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# Division of Student Affairs Student Employees Make Meaning of Their Intersecting Identities and Work

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The Graduate School

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS STUDENT EMPLOYEES
MAKE MEANING OF THEIR INTERSECTING
IDENTITIES AND WORK

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Jason Ward Foster

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Development:
Higher Education and P-12 Education
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

August 2019

This Dissertation by: Jason Ward Foster

Entitled: *Division of Student Affairs Student Employees Make Meaning of their Intersecting Identities and Work*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in Department of Leadership, Policy, and Development: Higher Education and P-12 Education, Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

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ABSTRACT

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A constructivist paradigm guided research to explore how student affairs student employees at two institutions made meaning of their multiple and intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment experience. Four current students at one institution provided data via interviews, a focus group, and participant journals while 12 former students at another participated, one via a phone interview whereas the rest submitted written email responses. Document analysis and a researcher journal also served as data sources as meaning and understanding emerged during this study.

Through intentional and unintentional development opportunities, students shared stories and painted a picture of the way employment in a division of student affairs supported their development as they came to making meaning of their identities. Conclusions indicated work experiences helped students develop confidence, a sense of self, a sense of belonging, and realize new appreciation for and understanding of their own and others' identities. Additional findings indicate students experience and witness discrimination of minoritized identities regularly in their student employment environments and privileged identities may allow students to forego fully processing their identities and experiences. Finally, while development opportunities in the work place

may help students in the processing of their identities, more consistency and

intentionality are needed when providing these types of experiences.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Even the last few minutes, having my brain make sense of this (how she makes
> sense of her intersecting identities) and drawing the parallels to where I work and
> getting it out in the open and explaining it to somebody who doesn't know me.
> Because it's really easy to explain it to people who understand, like talking to my
> friend, the Asian person of color who gets that race, and when we were kids, it
> didn't seem like race and sexuality, other than straight could even be a thing. And
> explaining that to a White person that does not know me and does not understand
> what that is like. It's real. It helps me so that I know there are people who are
> willing to listen and willing to hear my story.

–Monica, Personal Interview, 2018

As an undergraduate student working in campus recreation at Slippery Rock

University, I remember talking with a co-worker about her involvement in an

organization for students of color.  She explained the comfort she found in the

organization because it was the only place on campus she could go where, as she

explained, "people look like me."  I cannot recall the basis of the conversation or the

direction it went, but I remember those words, it is the only place where "people look like

me."  I have not yet come to fully process why these specific words stuck with me over

the years, and although my knowledge of diversity, inclusion, and social justice topics

have greatly improved, and I have come to understand my own identities better through

life experiences and intentional reflection, I will never understand the extent of my co-

worker's emotions that day, and likely many others during her time at a predominately

White institution.  Honestly, I was not willing to even hear her story at that point, much

less attempt to understand it, as my privileged identities made it possible to get through life without the need to process and interpret specific experiences and situations.  I had not thought about what it meant to feel uncomfortable in specific contexts because I did not have to.

However, as I continued my student employment career throughout my undergraduate and graduate degree programs, I began to understand who I was as a person.  Training opportunities, interactions with co-workers, and support from supervisors began to shape me as a person, and more important, I began to understand my social identities.  Granted, this was simply the beginning of an ongoing journey through which I have become the person I am today.  Gaining an appreciation for who I am and how I show up in the world would not have happened without my student employment experience, hence my desire to explore further the context of student employment as it relates to students' capacity to understand their identities.

Through this research, similar to the truth my undergraduate co-worker was trying to express, I continued to hear stories of other students' perceptions of loneliness on campuses with thousands of other students.  I also heard wonderful stories of how, on these same campuses, through their student employment experiences, people found support, comfort, safety, the ability to express their true selves, and an ability to better understand others.  Recognizing the importance of student employment in my life, and now hearing it from others, I designed research to explore and share these life-changing experiences.

Specifically, I was interested in an exploration of ways students make meaning of their intersecting social identities in the context of student employment experience within

a division of student affairs. I approached this study from a constructivist paradigm (Lincoln, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1990). The constructivist paradigm guided the research as it allowed for meaning to emerge as students shared their stories (Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010).

Understanding and making meaning of identity is complex (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Collins & Bilge, 2016), which meant in addition to relying on a guiding paradigm, I needed to structure my research design to account for this complexity. All identities intersect, but due to the way individual experiences are interpreted within systems of power and as a result of unique intersections, an appropriate lens must be used in the search for understanding and meaning. Participants in this study identified in multiple ways. For example, one participant identified as a middle class, White, Hispanic male, another as a White, pan-sexual, able-bodied female, and yet another a queer, Hispanic female. Overall there were 16 participants, each with their own unique identity, leading to the necessity of relying on multiple theories and concepts in order to understand their experiences best.

First, I understood social identities as multiple, intersecting and existing simultaneously to inform views and interpretations of experiences. To account for this, I relied on knowledge of multiple identities (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) as I designed this study and collected and interpreted data. Importantly, when I referred to intersecting identities the intent was to understand multiple social identities and the way they interact with one another, environments, and specific contexts.

In addition, I also viewed this research through a lens of intersectionality, which allowed for the understanding of a complex world and the experiences of people (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Leavy, 2017).  Intersectionality was developed out of  black feminist research and the exploration of systems of oppression, and refers to the way multiple social identities interconnect to inform experiences and shape a whole greater than the sum of the individual identities with a specific focus on oppressions resulting from multiple minoritized identities (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989).  Specifically, I was able to use a lens of intersectionality in two ways.  First, it allowed me to be conscious of the way multiple identities intersect not only with one another, but with environments and systems of privilege, power, and opression.  Second, I was able to apply a lens of intersectionality while exploring the identity of participants with multiple minoritized identities, while a focus on multiple identities was more appropriate for individuals who had multiple dominant identities.  Thus, the difference between multiple, intersecting identities and the specific concept of intersectionality was vital to this study.

While I explore both the concepts of multiple identities and intersectionality further in chapter two, some additional context of intersectionality is helpful at this time to aid with understanding the foundation of chapter one, and specifically the problem statement and purpose of the study.  Vital to the concept of intersectionality are concepts of privilege and oppression in systems of power, such as higher education.  While definitions of these concepts vary, ideas of privilege often focus on unearned benefits experienced by persons with dominant identities (McIntosh, 1988, 2012; Mullaly, 2010).  Whereas, oppression occurs when persons with minoritized identities experience inequitable access to resources and lack social capital (Leavy, 2017; Mullaly, 2010).

Perhaps one of most important aspect of intersectionality based research is it dictates that those who become aware of any type of inequality or oppression have a duty to initiate corrective action  (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989).

Applying a constructivist paradigm with lenses of multiple identity development and intersectionality allowed me to understand the social construction of students' realities in the context of their student employment experience, including the way they make meaning of their intersecting identities and experience power, privilege, and systems of oppression as student employees on campus.  Ultimately, findings will allow for action to be taken to create on-campus work enivronments that are condusive to, and better support, student development while recognizing and eliminating systems of oppression students with multiple minoritized identities experience at work.  Specifically, my goal was to understand student experiences so on-campus student employers can use the findings and recommendations to be intentional about creating work experiences and interactions that support students' exploration and understanding of their intersecting identitites.  The remainder of this introduction is an overview of the study and offers a background of literature that sets up the research problem, question, and purpose, as well as my positionality as the researcher.

## Introduction to the Study

Since a paradigm shift in higher education during the 1930s, the focus on supporting intellectual ability alone was replaced with an emphasis on the whole student, as aspects such as social, physical, spiritual, and emotional development became integral to fostering the growth of students as complete individuals (American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1996b; American Council on Education [ACE], 1937; Association

of American Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2002; Tinto, 1993). In higher education, this responsibility resides not only with faculty, but also with staff and students as well (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998; Bonfiglio et al., 2006), and led to a focus on the intentional creation of environments and opportunities to meet this goal (Dungy et al., 2004; Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993). In this wake, several organizations and researchers released principles, best practices, and hallmarks of education congruent with the goal of holistic development (ACPA, 1996a, 1996b; AACU, 2007; Astin, 1984; Bok, 2006; Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Coinciding with these developments, scholars formulated theories and models to explain student learning and development in college (e.g., Astin, 1984; Baxter Magolda, 1998; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; King & Kitchener, 1994; Kuh, 2003; Perry, 1999). An important component of many theories is out-of-class learning, including student employment, which now is an expected and valuable aspect of the college experience (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2003; Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, & Rude-Parkins, 2006). Researchers explored ways work influenced student development through models such as Chickering's seven vectors (Watson, 2013), and directly tied employment to learning domains, such as those presented in *Learning Reconsidered* (Dungy et al., 2004) that theorize all campus resources should be used to develop a whole student effectively (Bentrim, Sousa-Peoples, Kachellek, & Powers, 2013).

Additional literature focuses specifically on the development of first-year students (Salisbury, Pascarella, Padgett, & Blaich, 2012), retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993), involvement (Astin, 1984) and engagement (Kuh, 2003). Student employment likely serves as an important component of student development (Bentrim et

al., 2013; Chickering & Reisser, 1993), while providing involvement and engagement

opportunities students need to support their growth as individuals (Astin, 1984; Baxter

Magolda, 1998; Kuh, 1995, 2003; Perry, 1999).  A common theme in the literature

emphasizes the importance of understanding all aspects of student development and

learning (Patton, Renn, Forney, Guido, & Quaye, 2016), and goes as far as stating this is

an obligation of higher education institutions (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).  To understand student development and learning, it was

helpful to first explore concepts and theories of identity development.

Identity development spans social identities of class, gender, work status,

education, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and many others (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009).

Coinciding with the exploration of social identity are privilege and oppression, or

prejudice against an individual because of one or more of their social identities resulting

in a lack of access and exclusion of power (Black & Stone, 2005).  Intersections of

individual social identities and the way they influence one another is more important to

how individuals experience the world, rather than the examination of each identity alone

(Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill, McLaughlin, & Nieves, 2011; Dill & Zambrana,

2009; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Stewart, 2008).  Essentially, all identities and their

intersections inform life, and no single identity can define a person or experience.  The

foundation of intersectionality is based on research with women of color, specifically

Black women (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), has been expanded upon multiple times (Stewart

& McDermott, 2004), and is beginning to inform work specifically related to college

student development (Hardee, 2014).  With this study, I expand the connection of

multiple identities, intersectionality and student development to the specific context of student employment.

Conflict between multiple identities and contextual factors, such as family background, inform ways students make meaning of experience and understand their intersecting social identities (Abes et al., 2007; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Ung, 2013). College often offers the necessary support structures to explore identities (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Settles, 2006; Stewart, 2009), while providing a setting where students may be free from longstanding, external influential factors, such as enduring peer relationships and family expectations, (Russell, 2012; Ung, 2013) allowing for development of new perspectives and understanding. However, additional research is necessary to better understand how students make meaning of their intersecting identities.

While I rely on an understanding of multiple identities and intersectionality to inform the foundation of this study, it was also necessary to understand development theories of individual identity. Essentially, I viewed it as necessary to know how students may understand a single identity before tackling the complexity of multiple and intersecting identities. Thus, I summarized theories and models specific to sexuality (e.g., Dillon, Worthington, & Moradi, 2011), ethnicity (e.g., Ortiz & Santos, 2009; Torres, 1999), race (e.g., D.W. Sue & Sue, 2016), including specific theories on Black (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001), White (Helms, 1995; Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994), other races and multiracial identity development (Renn, 2000), gender (e.g., Ehrensaft, 2011), and social class (e.g., Borrego, 2003).

Theories and research on social identity span much more than the individual identities of sexuality, ethnicity, race, gender and social class, and cover topics such as

faith and spirituality (e.g., Fowler, 2000) and disability identities (e.g., Gibson, 2006), among others.  However, I focused on including an analysis of the literature that pertained specifically to identities reflected on by students in this study.   Further, while understanding the development of individual social identities provided background and a foundation for more complex identity development work, the focus of this research was on multiple intersecting identities, and the application of a lens of intersectionality as appropriate, and not on individual identities as separate entities.

Significant to this study was students' understanding of their intersecting identities in the context of their student employment experience in a division of student affairs.  Approximately 80% of all students work while attending college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; Sallie Mae, 2016).  Trends suggest a significant number of students work as a direct result of the increased cost of higher education (College Board, 2015).  Much of the existing research focuses on ways working affects the college experience (Kozak, 2010), is linked to academic success (Butler, 2007), impacts full-time student status (Johnson & Rochkind, 2009), or has other personal effects on students such as increased stress or loss of study time (Cheng & Alcántara, 2007).  With this research, I wanted to expand an understanding of the ways work may impact students and explored multiple identities in the context of work experience. I established the need for such research in the Statement of the Problem.

In this chapter I establish the basis for, and importance of, this study.  First, the statement of the problem, and overview of the literature on identity development, multiple identities, intersectionality, and student employment, addresses the importance of understanding intersecting identities in the specific context of student employment.

Next, I present the purpose of the study followed by an exploration of my perspective as the researcher. Finally, the concluding portion of the chapter is where I provide a synopses of Chapters II through IV.

## Statement of the Problem

While tenants of identity development, multiple identities and intersectionality have guided inclusive work on college campus for decades, a problem now exists where diversity efforts have veered from original goals of educating students toward critical consciousness. Critical consciousness refers to a more complete and complex understanding of the world and others, which in turn allows individuals to affect change (Freire, 1970). Institutions are now often mandating diversity efforts and using them as recruitment tools and to check boxes (Collins & Bilge, 2016), meaning such efforts are undertaken simply to meet administrative mandates, align with trends, and have a way to demonstrate adherence to diversity programming agendas and initiatives. A desire to develop common and easily understood language and terms to educate the masses has resulted in a loss of meaning and "flattening" of differences. For example, Collins and Bilge, discuss how the widely accepted use of the term "people of color" has reemphasized a dominant White group versus an everyone else mentality. They further explain how the desire to support individual needs through initiatives such as African American cultural and disability resource centers places an emphasis on individual identities and ignores the complexities of intersecting identities and the way no single identity can exist without being informed by all others. During interviews for this research, one participant supported this notion by sharing how, despite identifying as a

Black woman, she did not feel comfortable at the African American cultural center on campus because of her other identities.

Further, when exploring identity, the interactions between students' identities and school structures are often ignored, as are political factors and institutional contexts (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Understanding students' identities and experiences in specific contexts, as social and education politics continuously change, becomes essential for the education of students. A thorough exploration of student development in college resulted in recommendations for development to be examined "through a lens of privilege, power, and oppression … independent of dominant cultural models [and with consideration for] the impact of the environment on development" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 401 – 403). Further, Collins and Bilge (2016) postulate analysis recognizing intersectionality as a way to address "the complexities of educational equity" and believe "Aligning the copious literature on intersecting identities with real-life school setting may be especially useful for classroom teachers and school personnel" (p. 188). Generally speaking, there is a lack of understanding on the role specific campus environments play in student development (Russell, 2012; Torres et al., 2009; Ung, 2013), particularly from a point of awareness of understanding the way multiple identities and their intersections inform experiences. However, understanding these environments more completely may support educational equity and increase knowledge on the intersecting identities of students and the systems with which they interact.

When considering specific campus enviornments to explore further, student employment seemed like an appropriate choice for several reasons. First, my personal growth and understanding of my own intersecting identities through student employment

opportunities made it personally apparent student and identity development were present and supported in the on-campus employment setting. Next, student employment impacts a significant number of students, with nearly 80% of all college students working (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; Sallie Mae, 2016). Finally, upon an extensive review of literature, I was unable to identify research exploring student employment and the complex process of making meaning of intersecting social identities.

Research (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, et al., 2007) indicated context such as family background and current experiences as important to the construction of identity. While the relationship between some contexts and identities have been explored and are better understood, such as the way family environments inform Latino identity development (Torres, 2003), this is not the case for student employment and multiple identities. A significant amount of research exists exploring the student work experience (e.g., Athas, Oaks, & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013; Bentrim et al., 2013; Cheng & Alcántara, 2007; Glass, 2008; J. M., Kathman & Kathman, 2000; Lang, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1998; Perozzi, Kappes, & Santucci, 2009; Salisbury et al., 2012; Warren, 2002). However, there is no identifiable research supporting an understanding of how students make meaning of their multiple identities in the context of their employment experience or the specific elements within student employment environments that are vital to the identity development process. Further, campus ecology theory (Strange & Banning, 2001) posulates appropriate ways to design campus culture and spaces to best facilitate learning and development, and research provides a basis to understand how students experience campus environments (Renn & Patton, 2010). However, the way development occurs as a

result of experiences in a campus environment is less understood. Further, there is even less research on how environment, or the series of interconnected systems such as social interactions, peer groups, political factors, policy, and multiple other interactions and contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993), may inform identity development and meaning making of students' intersecting identities.

A majority of students are working (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; Sallie Mae, 2016) while attending college, and widely accepted theories indicate engagement (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 1993, 1995, 2003) outside of the classroom is crucial for student development. In addition, there is a recognition by higher education organizations that development is more than intellectual (AACU, 2002; ACE, 1937; ACPA, 1996b), and acknowledge that college environments must intentionally be created to facilitate development (Dungy et al., 2004; Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993). Further, a significant amount of research (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Renn, 2000; Stewart, 2008; Tinto, 1993; Ung, 2013) indicated college as a crucial time in life for students to make meaning of their identities. There is an expectation of intentional development of the whole college student, yet despite ongoing interactions and close relationships with college students on campus, student employers know little of the ways student employment informs an understanding of multiple and intersecting identities. A better understanding of the ways student employment and students' intersecting social identities inform one another, and student experiences as a whole, may expand knowledge and understanding of student identity development and highlight ways students can be better supported on campus.

As understanding of students' intersecting identities with and in the student employment context increases, the ways to intentionally structure work enviornments to be more conducive to educating and developing students toward critical consciousness will become more clear.  Development of critical consciousness allows students to challenge social inequities and work across differences more effectively (Carter, 2005; Collins & Bilge, 2016).  Further, as students work together to understand their own unique situations and identities, they build connections from their differences, increasing their understanding and compassion for others (Collins & Bilge, 2016), helping instutions of higher education reach their often stated goal of developing engaged global citizens, and meeting the challenge of developing the whole student.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to explore the construction of college students' multiple identities while focusing on the context of their student employment experience. The social climate within higher education in the US is always changing, necessitating the continuous need for scholars and educators to further their insight and understanding of student identity development (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Crenshaw, 1989; Torres et al., 2009; Ung, 2013).  Students may encounter an infinite number of unique experiences in the workplace, thus creating a need to understand how on-campus employment experiences influence students' understanding of their identities (Patton et al., 2016).

Though this research, I explored how college students, who work in a division of student affairs at one southeastern and one mountain state university, made meaning of their multiple identities and the ways their student employment experiences informed the construction of their understanding.  I relied on the definition of student affairs as the

collection of departments, offices, and individuals who focus on creating and supporting the intentional learning, development, and interaction of students outside the classroom (NASPA, 2018). The overall goal was for students to share their personal stories and detail specific work experiences that resonated with them as they processed through various workplace interactions to understand and connect the ways they made meaning of their multiple identities in the context of their student affairs employment. Further, I used the concept of intersectionality to inform this study as a lens through which to view the research, supporting theory, and basis for inquiry and analysis. Collins and Bilge (2016) recognize intersectionality "can take many forms and be used in many ways" and "as an analytic tool give people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves" (p. 2). The inclusion of intersectionality allowed me to design the study and analyze data in a way to better understand the experiences of those students with multiple minoritized identities and remain conscious of the ways students' intersecting identities inform their overall experiences and their experience of systems of power (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014).

Multiple, intersecting social identities create dynamics that need better understanding (Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005; Stewart & McDermott, 2004; Torres et al., 2009), which can only happen as similarly situated individuals explore their experiences (Collins & Bilge, 2016). This study allowed students to explore their identities individually via reflection, journals, and written statements, with me during interviews, and with one another during a focus group. These activities engaged students to express understanding of their own intersecting identities within higher education (i.e. on-campus student employment) with which they also intersect.

When exploring multiple identities and the way they intersect, it is beneficial to understand individual identity development theory as well as how they shape overall analyses (Collins, 2007). Thus, I relied on knowledge from intersectionality, multiple identity, and individual identity theories to shape this study and process understanding with participants in the real life setting of student-employment. It was essential to be informed on the theory of individual identities as well as student development when considering how each area shaped the other.

Ultimately, formalizing an understanding of intersecting identities in a specific context make knowledge available to all people. As Collins and Bilge (2016) explain, "the task is to place this research on intersecting identities in broader intersectional frameworks that investigate the potential of critical education to dismantle social inequality" (p. 189). By understanding intersecting identities in broader intersectional frameworks, it becomes possible to move away from diversity efforts that simply check boxes and toward better support and development of critical consciousness for students who depend on faculty, staff, and other personnel to fulfill the promise of educating the whole student.

## Researcher Perspective: A Foundation of Understanding

Socially-constructed identities are fluid and changing, shaped by individuals' experiences, and, in turn, informs personal views, interpretations, and understanding of the world (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Meyer, 2003; Russell, 2012; Torres et al., 2009). The privileged identities in each person dictate social norms and often aid in the creation of systems of power that may be insurmountable for others (Torres et al., 2009). Before I can explore the meaning and understanding of others and their identities, I must

understand myself and my place in the world, including how my experiences shape the person I am today. Identity is complex, multiple, and intersects to become more than the sum of parts, and allows each individual to experience both privilege and oppression in individual and instinctive ways (Dill et al., 2011; Russell, 2012; Warner, 2008). Accordingly, my self-exploration focuses on my intersecting identities as shaped by my life experience, as I attempt to make meaning of who I am today and how it may inform this emergent research.

The concept of privilege (Case, Iuzzini, & Hopkins, 2012; McIntosh, 1988, 2012) is often difficult to grasp when systematic privilege, that is neither recognized nor questioned, is the central tenet of subjective truth. I include a more comprehensive analysis of the tenets of privilege, oppression, and their systematic nature in Chapter II; yet, here I focus on what it means for me. While growing up in a working-class family posed limitations at times, and produced occasional feelings of unfairness in the world, my identities as a heterosexual, able-bodied, White, male provided unrecognized privilege that helped me to make meaning of my world. I was born and raised in a town of approximately 1,500 people in rural Pennsylvania where 99% of the population were perceived as White, English speaking, conservative individuals. In this town, masculinity reigned supreme and diversity, which at the time I understood mostly as skin color and a general overall interpretation of homosexuality as wrong, was easy to recognize, difficult to understand, and of little overall interest aside from ensuring it did not creep into our way of life, which was a White-dominated, misogynistic society.

In truth, I was unaware of my privilege for nearly 30 years before I had the knowledge and life experiences to process what this meant. While I continue to learn

about myself and the identity of others who differ from me, I recognize I will never have the capacity to understand what a life without multiple privileged identities is like or means on a personal level. With this, I am left to contemplate how privileged identities, specifically the ones to which I align, play a role in the world. I wonder how systems of power created by people with identities similar to mine inform the world of people without these identities. With that, I attempt to understand how people with minoritized identities experience the world, and in what ways their experiences differ from mine.

I know there are systematic injustices created by people who share many of the same dominant identities I have. I recall continuously hearing and believing the key to success for anyone is hard work. A commonly held belief among dominant groups is "If others do not have more, it is because they are incompetent and lazy" (Freire, 1970, p. 45). Bootstrap ideology and meritorious messages, combining disproven notions that hard work, skill, and ability alone lead to success, are rampant in U.S. society (Alvarado, 2010). Believing such messages for so long indicates my privilege has often gone unrecognized. In *No More Heroes: Grassroots Challenges to the Savior Mentality*, Flaherty (2016) explained:

> People with privilege are raised to see their own experiences as central and objective. We can't imagine a story in which we are not the protagonist. We can't imagine a different, better economic system. We can't imagine a world without White, cis-gendered male dominance. Saviors are not interested in examining their own privilege. We don't want to see that the systems of race and call and gender that keep us in comfort where we are – in the "right" jobs and neighborhoods and schools – are the same systems that created the problems we say we want to solve. (p. 20-21)

While I continue to explore and attempt to understand my own privilege, hearing the voices and stories of others becomes an important part of this journey. It is not one of needing to understand my own privilege better, hearing and appreciating the stories of

others, finding my own place in society, or having a role in forming a more equitable society for all, but rather is all of these simultaneously.  The systems that had me believing for so long that hard work is the key to success for all who are willing, are the same systems that need dismantling.

Persons with privileged identities need to challenge the systematic societal issues where social injustices thrive. In my lifetime alone, decades of unchecked privilege have allowed systems of privilege to persevere.  While current generations may not be at fault for the formation of such systems, the complacency of people on the dominant side has allowed them to flourish.  A just society "must be forged with, not for, the oppressed" (Freire, 1970, p. 33).  For this study, this means understanding the ways students experience various contexts as well as systems of oppression on campus and then using this knowledge to address oppression and create equitable environments that support the development of all students toward critical consciousness.  My privileged social identities have positioned me to take advantage of many years of opportunities for my own personal gain.  I now have the opportunity to be positioned to play a part in the creation of an equitable society as I assume a role beside others, even while I continue to process and understand my own experiences and privilege.  This role is defined by who I am because of my social identities.  My future starts with my present and my present is a result of my past, and the past is where I must start my reflection as I search for answers for the future.

**Privilege: Ability and Hard Work**

On April 13, 1984, I arrived in this world as a healthy, able-bodied, white, heterosexual, cis-gender, male in small-town USA.  Although I may not have recognized

it until nearly three decades later, my life of immense privilege had started. As I took my first breath, having done absolutely nothing else in life yet, I was on the privileged side of health, ability level, race, sexuality, sex, gender, and nationality. If there was such a thing as a birth lottery, I was holding a winning ticket simply because I was born. The only thing left to do from that point was to have this privilege reinforced on a daily basis, and unquestioned for the next 24 years until, as a graduate student, I was introduced to concepts of identity and privilege, which served as the beginning of my conscious exploration and reflection on how I show up in the world.

I recognize that due to either disease, accident, or the natural aging process, being able-bodied is temporary for most individuals. My fortune to be a mostly healthy individual and my status as temporarily able-bodied are identities I think about least often and take for granted. The ability to begin crawling and walking early in life, then transitions to running, playing with friends, and participating in sports is something a majority of individuals likely seldom contemplate intensely. Being able-bodied is directly connected to health, as it allows me to remain active as I age, meaning I experience a multitude of other positive effects of privilege ranging from physical, psychological to social.

I have never had my status as an able-bodied person challenged, neither can I recall a time in life where I even had a sprained ankle significant enough to limit mobility. In my world as a child and teenager, this would have been a significant disadvantage. Growing up in a working-class community, I understood the ability to work was directly connected to livelihood. I recall that an inability to go to work for a day did not mean a phone call to a supervisor and a quick explanation of the ailment, like

I experience today in my career, but rather, it meant one-fifth of our family income was potentially lost for the week.  For my father, this was especially true, as he often worked labor jobs for cash, or jobs with limited employee benefits.  My mother was more fortunate, typically holding a local factory job with some benefits, but she had to reserve the few sick days she earned for doctor's appointments for my sister, brother, and me.

My grandparents owned a small dairy farm and my family lived approximately 100 yards up the road.  From an early age, I was instilled with values of physical labor and hard work, as I recognized what it took for my grandparents to wake each morning at 4am and begin their responsibilities for the day.  Sickness was not an option and even significant injures were not reason enough to stay inside and disregard the work that needed to be done.  "The cows aren't going to milk themselves" is a phrase I heard throughout my youth.  This mantra embodied the mindset it was necessary to work hard and fulfill obligations no matter what, as demonstrated by my grandfather pushing through pneumonia to tend to morning chores, or weddings starting at noon and ending at 4:00pm so multiple family members, who owned small farms, could return home to tend to their responsibilities.  Thus, ability is something I rarely thought about, as people simply *sucked it up* and went about their business, a mentality that informs many experiences in my life, as previously discussed in my belief in messages that hard work leads to success.

My White identity is one that provides an immense privilege, something I now contemplate on a daily basis, and one that creates a disconnect between me and the values and viewpoints of people where I was raised. While difficult to admit, I was raised by parents and in a community that genuinely aligns being White with superiority.  Hearing

derogatory terms multiple times, and hearing people of other races being described as *worthless*, *ignorant, criminals*, and *thugs*, among multiple other negative descriptors and phrases, is part of daily life when I am around members of my family or nearly anyone else from the small town in Pennsylvania where I was raised. I grew up with these viewpoints, and my path to understanding my White privilege, as well as people who identify differently than I do, I can mostly attribute to my path through, and connection with higher education.

There were no people of color in my hometown, and still are not, meaning there was a limitation in my opportunity to experience diverse cultures. When I was approximately 17 years old, the high school track coach adopted an African-American daughter. I remember rumblings in the school and community regarding the inappropriateness of this action and the racist jokes that followed. I do not recall specifically contributing to this, but based on who I was then, I am sure I did. Around this same time, I also had an older cousin who had graduated from college and returned home. My cousin was having a conversation with my father, and while I do not remember how the conversation started, it arrived at a point where my father asked my cousin, regarding African Americans, "You wouldn't let one of them live with you, would you?" These experiences are important in my life as they are the first memories I have of hate, bigotry, and ignorance guiding words and actions. These were the first points in my life I can recall contemplating what it meant to be White, even though it was merely feeling a sense of shame for the way people spoke of individuals who were not White, for no reason other than the color of their skin.

My journey to college led me to a predominantly White university about 2 hours from my hometown. I was in a new town, with 3,200 people instead of 1,200, though it was essentially the same place. Diversity and culture were lacking, and I never had to think about what it meant to be White, because it seemed like everyone was. For the first time in my life, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to interact and socialize with non-White people who worked with me at the student recreation center. I remember individuals expressing concern about the lack of opportunities they had on campus and making jokes about how everyone who looked like they did could fit in one classroom on campus. My privilege allowed me to disregard such comments and finish my undergraduate college career without ever having my perceptions of race challenged to a point of needing to confront my views. However, through my discussions with co-workers and comments from my peers, I began to recognize we experienced life in exceptionally different and unique ways.

To this point, I have separated individual identities for the sake of sharing specific stories I associated with my understanding of each. Upon entering graduate school, I began to make meaning of my intersecting identities because of specific experiences at work and via close relationships with people with social identities different from mine. However, before moving forward to this phase of my life, I would like to return to other specific stories during the time of childhood through my undergraduate career about my social identities.

**Privilege: Sex and Gender**

Sex and gender were never separate identities for me until I sought education opportunities on identity development several years ago, some of which I can attribute to

my involvement in a social justice-based Ph.D. program.  With that, I return to my childhood where sex and gender were based on social norms and socially accepted behaviors.  As a boy in the 1990s, my parents, peers, and society encouraged me to play sports, occupy myself outside, jump my bike off dirt ramps, and come home dirty and hungry.  My toys consisted of trucks, tools, and action figures while I watched my sister play with a toy oven and tiny kitchen utensils.  While my dad helped around the house and cooked, my mom was the primary caregiver, tending to her motherly and household duties even after full days at work.  My dad fixed things, spent time in the garage, and drank beer while regularly watching sports.  Based on gender norms in the United States, my parents fulfilled stereotypical gender roles, and raised my siblings and me with these norms as well.  As I understood it then, when I grew up I would have a job to support my family and my future wife would take care of our family.

The first challenge I remember to my ideas of gender norms was in high school when a woman joined the football team.  There was name-calling, taunting, and opinions from students throughout the school.  I recall being confused as to why it mattered so much, but also understood that "girls don't play football."  I again moved on with my life without truly questioning or understanding the grand scheme of identity and society.  I can only reflect and explore these instances retroactively now, but as at the time of these experiences, I was likely ill equipped to process experiences that challenged accepted standards and norms.  Perhaps more likely, because these specific experiences did little to disrupt my life, I likely chose, whether consciously or not, to disregard the underlying social implications.

**Questioning My Views**

Upon graduating with a bachelor's degree from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania in 2007, I applied for, and never found, full-time employment that matched my degree and career aspirations. Consequently, I applied with a temporary employment agency near my undergraduate institution which soon placed me at a local factory. The pay of $10 per hour was enough to live on, and there were plenty of opportunities to earn more money by working overtime, as I often worked 16-hour days to complete orders. After only a few months, I realized a desire either to find a job better aligned with my education and degree or return to college for an advanced degree. When I shared this with my coworkers, I remember one of them asking why I would want to leave. Confused, I responded with all the things I hated about the job, including the long hours, hard work, and low pay. He responded, with equal amounts of confusion, stating that I was never going to find a job in the area that paid as well, with health insurance, and the same level of job security.

For me, this discussion resulted in significant internal contemplation and a couple of revelations. First, the pay and job I was writing off so easily and was eerily similar to my parents' lives and the jobs they worked to support their family, were aspects of the job this co-worker could not fathom giving up. Second, I unknowingly assumed people working in the factory wanted more. I had a similar reaction when one of my high school classmates told me she was not going to college, and that she only wanted to graduate, find a job, and raise a family. I struggled with the decisions of others, and in both instances, remember viewing these individuals' choices as the result of low ambition, and ones that ultimately would not lead to a fulfilling life.

Reflecting back at this point in my life, I considered financial struggles in my family and my status as a first-generation college student as aspects that made life harder than it should be, a viewpoint that now seems extremely privileged. As a first-generation student, despite the multiple resources on campus, I felt alone when confronted even with the simplest questions. While it seemed as though friends could have any of their questions about college answered by their parents or older siblings, I felt there was nowhere to turn with questions, such as how to access the dining hall or what a resident assistant was. While my parents' pride and support for my college career was unwavering, there was a limitation in the advice they could provide including words such as "take as much money as they want to give you," which ultimately is a contributing factor to my current student loan debt. I do not feel a need to assign blame, nor do I have any sense of ingratitude, but rather, I recognize that without having a similar experience themselves, my parents likely did not know what advice to give that would be specific to the college experience. Despite these hurdles, ultimately privilege from my identities of race, gender, sex, and now, education guided my life nearly unchecked. While I was ignorant to these privileges, I was free to move, to return to college, to find a job, or generally, to do what I wanted to do, without anyone questioning me or without any real fear of failure. With freedom to choose, I returned to college to pursue a master's degree.

As I began to learn more about concepts of identity and privilege in graduate school, I experienced internal conflicting views. I recall reverting to messages I heard throughout my life up to this point and discrediting the concept of privilege in favor of a narrative that people not enhancing their positions in life simply were not working hard enough. In my eyes, there were not systems in place limiting anyone's success.

However, for the first time, I also began to question how my identities had informed my view of the world and my interactions with others. I remember thinking that to be part of the conversations in class and with my peers I had to share stories of hardship and the absence of privilege in at least a part of my life. I resorted to sharing experiences of family financial hardships and being from a working-class family. During my childhood, my mom typically worked minimum wage jobs and while my dad had jobs that paid well from time-to-time, he was also often in-between jobs, a result of a bad temper and problems with authority. Thus, there were times when the electricity or gas company turned off our utilities due to unpaid bills. We often relied on food donations from a local food pantry, and it was common to wear clothes purchased at garage sales or handed down from older cousins. However, I never remember going without food, birthday presents, holiday gifts, or at least one new outfit to start the school year. I know my parents often went without to provide for my sister, brother, and me, and lived paycheck to paycheck, but we never lived in a state of poverty, with a true struggle to provide necessities for survival, at least not to my understanding and perception. Still, I had ambitions and goals for myself to be well off financially when I grew up.

While I struggled internally with the way I understood the world, I recognize now I was fortunate to attend graduate school and earn a graduate assistantship at an institution, and in a department that placed a significant emphasis on student development and identity. Having this opportunity resulted in three primary areas of growth and personal development. First, the faculty designed the coursework around an emphasis on student development and exploration of self and social identities. Second, the graduate assistantship was in the department of campus recreation, which had a

leadership team devoted to intentional development opportunities for student staff. Third, for the first time in my life I developed multiple, close relationships with individuals with a variety of intersecting identities different from mine.

Two important experiences happened during graduate school. First, I started a relationship with a woman who identifies as Chinese-American, and who later became my wife. This was the first time I had been part of an interracial relationship, and I remember trying to process through what my family's reaction would be when meeting my new partner; I recalled specific comments from my father and grandfather about the inappropriateness of dating people of color. Would my family be mad? Would they talk to her? Would my dad quit talking to me? I ultimately determined it would be fine, and if not, I was ready to accept strained family relationships for the woman I loved.

Reflecting on this experience, it strikes me as extremely selfish I never considered what my partner's experience would be when visiting my hometown. I told her about the town, but I do not recall specifically speaking about the views of some family members and the potentially hostile environment we were heading to. I likely hid what I would consider to be racist views, due to embarrassment, but my privilege allowed me to make this experience about myself, and it was not until quite a time later before I contemplated what my partner's emotions may have been.

Part of this experience and the understanding I have gained indicates I never before had to contemplate identity and the ways it shows up in various spaces and contexts. When I began to process the experience of my partner meeting my family, my initial reaction was to question how my family responded. Even in this reflective process, privileged identities put me in a position to question and worry about myself

first, when I should have been much more concerned with how my partner might react, or more so, how we navigated and understood this experience together, as partners. Thinking about this now, it is apparent these thoughts and emotions may have occurred retroactively, as I was unaware of the implications at the time.  I had never before had to think about where I was going, what the reaction would be, or if I would be welcomed. For the first time in my life, the possible outcomes of a situation were directly tied to someone's identity, and I failed to grasp what it meant.

When I met my partner's family, upon a late-night arrival after a long flight from the east to the west coast, I learned her entire extended family of aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents, would arrive at her house the next day to meet me. In addition to the nervousness that comes with meeting a partner's family for the first time, including her entire extended family, I was conscious to the fact I had never before been in a setting where there was not a White majority. I found a familiar comfort in the fact her dad and uncle were White and recognize now I did not afford her this same sense of familiarity and safety when meeting my family. She likely experienced a sense of hostility, or at least uneasiness, which I would unwittingly subject her to multiple times.

Shortly after my wife first visited my hometown, my best childhood friend married a woman from Bulgaria.  We often met in our hometown for holidays and social activities for the duration of time we spent at home spending nights in our favorite local bar.  Neither of our partners seemed especially thrilled that we always wanted to spend time there, but it was years later before we had a discussion as to why, tying back to the views and beliefs of people who frequented the bar.  One example of this is when the establishment's owner cancelled the show of a Black artist because of customers' threats,

saying they would never allow a Black guitarist to play music in the bar. While I was at a point in my life that this made me quite upset, my privilege allowed me to remain personally disconnected, and rather, focus my attention on how wrong this situation was strictly from an equity and inclusion standpoint. It was not until a few years later my friend and I discussed how our partners likely did not enjoy going to the bar because they were uncomfortable, unaccepted, and unsafe, and they likely told us as much, but we failed to appropriately listen.

The second and third impactful experiences for me in graduate school were when two of my fellow graduate assistants separately came out to me as gay. The most difficult part was watching a friend fight with, and be disowned by, her family and in the other case, continue to hide his identity from his family for fear of what would happen. Once again, I recognized the privilege of not needing to contemplate how I would tell someone about my sexuality and the reactions of my family. As a result of my heterosexual identity, I will never face this challenge. It seemed unfair to see my friends struggle with expressing their identity, and while I tried to support them in ways I knew, I began to understand there are many struggles in life I will never endure, simply because of how I was born.

While I was by no means well informed on complex issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice upon finishing my master's degree, my experiences made me a more open and accepting person. More so, I recognized the importance of equity and began to see some of the obstacles in society that people face as a result of their identities and the privilege I never understood in my life. These ideas resonated with me enough that my partner and I decided to find our first professional employment opportunities at a

place that valued diversity and inclusion, and placed student development at the core of the higher education experience. With this in mind, my partner accepted a job at Mountain State University, as it became apparent via the information she gained from her interview, and the research we were able to conduct online, this specific institution aligned with our values. Because I did not find a professional position immediately, I chose to enroll in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership Ph.D. program at the University of Northern Colorado, though shortly thereafter I also accepted a job at Mountain State University.

The most important thing I have done as a doctoral student is educate myself on equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through the social justice-based Ph.D. program, my participation in events such as campus social justice retreats, Safe Zone training, serving on inclusivity committees, completing inclusion-based research, and enrolling in equity workshops and certifications, I have recognized some root problems of the social concerns sweeping the US and how college students' social identity is reflected in meta-social issues. My parents taught me the importance of hard work, selflessness, and to have a "no quit attitude" and "to pick myself up by the bootstraps" when all else failed, a mantra that disregards social and systematic oppressions. In addition to these beliefs, my childhood and upbringing left me with intolerance, ignorance of differences, and a lack of understanding that not everyone can pick themselves up in the same way or without support from others. Compassion, empathy, and love for others are the most important values my mom taught me. While I will never fully understand the experiences of others, it is these lessons that guide me now and allow me the opportunity to at least question and understand my views and perspectives.

**Supporting Others through
Understanding**

Sometimes, motivation originates from unexpected sources. In the book *Do More Great Work* (Stanier, 2010), there is an overall message of doing improved and more purposeful work. The book does not have a social justice message, but in one section, readers must contemplate whether they are doing great work, and if not, what may be broken. While there are localized options, such as an individual's desk or office, options expand to include *your country* and *your world*. As I explore this question, my mind drifts away from my personal work to societal issues and it is easy to reach the conclusion that our world, and our society are broken. A broken US society is evident in high profile stories such as the Pulse Nightclub shooting (Barry, 2016), student protests at the University of Missouri (Criss, 2015), player protests in the National Football League and subsequent funding from the league for social justice advocacy (Huston, 2017), and legislation such as North Carolina's HB2, legislation which allowed gender listed on birth certificates to dictate which public restrooms individuals could use (Gordon, Price, & Peralta, 2016). Unfortunately, these stories are not exceptions, but rather examples of systems of oppression at work in the US every day.

Through discussions with peers and colleagues, beginning in graduate school at James Madison University and increasing during my time at Mountain State University as a professional, particularly during social justice-based trainings and seminars, and via coursework and class discussions while pursuing my Ph.D. at University of Northern Colorado, I have come to recognize, and at times have been directly told, that the task of educating the privileged falls to the privileged, and is not a burden people with minoritized identities must bear. Further, pity, sympathy, and empathy do little for people

with minoritized identities, but rather, action is necessary to effect systems of change.  In

*Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (Irving, 2016), there is a

message that White people may only view race and racism through their perspectives.  I

believe this likely translates to other identities as well.  I have been fortunate to have

experiences and an education that have helped me understand injustices and recognize

systems of oppression that place individuals at a significant disadvantage.  While I cannot

truly understand some of these experiences, I can work to educate others and do my part

to understand and change these oppressive systems. It is important to do so with input

from all voices and not simply the perspective of those with either dominant or

subordinated intersecting identities, as understanding all experiences within a specific

context is important to move toward equitable society.  I hope to use this research to co-

construct meaning with students around intersecting identities and their work on campus

and find ways to inform everyday experiences.

My intersecting identities have shaped my experiences with systems of power in

the rural town where I grew up, throughout primary and secondary education systems,

during my time in higher education, and as a professional.  Further, due to my

intersecting social identities, I interpret and make meaning of the world in ways different

from others.  While growing up in a working-class family may have had disadvantages,

this identity intersects with my dominant identities of White and male that combine with

multiple other social identities to ultimately provide immense privilege.  Experiencing

college as a first-generation student meant I searched for support and lacked confidence

at times, but because I saw leaders of the institution and a majority of other students who

I perceived as similar to me, I was never truly alone.  Despite knowing I would somehow

need to find a way to pay for college, and supplement financial aid dollars, I never

doubted I would be able to easily find a job. I interpret such experiences in a specific

way not because of any single identity, but rather, because of the way my social identities

intersect, and the way they all inform one another. The task now, is to share my stories,

and listen to those of others, as we attempt to co-construct meaning and inch toward an

understanding of how each of us make meaning of our identities through student

employment.

## Limitations

This study had six limitations. First, while there were 16 participants, only 4

participated via multiple interviews and a focus group, and only 3 of these 4 provided

research journals. Of the other 12 participants, 1 completed a phone interview while 11

provided data via written statements. While follow-up and clarification were possible via

email and phone communication, these methods likely did not provide the same depth of

rich data obtained via in-person interviews and likely affected consistency across data

sources, ultimately resulting in 25% of participants providing a majority of the data.

Second, when recruiting participants, I heavily relied on convenience and existing

personal connections for gatekeepers. Third, 13 of the 16 participants were student

employees in a department of campus recreation, potentially limiting uniqueness of

experiences of student participants. However, the significance of the data provided by

the three non-campus recreation participants made substantial contributions to this

research. In addition, because campus recreation and non-campus recreation participants

shared many similar experiences, I feel findings are still representative of what student

employees experience within a division of student affairs, and campus recreation participants were recruited from two separate institutions.

Fourth, many participants had a perceived or actual dominant identity of being White, which appeared as a salient identity in many situations. While Whiteness often intersected with one or multiple minoritized identities for many participants, participants with a non-White identity were able to discuss their experiences from a lens of intersectionality. Of the four students who participated in this research via interviews and the focus group only one identified as Black while the other three had an actual or perceived White identity. This meant it was impossible to find similarities and themes from a Black identity perspective, as I only had a single set of stories. However, as a constructivist paradigm and narrative inquiry place value on the voice of individuals, unique experiences and multiple truths, this one participant's stories added significant contributions to the research.

Fifth, as I identified participants and collected data in an area immediately after a direct hit from a major hurricane, faculty, staff, and students were picking up the pieces of their lives to find a way forward. After the institution was closed for several weeks, many students were still simply trying to find a place to live and ways to survive the remainder of the semester, and they were adjusting to revamped class schedules and required out-of-class assignments to make up for lost contact minutes. Students were stressed, anxious, uncertain about their immediate future, and pressed for time, and specifically explained these reasons as they kindly declined the opportunity to be participants for this research. As students declined the invitation to participate, I had to abandon my original plan of using purposeful sampling, which I intended to use to ensure

a variety of intersecting identities were represented in the study and that participants

would be able to speak to intersectionality, in favor of convenience sampling.

Finally, I designed my original study proposal to select students without the use of

gatekeepers.  Specifically, I hoped to avoid the use of supervisors as gatekeepers to avoid

insertion of an unnecessary power dynamic into the study.  However, to secure IRB

approval I had to involve supervisors in the recruitment process and received signed

consent from supervisors acknowledging student employees in their area as being

involved in the study.

## Research Question

A single research questions served to guide this study.

Q1      How do student affairs student employees make meaning of their
        intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment
        experience?

## Overview of the Study

This dissertation consists of five chapters.  Chapter I is a brief overview and

introduction of privilege and oppression, intersectionality, multiple identities, identity

development theory, student development, student employment, and the holistic goal of

higher education.  The statement of the problem suggests a lack of understanding of

intersecting social identities for college students in specific environments.  A summary

and analysis of literature provides an overview of student development, identity

development, and intersectionality and highlights a lack of research specific to

understanding the way students make meaning of their multiple and intersecting identities

and why this is vital for the intentional development of work experiences that support and

inform student identity development.  The chapter concludes with the researcher

positionality that outlines positionality and personal experiences with privilege and identity and provides limitations for the study.

Chapter II provides an overview of relevant literature, beginning with an exploration of student employment related literature before moving to an overview of identity as a fluid concept (Torres et al., 2009), with a focus on the way a majority of recent research has grown from the foundational identity development work of Chickering and Reisser (1993) and Erikson (1963, 1980). Next, research on developmental theories for sexuality, ethnicity, race, and gender are explored, followed by a review of literature specific to student development in college, including involvement theory (Astin, 1984), engagement (Kuh, 2003), and self-authorship and meaning making (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994). The chapter also includes an exploration of the model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes et al., 2007), and an overview of the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Dhamoon, 2011; Dill et al., 2011; Hancock, 2007). There is also a focus on the history and growth of intersectionality as a concept and tool for research (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Jones, 2009; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Finally, the chapter concludes with an exploration of identity and environment, with an emphasis on the importance of the bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) as it relates to college student development.

Chapter III focuses on the constructivist research paradigm and methods of the study. An overview of the methodological framework and paradigm as they relate to the anticipated co-creation of knowledge and understanding leads to an in-depth exploration of narrative inquiry, the chosen methodology. To conclude, there are details on specific

methodological choices, such as population, sampling, participants, the research site, data collection, and analysis, and an overview of rigor, including trustworthiness criteria and authenticity to frame the methodological perspective of the inquiry.

Chapters IV and V combine to present the data and results of the study. Specifically, Chapter IV provides an overview of themes for each group of participants and links supporting data directly to each theme. Chapter V begins with an overall discussion of the study and provides implications and recommendations for practice and research and concludes with an overall summary.

For decades there have been continuous calls for research to focus on more than the intellectual and academic development of students in higher education institutions (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998; ACPA, 1996b; AACU, 2002), and scholars have answered this through multiple studies and the creation of theories and models (e.g., Astin, 1984; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Perry, 1999).  The exploration of social identity development (e.g., Ehrensaft, 2011; Patton et al., 2016; Torres et al., 2009; Dillon et al., 2011) and intersectionality (e.g., Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991) has also been prominent in many studies, with additional authors implying an understanding that environment matters in regard to student development (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Strange & Banning, 2001).  However, research exploring students' understanding of their intersecting social identities in the context of student employment experience does not exist and is what this study attempts to address.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter begins with an exploration of current literature on student

employment, including student and institutional characteristics, motivation for working,

and student employment as it relates to learning and development.  Identity development

is then introduced, highlighting seminal research and concepts specific to identity

development in general (e.g., Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1963, 1980), while

providing an overview of research, theory, and models specific to the development of

individual identities of sexuality, ethnicity, race, gender and social class.  I offer an in-

depth review of college student development and the concepts of self-authorship and

meaning making, and the model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes & Jones, 2004;

Abes et al., 2007), which provided a basis for understanding the way college students

experience and make meaning of their multiple social identities.  There is a focus on the

history of intersectionality and its application to research, as well as an analysis of

identity development and environment, which includes an overview of bioecological

theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).  All of these combined to build

the foundation for exploring multiple and intersecting identities in the context of student

employment.

**Student Employment**

I chose student employment as the specific context through which to explore

student identity development which made it important to provide an overview and

synopsis of current literature on the topic.  I determined student employment was a worthwhile context in which to explore identity development partly because of the number of students it impacts.  The number of students working while attending college continues to increase and it has become a common part of the higher education experience (O'Brien, 1993; Riggert et al., 2006).  Statistics vary over time, with older reports indicating as many as 85% of all students worked at one point (Bradley, 2006), with other numbers suggesting over 40% of full-time students and nearly 80% of part-time students work (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).  Recently available data indicates 77% of all students work at least part time and 57% work year-round (Sallie Mae, 2016).  Statistics showing the number of students who work on-campus specifically were not readily available.  Even a comprehensive examination of on-campus student employment (NASPA, 2019) was absent of on-campus specific numbers and instead relied on numbers indicating 70% to 80% of students are employed overall.  Specific on campus numbers are likely not necessary for the purpose of this study, as the intent of providing numbers was to demonstrate the sheer volume of students who work and are impacted by this context.  It is nearly impossible to use a campus facility or service without seeing or interacting with student employees, especially within a division of student affairs.

**Institutional and Student Characteristics**

The percentage of students working, as well as the number of hours worked, vary by student demographics and type of institution.  The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2016) provides detailed data summarizing the type of students, based on demographic factors, more likely to work.  Of all full-time students, 45.1% of females

and 40.6% of males work.  However, while females are more likely than males to work, they work fewer hours overall.  Of all part-time students, 79.9% of males and 77.7% of females work, a trend reversal compared to full-time students.  When looking at the number of hours worked each week for all part-time students, 7.8% work less than 20 hours, 24.6% work 20-24 hours, and 44.6% work 35 or more hours, indicating part-time students are more likely to work a higher number of hours than full-time students.  Of all students, 14.6% work less than 20 hours per week, 16.5% work 20 to 34 hours per week, and 10.4% work 35 or more hours per week.  These numbers are important as they indicate 26.9% of all students work at least 20 hours per week, representing a significant portion of these students' time was spent within an employment environment.  The percentage of full-time students who work also varies by institution type.  Important for this study was the fact 41.9% of full-time and 80.3% of part-time students at 4-year schools work, once again demonstrating the high number of students who may be impacted through the context of employment.

Further, among full-time students 51.6% of American Indian/Alaskan Native, 45.9% of White, 43% of Black/African American, 40.7% of Hispanic, 25.9% of Asian, and 43.1% of students who identify with two or more of these races, work (NCES, 2016). Additional analysis shows 80.3% of White, 80.1% of Hispanic, 79.2% of Asian, and 69.8% of Black/African American part-time students work.  These numbers indicate students overall, have a high probability of interacting with students from backgrounds and with identities different from their own, a key factor in identity development and moving toward critical consciousness.

**Motivation for Working**

Students may choose to work to develop job skills, aid career preparation, and develop and improve their social life and networks (Baran, 2010; Cheng & Alcántara, 2007; King, 2006; O'Brien, 1993). However, whether it is due to actual need or a desire to improve quality of life, as many as 95% of students work for financial reasons, because of the rising cost of college (Curtis & Williams, 2002; Ford, Bosworth, & Wilson, 1995; DeSimone, 2008; King, 2006; King & Bannon, 2002; Lundberg, 2004; Lunsford, 2009). In 2015-16, families spent an average of $23,688 on college (Sallie Mae, 2016).

The fact students work primarily for financial reasons is not surprising as inflation is outpacing family income. State and federal aid have continuously declined since the late 1980s, and the costs associated with college have increased by 400% over the past 25 years (Boehner & McKeon, 2003; College Board, 2015; Orozco & Cauthen, 2009). Not surprisingly, these trends directly coincided with an increase in the number of students who work (King, 2006). While over 90% of students stated they would give up their job if their financial situation allowed for it (Curtis & Williams, 2002), students are forced to work due to the financial trends (DeSimone, 2008; King & Bannon, 2002). Recently available numbers (Sallie Mae, 2016) show college costs are covered 34% by scholarships and grants, 29% from parent income and savings, 13% by student borrowing, 12% by student income and savings, 7% from parent borrowing, and the final 5% with contributions from family and friends. These numbers indicate 25% of college costs fall directly to a student. In addition, parents of students who work fund a smaller

portion of college, 27% overall, compared to parents of students who do not work, 31% (Sallie Mae, 2016).

Discovering why students work was important to begin to inform an understanding of the expectations and desired results students had for their employment opportunities. While student affairs divisions often list tenants of student development and learning among their mission, vision, and values, including in student employment settings (Athas et al., 2013) students' primary motivation for working was financial need, leaving questions about whether students themselves expected or desired any type of development from their employment experience.

While specific student expectations of work may need additional exploration, it is known students mostly perceive their work experience optimistically if they deem the pay adequate, find a position where hours are adapted to academic schedules, are able to develop positive relationships with supervisors (Johnson, Kaiser, & Bell, 2012), and perceive their roles as challenging and important (Cheng & Alcántara, 2007). In addition, research indicates work may improve the college experience (Kozak, 2010), can support student development (ACPA, 1996a), has the potential to improve grades (Butler, 2007), and may help students develop skills necessary for success after college (Carr, 2005; Curtis & Shani, 2002; Glass, 2008; Watts & Pickering, 2000). Of all these benefits, most pertinent to this study is the fact work can support student development. Further, on-campus employment specifically supports students' learning and development (Astin, 1984; Athas et al., 2013; Lundberg, 2004; Wenz & Yu, 2010), may lead to higher levels of success in completion of institutional learning outcomes (Riggert et al., 2006), and leads to higher levels of involvement and engagement (Astin, 1993;

Lunsford, 2009). These findings are all important as they establish on-campus employment as critical learning and development environments for students.

**Student Employment, Learning,
and Development**

At a basic level, there is a justification for working while attending college due to the involvement and engagement opportunities it provides (Astin, 1984; Baxter Magolda, 1998; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Kuh, 1995, 2003; Perry, 1999). Job opportunities can also be valuable in helping students meet specific and desired outcomes of the college experience (ACPA, 1996a; Broughton & Otto, 1999; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006; Kozak, 2010; Pike, Kuh, & Massa-McKinley, 2008; Umbach, Padgetts, & Pascarella, 2010). A review of the literature demonstrates working may be connected to student learning and development in specific ways.

Working may support students in their journey through the seven vectors of development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and appears to increase student satisfaction with the college experience (Watson, 2013), leading to increased retention (Tinto, 1993). Working may specifically develop leadership and collaboration skills, which directly carry over and benefit other aspects of college (Bentrim et al., 2013; Salisbury et al., 2012). One study suggests working in the division of student affairs helps students develop interpersonal skills, personal wellness awareness, practical skills, increases their academic ability, and leads to higher levels of self-awareness (Athas et al., 2013). Further, working has been linked directly to informal learning, student growth, and development (Carr, 2005) and meeting learning outcomes (Ketchum-Ciftci, 2004). Overall, while research examining student employment and development is somewhat

limited, there appears to be consensus that working contributes positively overall to a college experience (Lewis & Contreras, 2009) and is more beneficial if opportunities are intentionally developed to meet specific learning outcomes (Perozzi et al., 2009; Reynolds, 2009).

The one additional area of student employment literature not yet addressed applies specifically to training student employees. Multiple studies indicate persons who train student employees focus on creating a culture of better service and efficiency, rather than on intentional learning and development opportunities (e.g. Gibbs, Chen, & Bernas, 2001; Guerrero & Corey, 2004; Jetton, 2009; J.M. Kathman & Kathman, 2000; Manley & Holley, 2014; See & Teetor, 2014). Some student positions, most notably resident assistants, receive training to provide skillsets beneficial in other parts of students' lives, such as teambuilding and communication (Diesner, 2015), first aid (Thombs, Gonzalez, Osborn, Rossheim, & Suzuki, 2015), suicide prevention and emotional awareness, (Swanbrow-Becker & Drum, 2015), and multicultural awareness and conflict resolution skills (Koch, 2012). Some of these skills may promote student development and a higher level of multicultural awareness will most likely encourage identity exploration (Kegan, 1994). However, the focus of the literature remains on assessing skill development so employees can best perform their jobs, and even when learning outcomes are examined (Diesner, 2015; Webb, 2003) the focus largely strays from the potential results of student growth and development.

The previous summary highlights some positive outcomes of working while attending college, and as a collective, appears representative of students with varying gender and racial identities. For example, while survey respondents in Bentrim's study

were 56% White, 30% African American and 8% other, 15 of the 19 focus group

participants were students of color. Further, studies by Athas et al. (2013) and Cheng and

Alcántara (2007) had samples sizes in the thousands that were generally representative of

institutional student populations as a whole.

　　　　While there appears to be a gap in the research addressing student employment

and identity development, it seems to be generally accepted that major benefits of student

employment include the development of social support networks and peer connections

(Butler, 2007; Cheng & Alcántara, 2007).  Further, development of these relationships

and support networks may be even more important for students with minoritized

identities, specifically African American and Latinx students (Baker & Robnett, 2012;

Flowers, 2004; Klum & Cramer, 2006).  Combined with generally accepted idea that

students need a safe, supportive environment to explore and make meaning of their

identity ( Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Evans & Broido, 1999; Paul & Frieden, 2008), the

workplace presents an environment that could support identity exploration for students

employed by the institution.  These assumptions were significant as I explored

relationships, feelings of safety and comfort, and workplace support with students during

this research.

**Identity Development**

　　　　Having provided an overview of student employment, the associated benefits, the

ways students learn and develop through working, and the gap in research focusing

specifically on identity development in the context of employment, I directed my focus

toward understanding the foundations of identity development to provide a frame for

understanding data for this study.  Researchers have focused on traditionally aged college

students and identity development for several decades (Evans et al., 1998; Patton et al., 2016). Identity, or an individual's personal beliefs and how they are expressed and relate to societal groups, is a fluid, ever changing social construct (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Meyer, 2003; Russell, 2012; Torres et al., 2009). Examples of social identities include social class, gender, work status, education, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion, and others (Torres et al., 2009). In these contexts, individuals construct an idea of who they are and who they hope to be (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Defining a sense of self, individuals navigate social contexts and constructs, processing interactions and experiences. Generally speaking, societal messaging and perceived norms begin to define dominant values, which then inform individual actions, experiences, and expectations.

Individual and group adherence to socially created norms and expectations ultimately create dominant and subordinated groups in society, creating unique life experiences for every individual dependent upon their social identities. Socially created identities and resulting discrimination persist and exist within nearly all systems and contexts on college campuses (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Understanding identity development may offer insight on ways to confront harmful views and actions, both intentional and unintentional, of those with dominant identities, and support individuals who are oppressed and have minoritized identities (Jolly, 2000). As I gained a better understanding of social identities, I was better able to design this study to explore the identities of participants.

Many researchers and scholars made identity development a focus of their research and theories (e.g., Abes et al., 2007; Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005; Bem, 1983; Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Crenshaw, 1991; Jones, 2009; McCarn & Fassinger,

1996), with a majority of work based on widely-accepted models proposed by scholars such as Chickering and Reisser (1993), and Erikson (1963, 1980). The theories and models proposed by Chickering and Reisser, and Erikson are detailed next because they have been instrumental to the field of student development and have informed numerous research projects for decades. Thus, these models have a place in student development literature as vital to our understanding and are often considered foundational works. However, it should be noted these theories are based on results founded from research with privileged, homogeneous student populations (Patton et al., 2016), which is why the overview of these theories is followed by an extensive review of theories relevant to specific social identities.

**Seven Vectors**

The seven vectors theory is a necessary inclusion in this study as it sets up a foundation of identity development literature in higher education. Through the seven vectors, Chickering and Reisser (1993) explain the process through which students move toward establishing and understanding their identity. While individual theories discussed later in this chapter explore this process for individual and intersecting identities, the seven vectors provide a starting point for understanding the process as a whole

Seven vectors combine to provide a working theory to support a better understanding of psychosocial development, originally applied to adolescence and early adulthood and then later adjusted to adults, and specifically, college students by Chickering and Reisser (1993).  By understanding Chickering and Reisser's vectors, individuals who work in higher education can recognize and support change in students and be aware of a holistic developmental view and process.  Students pass through the

vectors as the knowledge and understanding of themselves grows and as they become more complex individuals, but they do not necessarily progress through the vectors in order and they may revisit and re-evaluate criteria they have already passed (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).  The seven vectors are: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationship, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Each vector is discussed in more detail below.

The first vector, developing competence, describes development in tenets of intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Through mastering content, increasing intellectual capacity, and developing toward being able to comprehend, analyze, and synthesize information and knowledge, a student develops the capacity to reference multiple views of reality when interpreting experiences, thus expanding intellectual competence.  Physical development occurs as the body grows and previously unattainable skills develop and are refined. Further, interpersonal competence expands as a student learns to better interact and communicate, helping to realize appropriateness in social settings and leading to improved cooperation and social skills as a whole.  Improving development in the first vector helps students gain confidence and competence as they begin to understand a more complex view of the world.

Throughout the second vector, managing emotions, students progress first through a simple awareness of their emotions, which likely include anxiety, depression, guilt, optimism, and sexual desire, among others, to appropriate expressions and control of emotions (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).  As development occurs in this vector, students

can process emotions separate from self and integrate emotions with other aspects of self. Students also discover a new awareness of emotions previously not recognized as a part of their life.

Moving through autonomy toward interdependence, the third vector is dependent on the attainment of emotional and instrumental independence prior to the eventual recognition of interdependence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students progress through multiple phases during a transition to emotional independence. First, they experience a perceived freedom from the direction and influence of parents as they begin to rely on peers and social groups for these types of prompts. Then, other reference points in their lives, such as career or institutional supports, become important before finally recognizing their perceptions, values, and thoughts as a main source of motivation to pursue interests and take risks. During the development of instrumental independence students learn to think critically, develop problem-solving skills, learn to independently seek out resources and information, and develop an ability to be mobile (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Partially through reevaluating relationships, students ultimately learn to balance their independence, while recognizing the need for others and community as they develop interdependence.

As the developmental process leads students into the fourth vector, individuals learn to develop mature interpersonal relationships that include tolerance and the appreciation of differences with others as well as the capacity for intimacy (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Tolerance develops as students broaden their sense of self and abandon preconceived notions as they interact with others. Improved empathy, openness, frequent diverse world experiences, and the recognition of uniqueness and diversity in others

supports the development of tolerance.  Further, capacity for intimacy develops as students recognize partners as equals, develop relationships based on openness and trust, and shift away from dependence in relationships toward long-lasting, mutually beneficial partnerships.

The fifth vector, establishing identity, is dependent on first moving through the initial four vectors and has a connection to each of the seven vectors.  Students develop and grow into a sense of *who I am* and what this recognition of self means for their place in the world (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).  Establishing identity is complex, ongoing, and involves comfort with body and appearance, comfort with gender and sexual orientation, sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, clarification of self-concept through roles and life-style, sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, self-acceptance and self-esteem, and personal stability and integration.

The sixth vector, developing purpose, is a process during which students identify and articulate major goals and the general direction of their futures (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).  This intentional process relies on clarification of relationships and interests, and considerations of multiple life options.  Students develop a capacity to be committed to a decision, even if others contest their decisions and become a source of conflict.

The seventh and final vector, closely related to developing an identity, is establishing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).  Students develop a central philosophy and set of values through three stages that overlap to some extent.  These stages are humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence.  During the humanizing values stage students transition from a set of literal beliefs to a more

relative value system through which they process content and context. Next, students personalize values and settle on beliefs and guidelines that direct their lives. Finally, they develop congruence, the process through which actions and behaviors mirror personalized values and beliefs (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The seven vectors provided an understanding of how students develop a more complex view of the world, established identity, and developed purpose, relying on relationships and other support structures throughout a fluid process. However, the model did not account for the added complexities of multiple, intersecting, and minoritized identities. It was difficult to assume a queer, Black woman and straight, White male, both identities represented in this study, would develop an identity, purpose and values in an identical way, specifically given the context of a Predominately White Institution. While Chickering and Reisser (1993) provided a general guide that added insight to the overall developmental process of college students, the seven vectors provided but a foundation for understanding identity development, upon which individual identity development theories, varying contexts, and concepts of multiple identity development and intersectionality were layered.

**Theory of Identity**

A second foundational theory, Erikson's (1963, 1980) theory of identity, describes development as a social process with a foundation of trust and consists of eight stages from birth through adulthood. The stages include trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation and ego integrity vs. despair, the final three stages occur during adulthood. Stages are sequential as they build upon each other, and crisis is

necessary for the progression from one stage to the next. While the proposition is that stages are sequential, it is possible to return to a previously completed stage to gain a greater understanding of self.

During Stage 1, trust vs. mistrust, infants rely on predictable and consistent care to develop a sense of trust, confidence, and security (Erikson, 1963, 1980). The quality of care is presented as, perhaps the most important component in the maternal relationship that leads to the development of trust and confidence. If this trust develops during early crises that primarily pertain to hunger and nourishment, the infants become hopeful persons providing care will offer support in other times of crisis and thus become confident in existing in the world. Alternatively, care that is unpredictable and inconsistent may result in mistrust and insecurity that can influence other relationships.

Stage 2, autonomy vs. shame, occurs between 18 months and 3 years of age (Erikson, 1963, 1980). During this phase of life, children explore their independence and develop new skills, largely dependent on physical development. It is important to find the proper level of support to provide a child, even as a child's actions regularly contradict messages and commands from a primary caretaker. With proper care, based on tenets of firmness and tolerance, aspects of confidence and self-esteem develop, and ultimately a sense of autonomy is realized, dependent on the level of trust an infant has both in herself and for the world around her. Conversely, discouraging a child, inhibiting independence, and reinforcing vulnerability results in shame and doubt an overall lack of autonomy, and ultimately, defiance.

Proper development in Stage 3, initiative vs. guilt, which occurs from 4-5 years of age, is driven by a child's ability to move around more freely, an increased understanding

of language and an expanded imagination (Erikson, 1963, 1980). Children in this stage independently participate and plan activities and initiatives that may be met with control or contradictory instructions from parents. Initial understanding of masculinity and femininity occur, and the first sense of sexual orientation and desires may relate specifically to adults in life who are responsible for caring for the child. Overall, a child faces an internal battle between taking initiatives for life and guilt attributed to inappropriate thoughts and actions. Ultimately, a healthy balance between the two will lead to a sense of purpose.

Stage 4, industry vs. inferiority, occurs between ages 5-12 as a child's desire to learn about self and the world grows (Erikson, 1963, 1980). Learning develops from observation and trial to institutionalized and systematic efforts. Success, for a child, manifests in the form of demonstrating knowledge and accomplishments. Encouragement of these behaviors leads to a sense of competence while the opposite tends to promote inferiority.

Stage 5 is identity vs. role confusion, which occurs from ages 12-18, and marks the end of childhood and the beginning of a search for personal identity and self, as obsession with the perception of self in the eyes of others becomes central to life (Erikson, 1963, 1980). This stage is marked by internal battles as a sense of competence continues to develop, often including an intolerance of others and anything different. Role confusion appears where doubts from previous stages still exist, and as individuals attempt to identify a place in the world, often by being a part of various activities and lifestyles. Specific identities emerge and social values influence life as adolescents seek

affirmation from peers and society. Through multiple crises, an individual develops a sense of best self, and appreciation and acceptance of others.

Having emerged from Stage 5 with a sense of identity, individuals enter Stage 6, a search for a partner to share themselves with, in the stage of intimacy vs. isolation, a stage that occurs from the late teenage years to approximately mid-life (Erikson, 1963, 1980). While navigating this stage, an individual explores concepts of ego, commitment, safety, pride, and intimacy. While avoidance of close and intimate relationships may lead to isolation and self-absorption, successful progress through this stage leads to the virtue of love.

Stage 7, generativity vs. stagnation, occurs during mid-life, from approximately ages 40-65, as life focuses on productivity and creativity (Erikson, 1963, 1980). During this stage, adults teach, prepare, and learn from the younger generation. Similar to some of the stages earlier in life, adults in this stage need love, support, and reinforcement of their value. Through being productive at work, raising children, and finding purpose in their lives, individuals experience development that leads them to the Stage 8.

Ego integrity vs. despair is the final stage and is where life success is self-measured (Erikson, 1963, 1980). Narcissism is left behind as a critical reflection process occurs. Having a sense of failure regarding life goals and accomplishments will lead to despair, while success will lead to a sense of wholeness, acceptance of one's life, and commitment to the responsibility of leadership.

As foundational theories, the seven vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and theory of identity (Erikson, 1963, 1980) informed a multitude of other identity related theories (e.g., Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Josselson, 1987; Marcia, 1980; McCarn &

Fassinger, 1996; Phinney, 1990).  While theories encompass a plethora of identities, a

majority of the research focuses on sexuality (e.g., Brown, 2002; Dillon et al., 2011;

Fassinger, 1998), ethnicity (Phinney, 1989,1990; Torres, 1999), race (e.g., Cross &

Fhagen-Smith, 2001; D.W. Sue & D. Sue, 2016), and gender (e.g., Phinney, 1989, 1992;

Torres, 1999).  A discussion of the literature related to each of these social identities is

first, as students often make meaning of a single salient identity more easily and prior to

understanding the complexity of their intersecting identities.  By understanding the ways

students develop and process their individual identities, I, as the researcher, was better

able to understand their stories from lenses of multiple identity development and

intersectionality.  I viewed foundational and individual identity development theories as

necessary building blocks to a more complete understanding within the complexity of

multiple identities and intersectionality. I followed the review of individual identity

theories with a discussion of intersectionality, multiple identities, and the important role

of intersecting identities in students' development.

**Sexuality**

I provide an overview of sexual identity development because multiple

participants identified across the spectrum, and shared stories of their sexuality separate

from their other identities. Much research has been conducted on sexual identity

development (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Brown, 2002; Cass, 1979; Evans & Wall, 1991;

Fassinger, 1998; Harr & Kane, 2008; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Singh, Dew, Hays, &

Gailis, 2006).  For the purpose of this research, I used the definition where sexual identity

development is "the individual and social processes by which persons acknowledge and

define their sexual needs, values, sexual orientation, preferences for sexual activities,

modes of sexual expression, and characteristics of sexual partners" (Dillon  et al., 2011, p. 657).  Generally, scholars view sexuality and coming out as fluid (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Evans & Broido, 1999; Evans & Wall, 1991).  A majority of literature and theories originally relied on one specific model (Cass, 1979) as a foundation, however, research (e.g. Brown, 2002; Dillon et al., 2011; Fassinger, 1998) has since expanded beyond this original understanding of sexual identity development to offer multiple views of the process.

The first widely-accepted model of sexual identity development explored the identities of persons who identified as gay and lesbian (Cass, 1979).  This model suggests stages of identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis.  Through these stages individuals who have no awareness of their sexuality prior to identity confusion, move from a place of questioning to one where their sexuality becomes an aspect of who they are instead of a dominating single identity.  During this developmental process, individuals move from simply being aware of their identity to full acceptance of who they are.  In addition to a sense of self through exploration, deepening of commitment and synthesis, an understanding and appreciation of group identity develops as individuals realize the subordinated nature of this social identity.  As mentioned, research on sexual identity has progressed, and other models supersede this original work.

Since Cass's (1979) early work became well known, there have been models proposed specific to lesbian identity development (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), bisexual identity development (Brown, 2002), and updated attempts to explore and better define lesbian and gay identity formation as a whole (Fassinger, 1998).  A review of multiple

models and theories pertaining to various identities resulted in a summary of similarities, overview of sexual identity development, and proposal of a new heterosexual identity model (Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, & Vernaglia, 2002).

While Worthington et al.'s model (2002) was proposed to explain the development of heterosexual individuals, it offers valuable insight to sexual identity development in general. Biology, microsocial context, gender norms and socialization, culture, religion, and systemic homonegativity are all thought to directly influence sexual identity development. Additionally, individuals understand their sexuality as a multidimensional concept as a part of who they are. As individuals explore perceived sexual needs, preferred sexual activities, preferred characteristics of sexual partners, sexual value, sexual orientation identity, and preferred modes of sexual expression, understanding develops. As each of these aspects is explored, development occurs consciously and unconsciously, and there is development from a stage of unexplored commitment to active exploration, and then, similar to foundational work in the field (Cass, 1979), to diffusion, deepening of commitment, and synthesis (Worthington et al., 2002).

Another model that focuses on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identity development proposes factors of personal actions, emotions and beliefs, interactions with people closest to us, and policies, law, and social norms as most influential to sexual identity development (D'Augelli, 1994). According to this model, there are six contextual-based processes through which individuals move. These include exiting heterosexual identity, developing a personal LGB identity status, developing an LGB social identity, becoming an LGB offspring, developing an LGB intimacy status and

entering an LGB community.  Overall, ideas important to the theory hold sexual identity

development is fluid, happens over the course of a lifetime, and the surrounding

environment and other immediate influences significantly inform the process.

Each of the discussed stage-based models are limited as they tend to focus on

single sexual identities, almost exclusively ignore heterosexual identity development and

focus on the process of sexual identity development as a means to come out to others

(Patton et al., 2016).  As the focus of this research is to explore the way students make

meaning of their intersecting social identities, identifying a model that specifically aligns

with this goal is important.  Such a model exists in a unifying model of sexual identity

development, which is not specific to any single sexual identity, explores similarities

across sexual identities, and explores effects of intersecting contextual factors that may

affect sexual identity development (Dillon et al., 2011).

The unifying model of sexual identity development (Dillon et al., 2011)

emphasizes both individual and social identity development as part of the overall sexual

identity development process.  The fluid, non-linear and non-stage-based model, in which

development occurs consciously and subconsciously, includes five statuses of

compulsory heterosexuality, active exploration, diffusion, deepening and commitment,

and synthesis.  In the compulsory heterosexuality status, individuals identify as

heterosexual, often attributed to messages received from family and society, which

identify this sexuality as normal, an identity individuals often accept without question of

self-exploration.  Active exploration may happen at any point in life, and assumes

exploration is both cognitive and behavioral, is focused on a specific purpose, and sets

goals, that, at least during exploration, socially accepted norms of heterosexuality are

unheeded. Sexual minority individuals are more likely to explore all facets and aspects of their sexual identity.  Diffusion may appear similar to exploration due to a disregard for socially-accepted norms related to sexual identity and activity, but behaviors are less likely to be goal oriented or purposefully directed. Diffusion may be carefree, meaning individuals are indifferent and untroubled both in their actions and in attitude about their sexual identity, while diffused individuals likely have fundamental concerns and uncertainty.  During deepening and commitment, there is a conscious effort for actions and values to align with sexual identity. Persons who identify as LGB are more likely to continue exploration in this status than is a person with a heterosexual identity, though those with this latter identity are more likely to transition to the deepening and commitment status directly from compulsory heterosexuality. Finally, in the synthesis status, individuals clarify their understanding and definitions of their sexual identity and develop a worldview that aligns with their identity as demonstrated by their actions and view of others.

Using the previously outlined theories and others as a foundation (e.g., Cass, 1979; D'Augelli, 1994), researchers have recognized the importance of understanding the sexual identity development of students in college (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005).  One qualitative study explored the coming out process of 20 LGB students in college residence halls (Evans & Broido, 1999).  The researchers discovered coming out happens first to self, and then to other LGB people and finally to heterosexual individuals. Findings indicate this is a fluid and lengthy process, with coming out to a roommate posing a significant challenge.  As students explore their identity, others struggle to understand and accept the fluidity of both the process and identity.  While awareness of

identity and the accompanying complexities vary greatly by individual, factors which encourage the coming out process include being around supportive people, perceiving the overall climate as supportive and having role models in the environment that share a similar sexual identity.

Based on a subset of participants from an early study when data were collected via in-depth interviews (Evans & Broido, 1999), the identity of lesbian and bisexual women was explored further (Evans & Broido, 2002). The results indicated an overall perception of an environment, with residence halls being crucial as students seek support as they process factors of their identity development. Factors that help create a positive perception included residence halls with staff who are open about their sexual identity, are academically oriented, and offer a sense of community. Additionally, through the presence of LGB programming and visible signs of support, as well as positive interactions with roommates, other students and staff in the building helped promote a positive environment.

Additional smaller studies also offer valuable insight into the sexual identity development of college students. A study exploring the LGBTQ identity of students and their involvement in identity-specific leadership activities involved seven students and was based on a previous model that identified identity as fluid and contextual (D'Augelli, 1994). Findings indicate students struggle with their sexual identity in social groups of other identities, transgender students develop sexual orientation as their understanding of gender increases, and peer culture in LGBTQ organizations is important for comfort and perceived support (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Finally, interviews with five gay men suggested immense struggle and pain throughout the identity development process,

relationships are vital for support and validation, and individuals find value in the process of accepting their identity (Paul & Frieden, 2008). These studies combined provided clarification that sexual identity development is fluid and a process dependent on peer relationships and support, ideas that were important as participants and I explored their sexual identity development as a single component of their intersecting identities and experiences within the context of student employment.

**Ethnicity**

Because of general uncertainty with the concept of *ethnicity*, the term is often incorrectly used interchangeably with race (Cokley, 2005). To provide a foundation for this section, I use the definition that ethnicity is "a pattern of culture, traditions, customs, and norms unique to, but also shared within, an ethnic community" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 130). Much of the work on ethnic identity development has a basis from an original model and research from counseling literature (Phinney, 1989, 1990, 1992). Although verification of a bicultural orientation model (Torres, 1999), also further applied specifically to Latino students (Torres, 2003), aids understanding of this topic.

Individuals may have positive or negative associations with, and perceptions of, their ethnic identity, but generally have a sense of belonging to their group (Phinney, 1989, 1992). In addition to a sense of belonging, self-identification in a specific ethnic group is necessary for development to occur, a conclusion reached after an analysis of 70 ethnic identity models, and accompanied by a  proposed model for ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1990). Findings also indicate other identities may affect development of ethnic identity, where specific characteristics and aspects of a

distinguished group play a significant role and context is important but needs further analysis (Phinney, 1990).

The three-stage model on which these conclusions are largely based includes stages of diffusion-foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement (Phinney, 1989, 1990). In the first stage, diffusion-foreclosure, it is likely individuals have explored their ethnic identity leading to either no alignment with their ethnicity, known as diffusion, or experienced positive and negative thoughts about their ethnicity, typically directly attributed to information they receive from people close to them, and labeled as foreclosure. In the moratorium phase, an individual, particularly an adolescent, has likely explored ethnic identity on a limited basis, but fails to derive specific understanding or meaning. In the last stage, identity achievement, internal conflicts are resolved, and a rich understanding of ethnicity leads to acceptance.

Recognizing a lack of research and understanding pertaining directly to the development of Hispanic students, one researcher attempted to validate the bicultural orientation model (BOM) to demonstrate a relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity (Torres, 1999). The model indicates the worldview of Hispanic students, and when students have a high ethnic identity and high acculturation, they have a bicultural orientation, and are comfortable living and functioning from lenses of both Hispanic and Anglo culture. Alternatives to a bicultural orientation includes high ethnic identity and low acculturation, resulting in a Hispanic orientation, low acculturation and low ethnic identity, or a marginal orientation, and low ethnic identity and high acculturation, which means Hispanic students align with an Anglo orientation. Through an analysis of data collected from Hispanic college students in the southeastern United States, the BOM was

validated, meaning ethnic identity persists to some extent, even with high levels of acculturation and little knowledge or awareness of Hispanic culture. Relying on the knowledge provided by this theory, I was better able to explore and understand the identities of Hispanic identifying individuals in this study.

Further exploration, via a grounded theory study with the goal of exploring ethnic development of 10 Latino students during their first 2 years of college, suggests the development of socially constructed identities is important to the overall college student experiences (Torres, 2003). Findings also indicate family environment and influence, generational status, and perceptions of self in society are important factors to determine the starting point of a student's identity development, which is, upon arrival at college, influenced by psychosocial and cognitive development. Students reported strong conflicts between sense of self and external expectations, and peer groups and campus culture significantly affect their identity development. These findings are similarly supported in a study on multiracial students in higher education that collected data from 24 students across 3 campuses (Renn, 2000). Recognizing societal perceptions, sense of self, and the impact of campus culture and peer groups on identity development, I was able to identify the work context as a potential influential factor in identity development as it includes each of these four components.

Over the past several decades, other studies on ethnic identity specific to college students have stemmed from the foundational theories (Phinney, 1989,1990; Torres, 1999) and informed the knowledge base (e.g., Jourdan, 2006; Morales, 1989; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Renn, 2000; Torres, 2003; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). Some authors indicate confidence and support are vital for ethnic identity development, specifically

when students identify with multiple ethnic identities, and that students may struggle to communicate with others or find acceptance if these criteria are missing (Jourdan, 2006; Renn, 2000).  Information pertaining to ethnicity and development aided my analysis of data in this study as one participant identified as Hispanic and supported my understanding of how ethnic identity informs other social identities that are experienced simultaneously.

**Latinx Development**

In large part due to the historical significance and context of relationships between persons who identify as Black and White, and the influential role this plays in the development of theoretical models, it is difficult to explore Latino and Latina identity, now commonly referred to using the gender-neutral term Latinx, using current development models (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001).  However, there are important aspects of development that may help understand a Latinx experience.  Perhaps of most significance for Latinx populations who live in a country where discussion is primarily focused on Black and White, is the sense of having a label of other applied to their identity, leaving individuals to self-identify with a multitude of race and ethnicity categories.  Ultimately, there are multiple thoughts to consider during the exploration of the Latinx experience and the identity development process, including skin color, family, nation of origin, culture, peer interactions, appearance, and the multitude of racial subcategories in the overarching category of Latinx.

One model of Latinx development proposes six perspectives of how individuals may see themselves during the development process (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2012).  When aligned with the White-Identified view, individuals aligned with a White identity may

perceive any non-White race negatively, and limit contact with people of their race and ethnicity.  An Undifferentiated/Denial view occurs when individuals determine neither race nor ethnicity are important, and do not connect with their, or other, cultures. Individuals may also view the world as Latinx as Other when they come to understand they are not White, but also do not have a strong connection to their Latinx culture. Through the lens of Subgroup-identified, individuals fail to recognize a larger Latinx culture, and strictly adhere to standards of a specific subgroup of the larger culture. Through increased awareness about race and ethnicity, individuals may move to a Latinx-identified view, in which all Latinx individuals are viewed singularly.  Finally, when viewing experiences from a Latinx-integrated stance, individuals recognize and understand the intricacies of their ethnicity and those of others.

**Race**

Race is significant in informing individual identity development (Russell, 2012). Race, however, is a socially-constructed phenomenon with arbitrary categories nearly absent of scientifically significant differences, which in the United States, dates back to the desire to justify African slaves as less than in a society of the White Christian elite (A. Smedley & Smedley, 2005).  While physical differences exist between races, it is the socially-constructed ideas and beliefs about these differences that inform racial privilege and discrimination (A. Smedley, 1999).

Similar to the analysis on sexuality, there are foundational theories and models to understand the development of race as a social identity (e.g., Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1979; Cross, 1978, 1995; Helms, 1993), as well as updates to original models (e.g., Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Helms, 1995; Rowe et al., 1994; D.W. Sue & Sue, 2016).

Additional models and theories provide a foundation to understand identities of persons

who identify as Black (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001), White (Helms, 1995; Rowe et al.,

1994), Latino (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001), and explore multiracial development (Renn,

2000).  Participants in this study identified with each of the aforementioned races, and an

overview of these key theories as well as an analysis and exploration of relevant literature

follow.

**Black Identity Development**

One of the first well-known models of Black identity development explained the

process as taking place through five stages of pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-

emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment (Cross, 1978, 1995), and was

later updated (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).  The original model proposed individuals

process experiences as they proceed through life after beginning with little sense of what

it means to be Black, especially in a world dominated by White norms (Cross, 1978,

1995).  They experience challenge with their understanding of race, search for

understanding, develop a worldview and then become committed to a new identity,

including sharing in the struggles of like individuals.  Thus, individuals begin to live their

life with this new sense of self, and although the identity is perceived as fully developed,

the cycle may eventually repeat.

The updated model of Black identity development (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001)

explains the development process as having six sectors across a lifespan as individuals

are heavily influenced by parents, social networks, and society.  The model emphasizes

Personal Identity, or personal traits, Reference Group Orientation, or individual values

and views of the world, and Race Salience, or an individual's approach to life and the

significance race plays in this pursuit. The researchers explained three patterns of nigrescence or becoming Black. Pattern A is a normative and social process influenced significantly by parents, family, and community; Pattern B is conversion because a healthy Black identity has not been developed; Pattern C, is dependent on whether Patterns A or B have been experienced and includes development and redevelopment of Black identity throughout adulthood (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Patton et al., 2016).

The next models adapt and build upon the initial model of Black identity development to include other races and focuses on development of White individuals and people of color, a categorization including Native Americans, Blacks, Asians, and Latino/as (Helms, 1993, 1995), and is based on three components of racial identity and status through which individuals pass. The components of racial identity are presented as personal identity, or feelings and understanding of self, reference group orientation, or using racial group behaviors and thoughts as a locus for individual expressions, and an ascribed identity, explained as commitment to a racial group (Helms, 1993).

The people of color identity model indicates non-White individuals pass through five statuses of conformity, to a different dominant identity, dissonance, immersion/emersion, internalization, and integrated awareness (Helms, 1995). In this model, racial identity development is a process where "the general developmental issue for people of color is surmounting internalized racism in its various manifestations" (Helms, 1995, p. 184). Individuals process through thoughts of devaluing their group, confusion about their social group, commitment, and loyalty to their social group, a capacity to respond to the dominant group, and finally to valuing their identity and self-expression (Helms, 1995).

**White Identity Development**

Helms' (1995) White racial identity model theorizes people who are White pass through six stages of contact status: disintegration status; reintegration status; pseudoindependence; immersion/emersion; and autonomy status with the main developmental concern of abandonment of entitlement. Through these six stages, individuals move from being unaware of racism, contemplating race loyalty and humanism, intolerance of other groups, commitment to their racial group and tolerance of others, a search for understanding, and finally to a self-awareness about race and acceptance of a privileged identity (Helms, 1995). Upon entering the final stage, individuals actively seek to educate themselves and potentially others, to create a better world for people of all races.

As stated, the model for White identity development (Helms, 1993, 1995) builds upon a model for Black identity development (Cross, 1978) that may not be appropriate considering development between different races is likely to be a dissimilar process (Rowe et al., 1994). To address this concern, the White racial consciousness model was developed (Rowe et al., 1994), relying on an adapted version of the stages of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989). The White racial consciousness model explains an awareness of being White through two statuses of unachieved White racial consciousness and achieved White racial consciousness, with specific attitudes in each status, through which individuals move as a result of life experiences (Rowe et al., 1994).

In the status of unachieved White racial consciousness, there are avoidant type, dependent type, and dissonant type attitudes (Rowe et al., 1994). Avoidant attitudes occur when individuals lack consciousness of being White and are unaware of issues

affecting minorities, dependent attitudes are present when people are aware of being

White but fail to understand what it means to identify in this way, and dissonant attitudes

exist when there are inconsistent thoughts and attitudes about being White despite an

openness to new knowledge and ideas about race. In the achieved white racial

consciousness status, individuals move between attitudes of dominative, or feeling the

White race is superior, conflictive, where overt racism is opposed but little is done to

challenge racial inequalities, reactive, or taking responsibility of racial oppressions as a

result of the dominant White identity, and integrative, where a more practical, as opposed

to theoretical, approach is applied to views and actions related to race and inequality.

While the previously discussed models address Black (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001) and

White (Helms, 1995; Rowe et al., 1994) identity, and generally theorize development for

people of color (Helms, 1995), other theories explore Latinx (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001)

identities and focus more on context, rather than model development.

**Multiracial Development**

Persons who identify with more than one race are more likely to have a

heightened awareness of their racial identity (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007).

While exploring the identity of biracial and multiracial college students, it is suggested

space and peer culture play vital roles in development (Renn, 2000). To this extent,

students seek a private space to make meaning of their identity, while public spaces and

peer culture often have significant influence on this process of understanding self.

However, students who identify with more than one race often have difficulty finding

public space or a peer group of like individuals, as they are often forced to identify with a

single race (Renn, 2000). Dialogue with students in this study suggest employment may

serve as a context through which students who identify with more than one race explore and come to understand their identities.

Ultimately, development of many racial identities, including those discussed (i.e. Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Helms, 1995; Rowe et al., 1994), rely on, and can be explored and understood, using the racial and cultural identity development model (RCID) (D.W. Sue & Sue, 2016) as a foundation (Patton et al., 2016). I used RCID as a foundational model to explore multiracial development to support understanding of participants in this study who identify with more than one race. Inclusive of common characteristics of development within varying racial identities, the RCID consists of five stages of conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and integrative awareness (D.W. Sue & Sue, 2016).

During the conformity stage, individuals have negative views of self and others who share their identity, discriminatory views of other minoritized groups, and identify with dominant culture. In dissonance, increased awareness and a desire to learn more about their culture contradicts previous held beliefs learned as assimilation to dominant culture occurs. In resistance and immersion, as individuals begin to learn more about their culture, positive views of self-develop, along with empathy for other minoritized groups and a rejection of dominant group culture. Next, during the introspection stage, individuals struggle to discover their identity as one shaped by both dominant culture and an understanding of their own culture. Also, during this stage, standards dictated by their culture and heritage shape individuals' general attitudes toward others and the world around them. Finally, in the stage of integrative awareness, individuals form an identity

developed and informed by dominant culture, other groups, and their race and heritage, as an appreciation for both self and others is formed.

Upon exploring Bronfenbrenner's (1979,1993) ecology model of human development and the person, process, context, and time model, discussed in greater detail in a following section, Renn (2000) determined there are several important components that inform the exploration of mixed-race college students. For mixed-race college students, racial identity development from the person context is influenced by family background, heritage, and cultural knowledge based on experiences with like and different cultural groups. Related to process, increasingly complex interactions with others and the systems in which they live inform development as students attempt to make meaning of systems. For context, direct interactions with others in microsystems and the campus culture created in the mesosystem have the greatest influence. Components of the exosystem, such as policies and racial issues, and macrosystem, such as lifestyles of the students and ideas and beliefs about race, also play a role in student development, though perhaps to a lesser extent. Finally, time influenced student development and understanding of a mixed-race identity, as at this time, there were discussions and debates at the national level on being able to identify as more than one race on the U.S. census (Renn & Arnold, 2003). Each of these components were used during data collection, to inform interview questions, and analysis to support understanding. For example, students were asked to share stories about the interactions they had at work and the way these informed experiences in other contexts. It appears tenants of the ecology model of human development are applicable in understanding the

development of multiracial college students and emphasizes the importance of context and environment in the development process.

**Gender**

Gender, or the way individuals identify as man or woman, or at any other point on a fluid spectrum, is informed by society, and differs from sex, which is whether an individual is biologically male or female (Bussey, 2011). Biological sex does not dictate or always align with the identity of man or woman or having traits of both or neither of these identities, and neither sex nor gender are direct indicators of sexuality (Fausto-Sterling, 1993; Lev, 2004). Cisgender refers to when biologically assigned sex aligns with gender; transgender is when the two differ (Bem, 1983; Lev, 2004), for example, an individual born female who identifies as a man, or anything other than woman. While gender development typically occurs from childhood to adolescence (Galambos, Almeida, & Petersen, 1990), research suggests students continue to experience internal conflict and attempt to make meaning of gender identity throughout their college years (Beemyn, 2005; Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubs, 2005; K.A. Carter, 2000)

An analysis of existing literature concludes that gender affects identity development overall and development occurs in varying ways based on gender identity (Russell, 2012). Gender identity development is a process of exploration grounded in cognitive development and social learning (Bem, 1983; Josselson, 1973, 1987). Marcia's (1980) model of identity development has been adapted (i.e., Josselson, 1973, 1987) to explain identity development in women (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Other research also focuses on gender identity development as it specifically relates to women (Downing

& Roush, 1985; Jordan, 1991) and transgender individuals (Beemyn et al., 2005; Lev, 2004).

Multiple explanations and theories combine to offer insight on gender identity development. Research based in psychoanalytic, cognitive-developmental, biological, gender schema, and sociological theories explain gender development, though most lack empirical support and verification (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). However, there are two gender identity-related theories useful to this study.

First, social cognitive theory emphasizes the influence of environment and society and proposes gender identity as the product of interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, with observation of human behavior as a major part of the development process (Bussey, 2011; Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Additionally, while external influences primarily inform perceptions of gender early in childhood, internal standards and expectations of perceived gender eventually guide understanding, action, and choice. Thus, individuals act, dress, participate in activities, and perhaps even make career choices, based on expectations of their gender identity. As I explored students' stories of their work experiences, it was important to be aware of the way their actions at work were informed by their perceived notions of how they were supposed to act based on perceptions of gender.

Gender schema theory proposes gender identity as a result of schematic processing, in which children learn how to act and identify based on the cues of society and expectations of their sex (Bem, 1983). While children learn gendered roles through observation and information they receive from persons around them early in life, they also use this information to develop their schema, or cognitive structure where they

process and organize behaviors, actions, words, and other information as masculine or feminine. Ultimately, a child begins to use a schema to process information to understand gender identity, which then directly informs actions and perceptions of self. Gender schema theory provide a guide for understanding why students perceived their gender identity and associated actions in a given way.

One area of concern for both social cognitive and gender schema theory is the focus on masculine and feminine and male and female, and the absence of information pertaining to other identities on the fluid gender and sex identity spectrums. Further, the language used to explain each theory makes it apparent the theories are based on an assumption that gender aligns with sex. A lifespan model for LGB development (D'Augelli, 1994) was adapted to understand gender identity development of transgender college students (Bilodeau, 2005). Via this model, it was postulated students move from recognizing themselves as transgender, developing an identity by challenging internal views, building a network of support, coming out and reevaluating relationships, forming intimate relationships, and finally committing to political and social action. The steps of this model are similar to stage models discussed for other identities (e.g. Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Dillon et al., 2011), where an individual moves from a beginning stage of self-recognition, middle stages of affirming an identity, and ultimately to action. This is useful as identity development is explored, as this general pattern can inform understanding, particularly for identities that may not be as well understood or supported in the literature, such as transgender identity development.

Children may ultimately align with one of many gender identities (Leibowitz & Telingator, 2012). As gender identity develops, children may experience conflict with a

gender self, or perceptions of their core gender identity, and a false gender self, or the adjustments they make to align with external messages (Ehrensaft, 2011). This internal conflict that begins in children, likely persists to the college years, and gender identity development may even be a lifelong process. Research suggests transgender students may struggle more than peers to adjust to campus and find support networks during college (Beemyn et al., 2005; K.A. Carter, 2000; Enochs & Roland, 2006). Thus, it becomes important to understand the types of external messages college students receive to increase understanding of gender identity and support the process, as gender served as a primary lens through which participants interpreted their experiences.

**Social Class**

Social class refers to the overall position one holds in society based on a combination of factors such as income, wealth, education, and job status and the resulting ways similarly positioned groups experience systems of power (Patton et al., 2016). Class plays a significant role in access and decisions to attend college (Paulsen & St. John, 2002), and nearly every social class is present in higher education environments, providing an ideal setting to study the topic in individuals as they transition to adulthood (Langhout, Rosselli, & Feinstein, 2007). However, "there are no specific theories regarding social class identity development among colleges students" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 244), as the topic has been largely ignored by researchers (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Schwartz, Donovan, & Guido-DiBrito, 2009).

Despite the lack of theory, there is some understanding of the way social class informs students' college experience. It is understood college students from low social classes perceive themselves to be unprepared to handle college, are more likely to be first

generation students, and do not see themselves as supported at college (Langhout et al., 2007; Walpole, 2003). Students from middle and upper social classes are likely to ostracize those in the lower social class, resulting in a failure to understand the experiences of these students (Patton et al., 2016). Further, students may struggle with anxiety if life circumstances result in a downward movement in social class (Matusov & Smith, 2012).

Langhout et al. (2007) postulated the ways college students may experience classism, the negative attitudes, actions, and stereotypes associated with lower social class. They explain students from lower social classes are likely to experience situational classism, defined as stereotypes about their class at a macro level, and institutionalized classism which "occurs because of organizational structures, policies, and procedures that differentially affect students based on their social class background, at the meso level" (p. 207). At the micro level, students experienced interpersonal classism via separation, devaluation, discounting, and exclusion. Their results indicated female students, students of color, and students with less capital experience higher levels of citational, institutionalized, and interpersonal classism.

A study exploring the college experience of students from lower socioeconomic status (SES) households (Walpole, 2003), an important component of social class, further clarified the overlap of social class and college. Findings demonstrated students from low SES backgrounds spend less than 1 hour per week interacting with faculty outside of class, limiting support that could be provided from these relationships. Further, they are less likely than high SES peers to visit a faculty member at home, spend less time in student clubs and studying, and are more likely to work, and work more than 16 hours,

while attending college.  Each of these actions may lead to lower persistence and academic success.  However, accepting these findings as true, it will be important to assess whether students view their work experience as a means to make up for the lost engagement with faculty members.  While contact with faculty may decrease as work hours increase, working students have the added benefit of building meaningful relationships with supervisors.

## Self-Authorship and Meaning Making

The previously reviewed theories provide an understanding of the ways in which students develop individual identities.  Meaning-making theory complements identity development and explores the ways students' sense of self and interpretations of the world materialize as they come to better understand themselves and their identities.  Understanding how students make meaning helped me understand the importance of the stories they shared as I was more aware of the process they were experiencing and working through.

Meaning-making theory suggests that individuals experience an evolution of consciousness in which they progress through five stages (i.e., incorporative, impulsive, imperial, interpersonal, institutional), from simply recognizing a world exists outside of themselves as young children to an often unattainable state of understanding connections between systems and individuals far beyond even their sense of self (Kegan, 1982, 1994).  Passing from one stage to the next requires cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development and is dependent on times of immense challenge and instability, along with periods of stability.  As this process occurs, individuals gain a new perspective on their environment and life and reconstruct a foundation of who they are.  Too much challenge

without commensurate support may inhibit growth and development (Sanford, 1967). Throughout the journey, thought processes and ways of functioning change as meaning making becomes perpetually more complex (Kegan, 1994).

The evolution of consciousness occurs from Order 0 through Order 5 (Kegan, 1994). Infants begin in Order 0 in which they do not have the capacity to recognize a world outside of themselves. Children then move into the Order 1 of consciousness at approximately age 2 as they begin to recognize environment as separate from self; however, they do not think logically or have the ability to reason and possess impulsive and fluid emotions. In Order 2, children develop logical reasoning skills, and recognize others as unique and separate from themselves, as peer groups become a key component of development (Kegan, 1994).

College students most likely exist in Order 3 of consciousness (Baxter Magolda, 2001), in which they sense a need for acceptance and validation from others (Kegan, 1994). A sense of belonging, often found via personal relationships and common experiences with others, supports growth, while learning to eliminate external influences and expectations from the meaning making process provides the necessary challenge needed for growth to occur. Order 4 of consciousness is much more elusive for college students (Abes et al., 2007; Baxter Magolda, 2001), but recent research indicates there are significant shifts in self-authorship capabilities during the first three years of college (Barber, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2013). Researchers have attempted to better understand the relationship between college-age students and meaning making at the level of self-authorship (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes et al., 2007; Baxter Magolda, 1998; Pizzolato, 2004, 2005).

Order 4 of consciousness, or self-authorship, involves analyzing views and beliefs and recognizing how one fits in the world (Kegan, 1994). Ultimately, students develop a sense of self by interpreting the perspectives of others, instead of being obsessive with needing to satisfy external expectations. Perhaps said best, self-authorship "…is a way of making meaning of one's experiences from inside oneself" (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 152). Research supports Kegan's (1994) interpretation of self-authorship (Barber et al., 2013; Pizzolato, 2004, 2005), and identifies four dimensions of self-authorship as trusting oneself to make knowledge claims and to act on beliefs, developing a sense of confidence to direct life and act on priorities, effectively acting on their environment, and rebalancing identity in relation to others (Baxter Magolda, 1998). During this study it was important to determine if college students remained in the more likely Order 3, or if their work experiences supported their transition to self-authorship. Through self-authorship students can move toward critical consciousness, and student employment.

Through a widely accepted theory, Baxter Magolda (2001) explained how students move toward self-authorship. The four phases of moving toward self-authorship include Following Formulas, Crossroads, Becoming the Author of One's Life, and Internal Foundation. During the Following Formulas stage, young adults allow others to define who they are, follow plans developed by others, and often lack a rich sense of self. Moving to Crossroads, students realize a need to create a sense of self and plans more appropriate for and better aligned with this understanding. Next, during the Becoming the Author of One's Life phase, comparable to Kegan's (1994) Order 4 of consciousness, students develop an ability to choose and stand up for their beliefs. In the final phase of Internal Foundation, individuals develop a clear sense of self and an internal foundation

supports life decisions. Determining where students were within these four stages helped me understand their overall journey as they made meaning of their multiple identities.

Research suggests development to self-authorship is more likely to happen, and will happen sooner, as students participate in activities that are meaningful and require the development of an internal voice (Barber et al., 2013). Perhaps a statement that surmises the potential application of self-authorship to research best is, "The appeal of the theory of self-authorship is that it addresses intersecting domains of development and thereby, conveys a more complex and holistic description of identity" (Jones, 2009, p. 288). As I explored the complex understanding of multiple identities and maintained a lens of intersectionality, applying self-authorship supported my understanding of students' stories. Applying self-authorship as a meaning making filter is demonstrated in the exploration of self-authorship development in Latino students (Torres, 2010).

Using self-authorship to explore Latino student development, two new development patterns are presented (Torres, 2010). First, development is not always linear, but rather, students may regress or stagnate in stages, typically as a way to cope with crisis, often associated with racist situations. This finding is something the primarily White students in sample populations of previous studies about self-authorship would not have experienced. Second, development in the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions never progressed more than one phase ahead of any other dimension. This suggests that holistic development may be needed in all three dimensions to progress through toward self-authorship. As a whole, the findings from Torres (2010) indicate the process for self-authorship may vary dependent on social identities.

**Model of Multiple Dimensions
of Identity**

I introduced the context of student employment, discussed foundational theories

of identity development, including individual identities such as sexuality and race, and

explored ways students may come to understand their identities through self-authorship

and meaning making. However, the theories and models discussed thus far were typically

one dimensional and do not focus on multiple identities. Further, even in-group

differences were largely ignored meaning the development of all individuals with a

shared identity was considered essentially to be the same. Now, the importance of

listening to individual stories, finding meaning in differences and experiences, and

helping students explore their multiple identities as they develop a sense of self is

recognized and accepted (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Patton et al., 2016;

Pizzolato, 2004; Sharp, Riera, & Jones, 2012; Ung, 2013).

Individuals find a sense of self in one of four ways when exploring multiple

identities (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Individuals either accept socially-assigned labels

and expected norms of their identity, identify with aspects of a single identity, segment

identities based on context and environment, or make meaning of their multiple and

intersecting identities. The model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes et al., 2007;

Jones & McEwen, 2000) provides a basis to explore intersecting identities and the

development of college students.

The model of multiple dimensions of identity was developed from a grounded

theory study using a phenomenological approach and in-depth interviews with the goal of

advancing a more complex understanding (Jones & McEwen, 2000). The study built

upon current understandings of identity (i.e., Deaux, 1993; Erikson, 1980) and multiple

oppressions (i.e., Reynolds & Pope, 1991). The authors conclude identity is fluid and socially-constructed, and no single identity is independent, but rather, identities intersect and are understood in relation to one another (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Baxter Magolda, 1998; Kegan, 1982, 1994). A core identity, including personal attributes, experiences, and characteristics, is at the center of the model, with each individual identity dimension surrounding the core, and moving fluidly from less to more salient, dependent on the context of how identities develop (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

While examining the results of a narrative inquiry study exploring the self-perceived identities of ten college lesbians, which led to the development of the original model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes & Jones, 2004), researchers noted the model did not incorporate elements of cognitive development (Abes et al., 2007). Thus, the model was reconceptualized to incorporate meaning making (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994). By including meaning making, it was possible to better demonstrate the relationship between the core identities and other individual identities, as well as the salience of each identity as it relates to the context of development (Abes & Jones, 2004). The updated model emphasizes the interactive relationship between perceived identity, context, and meaning making. Essentially, context affects perceived identities differently dependent on the meaning-making ability of each individual (Abes et al., 2007). Approaching the exploration of identity development from this model is to make meaning of it as a product of social construction, and interactive relationships with others and the environment.

A study that informed the reconceptualization of the model of multiple dimensions of identity explored lesbian identity development as it intersects with race,

social class, religion, and other identities (Abes & Jones, 2004). The research was

framed using the original model of multiple dimensions of identity as well as

constructivist development theory (Kegan, 1982), while considering cognitive and

interpersonal development (Abes & Jones, 2004). As participants developed higher

levels of meaning-making capacity, they were able to better understand their identities

internally and filter out external influences; hence, the addition of meaning making as a

filter to the reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes et al., 2007).

When exploring multiple identities, there have been significant findings that

inform research and that must be considered when analyzing data. First, there are

conflicts between identities, and more so between oppressed and privileged identities,

and individuals may resist specific identities until they are better understood (Abes &

Kasch, 2007; Jones, 2009). Experience of subordination and oppression may have a large

influence on how identities are understood, and in addition to the context of a situation or

environment, individual identity is also connected across time, to both past and present

(Jones, 2009). Specific identities may be completely ignored in certain environments and

focusing on a dominant identity may be a way to hide less-privileged identities (Abes &

Kasch, 2007; Jones, 2009). Experience of oppressions in certain environments may be

attributed to the saliency of an individual identity (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014).

As I focused on multiple identities during this research it was important to

understand the way students' identities showed up in the world. For example, many

participants identified with a dominant White identity, and understanding the existence of

multiple identities helped me recognize a dominant identity may be used to hide

minoritized identities. As I listened to and analyzed students' stories, understanding

multiple identities helped me gain understanding of their experiences.

## Intersectionality

Similar to understanding multiple identities, intersectionality posits identity

cannot be explored individually, and no single identity can be ignored, but rather, each

identity is woven with others, and all of identities combine to inform and influence

experiences and interpretations of the world (Goodman, 2014; Wijeyesinghe & Jones,

2014). I relied on foundations of multiple identity development to recognize and explore

the interactions of identities with one another, and the context and environment within

which they exist. Applying a lens of intersectionality, however, allowed me to further

explore multiple minoritized identities and the way individuals with these identities

experience systems of power and oppression.

Intersectionality, though popular since the 1980s (Crenshaw, 1989; Dhamoon,

2011), is quickly becoming a more common term, especially in the field of higher

education (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes et al., 2007; Abes & Kasch, 2007; Jones &

McEwen, 2000; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Intersectionality has been used as a paradigm,

theoretical base for research, and lens for analysis (Crenshaw, 1991; Dhamoon, 2011;

Hancock, 2007). Specifically, "intersectionality: references the critical insight that race,

class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation[ality], ability, and age operate not as unitary,

mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape

complex social inequalities" (Collins, 2015, p. 2).

This definition presents intersectionality in a way agreed upon by many scholars,

and most importantly, suggests identity develops as a result of intersections and is a

product of the way identities interact, inform, and influence one another (Abes & Jones, 2004; Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill et al., 2011; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Nash, 2008; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Stewart, 2008).  In short, identity is complex, multiple, and more than the sum of parts, and allows most people to experience both privilege and oppression in individual and instinctive ways (Dill et al., 2011; Russell, 2012; Warner, 2008).  Intersectionality, grounded in feminist theory, is based on lived experiences and socially constructed (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Dill et al., 2011; Narváez, Meyer, Kertzner, Ouellette, & Gordon, 2009).  Failing to recognize and explore new dynamics created by intersecting identities means differences and experiences are minimalized and important concepts of self may be missed (Brah & Phoenix, 2013; Cole, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989; Narváez et al., 2009; Nash, 2008).

A large portion of theory and research on intersectionality stems from research with women of color (Crenshaw, 1989,1991).  This work is where the concept of intersectionality as unique and nonadditive found significant support and is commonly referenced in research.  The original work explored violence against women of color (Crenshaw, 1989), while follow-up research focused on women of color in the workplace (Crenshaw, 1991).  Crenshaw's goal was to expose subordination and explain the ways these groups experience systems of privilege and power, discussing intersectionality in structural, political, and representational categories.

This original work has been expanded and elaborated on multiple times, and one specific study, Stewart and McDermott (2004) offered the following foundational tenets of intersectionality:

(a) no social group is homogenous, (b) people must be located in terms of social structures that capture the power relations implied by those structures, and (c) there are unique, nonadditive effects of identifying with more than one social group. (p. 531-532)

These three tenets provide support for multiple ideas. First, differences between individuals and groups are recognizable. Second, access to power and privilege shape experiences, which in turn shape our identities. Finally, identities become complex and unique and are not simply an identity of being a woman added to a Black identity, meaning intersecting identities are more important than an individual identity alone (Settles, 2006), as multiple, individual identities tell only a partial story.

Research conducted over the course of the last several decades has informed much of what is known about identity and intersectionality (Chung & Szymanski, 2007; Harris, Cook, & Kashubeck-West, 2008; Kimmel & Yi, 2004; Meyer, 2003; Whitney, 2006). More importantly for this study, there is much progress in how college students and intersectionality are understood (Abes & Jones, 2004). Often, there is conflict between one or more identities and individuals face substantial challenge and conflict before they begin to make meaning of who they are, or gain a better understanding of self (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2008; Ung, 2013). Additionally, family background and culture, or a dominating identity, such as ethnicity or religion, may significantly impact how students make meaning of their gender and sexuality (Brooks, Inman, Malouf, Klinger, & Kaduvettoor, 2008; Narváez et al., 2009; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Stewart, 2002, 2009; Ung, 2013). Students can gain the best understanding of self when they eliminate external influences and expectations, and focus on internal identities (Russell, 2012; Ung, 2013). Finally, a common theme in findings across studies is that college offers the necessary support and peer relationships students

need to make meaning of multiple, intersecting identities (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Settles, 2006; Stewart, 2009; Strayhorn et al., 2008).  To manage multiple identities on a day-to-day basis, students may separate identities in their daily lives, integrate cultural identities into a single, holistic identity, and develop new ways to conceptualize identities in their existing social group, or find a new group that honors their identities (Brooks et al., 2008).  Knowing the way students may manage multiple identities was important context when interpreting meaning from their stories, and recognizing they may often separate or speak to a single identity justifies the need to understand individual identity and related literature.  Understanding identity is complex, and the process of interpreting meaning from discussions about identity must be done from many angles and perspectives.

**Privilege and Oppression**

Exploring social identities and focusing on intersectionality make it necessary to be aware of the ways privilege and oppression interact with systems of power (Case et al., 2012; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Patton et al., 2016; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Indeed, privilege and oppression are systematic, meaning dominant culture values, assumptions, beliefs, and social norms oppress people who identify with minoritized identities due to inequality in power (Case et al., 2012; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Often, people with dominant identities benefit without recognition or understanding of their privilege (McIntosh, 2012; Mullaly, 2010).  Most definitions of privilege focus on the idea of unearned benefits for persons with dominant identities (Case et al., 2012; Leavy, 2017; McIntosh, 1988).  Thus, when people with minoritized identities experience inequitable access to resources and services, and instead encounter unjust obstacles and

barriers to obtain the same benefits of the dominant group, oppression occurs (Leavy, 2017; Mullaly, 2010).  Of specific concern for this study were indications that privilege and oppression created in society also exist systematically throughout the higher education system in the United States (LeSavoy, 2010).

Systems of oppression affect how identity development occurs, particularly for individuals with minoritized identities (Patton et al., 2016).  Privilege is recognized as part of any social identity and often is present as White privilege (Wise, 2011), social class privilege (Lott, 2012), gender privilege that appears as both male privilege (D.A. Phillips & Phillips, 2009) and cisgender privilege (Taylor, 2010), heterosexual privilege (Feigenbaum, 2007), ability privilege (Wolbring, 2014), and Christian privilege (Seifert, 2007).  In each of these privileged identities, and others not listed, people with privilege are in control, meaning they do not need to be aware of their privilege, while people with non-privileged identities are always aware of the inequalities they face (Mullaly, 2010).  Privilege is present in the higher education setting in this way as well, with research indicating the best approach to address inequality may be to shift the focus from people affected by their subordinated identities, to people who benefit from their unrecognized privilege (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001).

Paulo Freire (1970) speaks to inequality and systems of oppression in Pedagogy of the Oppressed and explained the way minoritized populations lose humanity as "the result of unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed" (p. 28).  There is an ongoing struggle for oppressed individuals to realize equality and justice in societal systems, for which education can be a means to attain such equality and regain humanity through the creation of knowledge

and understanding (Apple, 1982; Freire, 1970), though institutions of higher education often allow systems of injustice to thrive (Apple, 1982).  To create a just society, Freire (1970) explained "the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (p. 29), and explains the challenge oppressed individuals face is "to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (p.29). To move toward equality, it is necessary for all to collaborate and work toward the common goal of a just society.

To move toward critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) requires a true understanding and appreciation of the differences of others, often accompanied by the development of empathy for those different than ourselves (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Understanding the way privilege and oppression systematically inform the experiences of others is a necessary part of growth toward critical consciousness.  For example, as shared in my researcher positionality, I felt I was truly growing and becoming a diverse individual because of knowledge I was gaining on identity during my time as a master's student.  However, when I returned to my home town with my partner for the first time, I never took the time to process or discuss what the experience was like for her. I had failed to develop a sense of empathy for her experiences.  Applying a lens of intersectionality, thus exploring systems of privilege and oppressions, was necessary as I explored the original problem of this research.  If universities are implementing diversity and inclusion efforts simply to check boxes, it is unlikely students are moving toward critical conscious and an ability to intervene and change an unjust society.  Like myself during my master's program and still at times to this day, if I feel good about understanding injustices in society, but do nothing to act against them, I am not truly

serving a purpose in the battle toward equality. Understanding individuals' experiences, however, and developing empathy to care about those experiences is needed for individuals to push society toward change and understanding systems of privilege and oppression are a significant component of doing so. For this research, as systems of power are prevalent throughout higher education, this meant listening to participants' stories and coming to better understand their experiences as student employees.

**White Privilege**

White privilege refers to the privilege and unearned benefits individuals experience as a result of their Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2011; McIntosh, 1988). Often, individuals are unwilling to recognize the advantages resulting from being White (McIntosh, 1988) and even when made aware of White privilege, racial bias may not lessen (Stewart, Latu, Branscombe, Phillips, & Denney, 2012). However, as individuals understand the ways they have suffered personally, they may begin to develop empathy for others (McIntosh, 2012). Knowing this helped me to better interpret the experiences of White identifying participants and explore their awareness of privilege.

In an exploration of White identity, DiAngelo (2011) explained how those with a White identity are often shielded from stressful racial environments and develop an expectation of racial comfort. Part of this is likely due to the fact identity is typically discussed from a lens of minoritized identities while those with dominant identities never fully explore the ways they benefit from privilege (DiAngelo, 2011; McIntosh, 2012). White people interpret their view of reality as normal and may never truly understand the experiences of others (McIntosh, 1988). DiAngelo (2011) continued to explain White Fragility, a concept explaining people who are White respond negatively to even small

amounts of racial stress. Because they respond with anger and other ways that remove them from the situation, either physically or mentally, people who are White never develop the ability to critically discuss race and associated privileges. Thus, people who are White accept the idea of success as meritocratic and often claim to view all individuals the same, allowing them to both forego thinking about race and designate racial issues as "their problems" instead of products of privilege and systems of power. Both institutions from which participants were selected are Predominately White Institutions, meaning an understanding of White identity was essential for this study.

**Gender Privilege**

Gender privilege includes unearned benefits of being either male or cisgender, or both (D.A. Phillips & Phillips, 2009; Taylor, 2010). Within systems of power, the privileged identities of White and male often intersect (Case et al., 2012; McIntosh, 1988). Through male privilege, male attributes and contributions to society are seen as more desirable and significant, and men may be unaware or unaccepting of privileges associated with their male identity (Black & Stone, 2005). Further, men may overtly display dominant and unemotional attitudes, even if contrary to their true self.

Cabrera (2012) explained those with intersecting male and White identities likely hold a "disproportionate amount of societal power relative to women and people of color to both recreate and challenge the existing racial paradigm" (p. 31). Cabrera (2012) explored the intersecting identities of White and male in higher education through interviews with 12 students. He determined white male college students viewed race as individual instead of systematic, minimized racial issues, felt victimized as Whites, claimed reverse racism, and failed to have their view on race changed substantially

during college, largely attributed to self-segregation. Understanding White male identities in higher education was important as these identities were represented multiple times in the participants of this study.

## Identity and Environment

The final area of theory I explore for this study pertains to the effects of environment on identity, as environment is often referenced as having substantial effect on identity development (Abes & Jones, 2004; Brown, 2002; Evans & Broido, 1999; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Russell, 2012; Strange & Banning, 2001).  Environment refers to external influences that may include family, society, programming, resources, expectations, social groups, peer culture, and other factors (Renn, 2000; Russell, 2012). Students perceive the environment as having a large influence on their development and meaning-making capabilities (Russell, 2012).  The individuals in an environment influence how it is perceived, and the perception is different for each (Strange & Banning, 2001).  In addition, the environment may significantly inform what a person shares with others about personal identities (Evans & Broido, 1999).  Of the existing theories on development and environment (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lewin, G. M. Heider, & Heider, 1936; Strange & Banning, 2001), bioecological theory of human development  (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) seems most relevant to this study, as it explains concepts in a way similar to the reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes et al., 2007).

### Bioecological Theory of Human Development

Bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) evolved from the previously conjectured ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and

support exists to include it as part of the exploration of student development in higher

education (Renn & Arnold, 2003). The original theory encouraged researchers to focus

on the environmental context when studying development. This focus, however, resulted

in a disregard for personal characteristics, resulting in a need to revise the theory.

Eventually, updates continued and adaptations to theory were made until it came to

represent a process-person-context-time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a), which

remains the basis for how the theory is presently used and applied to research.

The person-context portion of the PPCT model is similar to the model of multiple

dimensions of identity, in that both models suggest personal characteristics and the

context of experiences influence dimensions of identity development (Abes et al., 2007;

Bronfenbrenner, 1995). The process and time portions of the model, however, require

additional explanation. Specific to the process in the PPCT model:

> …human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the person, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal process. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a, p. 6)

Essentially, the proximal processes are the agents of development in an environment,

with varying effects, based upon personal characteristics of a developing individual

(Bronfenbrenner, 2005a).

Time becomes apparent with this definition of process and is a contributing factor

in the overall model, experienced in multiple ways. First, time is applied in the sense of

what is happening during an interaction between a person and environment, and second,

the extent to which meaningful experiences and activities are consistent and reoccurring.

Third, time is viewed at a macro level, regarding life events, either internal or external to

the environment, and the time, as in year, decade, or era, the development occurs.

Finally, specific characteristics of an individual at any given time may have an effect or

influence development of characteristics at time later in life (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a;

Bronfenbrenner, 2005b).

     For the purpose of this research, it was also important to expand upon the concept

of context, a term mentioned repeatedly in higher education and student development

literatures (Abes et al., 2007; Beemyn, 2005; Renn, 2000; Bilodeau & Renn, 2005;

Stewart, 2008; Torres et al., 2009).  Context refers to interconnected systems that

influence an individual's life, and are made up of a microsystem, mesosystem,

exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).  The microsystem

is the immediate environments of which an individual is a part, such as the home,

workplace, clubs and organizations, or residence hall.  For this study, I explore identity

through the microsystem context of student employment.  The mesosystem is a

combination of multiple microsystems and the relationships between them.  The

exosystem affects development, yet individuals are not active participants in the systems.

Examples include parental income, politics, and academic major (Renn & Arnold, 2003).

The macrosystem is a large-scale system that may have effects throughout an individual's

development, such as cultural values, laws, and societal norms (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

Further, it is macro level systems which create systems of privilege and oppression (Case

et al., 2012).  Finally, the chronosystem is included as part of context, as past events and

circumstances play a role in shaping development (Guardia, 2008).

Similar to the model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000), the bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1995, 2005a, 2005b) emphasizes context, personal characteristics, and subjective experiences as vital to the development process.  Recognizing these considerations may assist with understanding student experiences and the co-creation of meaning.  It is postulated when a student is identified as the center of an environment, experiences and development are affected by each of the interconnected systems, ranging from direct effects in the microsystem, to the indirect context provide by the macrosystem (Renn & Arnold, 2003).  In the immediate environment of the microsystem, interactions with "persons, objects, and symbols" (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 638) inform development and understanding a microsystem may be vital to understanding the development of individual students (Renn & Arnold, 2003).  Also of importance, messages from different microsystems may not align with one another (Renn & Arnold, 2003), indicating it is important to listen to stories told about multiple interactions in varying microsystems. These multiple microsystems combine to form a student's mesosystem that likely plays a large role in overall peer culture, which is also vital to understanding individual development (Renn & Arnold, 2003).  Context of the exosystem (i.e. school rules, financial situation) and macrosystem (i.e. current events, state of the country, national politics), also play a role in development, and will likely be a part of students' stories.

## Summary

Generally, identity is accepted as a fluid concept (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005) with individuals needing some crises (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) or, at least, a type of influential experience in order to inform a transition in ways of knowing and

understanding of self.  Also, it is apparent experiences in life inform individuals'

understanding of themselves throughout the remainder of their lives and may cause

challenge or support as the exploration of self occurs (Sanford, 1967).  Through an

analysis of multiple models, it becomes clear with nearly all identities, individuals

experience resistance and conformity, then an epiphany about who they are, often as a

result of introspection or a significant life event, at which point they develop a desire to

learn more about their identity and what it means to their life experiences. Ultimately,

individuals develop a comfort, or at least understanding, of what their identity means for

their daily interactions, and often, for people with minoritized identities, results in a

desire for action toward social justice and equality.  This general theme of identity

development is summarized in the racial and cultural identity development model (D. W.

Sue & Sue, 2016), but can be observed in models for other social identities as well.

Researchers (Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes et al., 2007) have

attempted to transition a general understanding of social identity development and make

it applicable to college students, and to support their growth and development, by

providing appropriate environments and contexts to encourage development.

Development has been explained through constructs of involvement (Astin, 1984),

engagement (Kuh, 2003), meaning making (Baxter-Magolda, 1992), and self-authorship

(Kegan, 1994).  However, as the understanding of college student development

progressed, so too did the recognition social identity could not be understood by

exploring individual identities alone, resulting in intersectionality (Collins, 2015;

Crenshaw, 1989) multiple identities (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes et al., 2007) based

research.  With this, a strong emphasis is placed on the context of experiences, including

how identity is influenced by environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and in turn, the ways in which students perceive their environment as informed by their identity (Russell, 2012). However, research does not provide a clear indication of ways students make meaning of intersecting social identities in specific contexts of a collegiate experience. For example, the purpose of this study is to focus specifically on the way students understand their intersecting social identities in the context of their role as student employees, yet a review of student employment literature demonstrates the connection between identity and the context of work has not been substantiated.

Research pertinent to student employment clearly demonstrates students continue to work at a rate near historic highs (NCES, 2016), often as a result of the combination of the rising costs of attending college (Boehner & McKeon, 2003) and parents less likely to pay a large portion of these costs (Sallie Mae, 2016). There is a plethora of research on academic achievement and work (e.g., Athas et al., 2013; Dundes & Marx, 2007; Moore & Rago, 2009; Wenz & Yu, 2010) that provides detail on the effects of the number of hours worked, all of which is inconclusive to the overall effect of work on grades. Literature also explores the benefits of work, such as increased retention (Tinto, 1993), higher satisfaction with college (Watson, 2013), and better communication skills (Diesner, 2015), and loosely connects work to overall student development (Bentrim et al., 2013; Carr, 2005). However, the research does not connect back to specifically explain identity development in the context of a student employee work environment.

To fully understand minoritized social identities, it is important to allow intersectionality to guide the exploration and pay specific attention to context and the systems of power that social identity informs (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Wijeyesinghe &

Jones, 2014). The constructs of social identity development, multiple identities,

intersectionality, student development, and the importance of context and environment on

development of college students all exist but have not been combined in one place to

explore social identity development for students in the context of employment. The

following research question will be explored further in this study: how do student affairs

student employees make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of their

student affairs employment experience?

CHAPTER III

PARADIGM AND METHODS

This chapter provides details on the paradigm, methodology, and methods that I used to frame the study and explains how I established trustworthiness and authenticity criteria. The overall goal of this research was to explore how student affairs student employees make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment experience. Accordingly, this research was based in a constructivist paradigm (Lincoln, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1990), of which the ontology of the study meant knowledge was socially constructed via emergent design (Guido et al., 2010), making it important for the researcher to earn the trust of research participants, allowing open and honest dialogue to occur.

The purpose of this research was to determine the ways students made meaning of their intersecting social identities in the context of their student affairs student employment experience. Put more plainly, this study examined what it was about student employment experiences that shaped development by exploring the context in which they occurred. To this end, the discussion in the chapter shifts to focusing on how students were chosen via the use of gatekeepers and purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013), and the use of a narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), allowing students' stories, collected via semi-structured interviews and email statements, to serve as the primary data collected for the study. Researcher and participant journals,

document analysis, one phone interview, and a focus group also served as sources of data.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of rigor, and focuses on trustworthiness and authenticity criteria. Rigor is addressed by discussing trustworthiness criteria first, with a detailed explanation of how credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were bolstered in this study. Further, there is an overview of authenticity criteria, specifically fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and how they were met in this inquiry.

## Constructivist Paradigm

Paradigms based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological frameworks, guided action and practice for this study and provided a lens through which individuals created and interpreted knowledge from the world in which they live (Guido et al., 2010), and allowed for varying views of research interpretation, understanding, and creation of knowledge. The axiology (i.e. study of values in research), ontology (i.e., nature of reality), epistemology (i.e., how what is known, is known), and methodology (i.e., how knowledge is gained) are unique for each paradigm (Guido et al., 2010; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The axiology of a constructivist paradigm indicates behaviors and choices should lead to views representative of all voices and heightened participant awareness (Mertens, 2014). These values indicate research should be conducted in a manner that it can be applied to inform, affect, or change practice. As I conducted this research from a constructivist paradigm, it is important to ensure I use the findings to address inequalities in systems of power (Patton et al., 2016).

Approaching this research from a constructivist paradigm, the goal was to allow individual and shared experiences to guide and inform the meaning-making process and construction of knowledge (Guido et al., 2010).  Through varying sets of assumptions and multiple, socially constructed realities, knowledge creation occurred through the interpretation of multiple truths (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln, 1990; Mertens, 2014). From a constructivist lens, ways of knowing are subjective, reality is multiple and relative, and knowledge is socially constructed through an emergent design (Guido et al., 2010; Schwandt, 1990).

The researcher's and participants' backgrounds and connections to the study informed the research and epistemology, or how what is known, is known (Guido et al., 2010).  Co-construction of knowledge occurs in a constructivist paradigm, as experiences, values, and ethics were shared, shaped the research, and informed the decisions and interpretations along the way.  The ways the study progressed were directly connected to the views and experiences of the researcher and participants, and research decisions were informed by data as they emerged from the sharing of stories between researcher and participants (Guido et al., 2010; Schwandt, 1990).

**Intersectionality Lens**

Intersectionality is complex and can be used within research in multiple ways (Collins & Bilge, 2016), making it necessary to detail the specific way it was used as a lens for this study.  Students continuously process and try to make sense of and derive meaning from their intersecting social identities of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, citizenship, relationship status, socioeconomic status, religion, personal experience, and multiple other social identities (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007;

Crenshaw, 1991; Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012).  For students with multiple

minoritized identities, there is a need to explore intersecting identities within systems of

power, which I was able to do better through a lens of intersectionality.  Intersectionality

"…ties individual experience to a person's membership in social groups, during a

particular social and historical period, and within larger, interlocking systems of

advantage and access" (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014, p. 11).  The use of intersectionality

as a lens through which to explore students' understanding of their intersecting social

identities connected their meaning-making process to social systems of power and

oppression to create meaning from interwoven identities in these systems.  Multiple

forms of fundamental and systematic oppression work to marginalize some social

identities leading to a failure to recognize, not only intergroup differences, but also the

uniqueness of individuals who experience multiple, intersecting identities (Crenshaw,

1991; Walby et al., 2012).  Intersecting identities, however, do not live in a system of

oppression alone, but rather, exist simultaneously in systems of oppression and privilege

(Dill et al., 2011).  Because of this,  understanding the ways students make meaning of

their intersecting minoritized identities is a product of exploring the social construction of

identities, their intersectionality, and the varying contexts related to their development

(Jones, 2009).  Thus, in addition to exploring intersecting identities, I used

intersectionality as a way to view identity development throughout students' duration in a

specific context.

     Using intersectionality as a lens for this research allowed me to understand the

complexity of the world and the experiences of people in it who have multiple

minoritized identities (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Leavy, 2017; Patton et al., 2016).

Formulating a plan for such research presents a major challenge.  To meet this challenge,

I used six guides for thinking through this research via intersectionality; *social inequality*,

*power*, *relationality*, *social context*, *complexity*, and *social justice* (Collins & Bilge,

2016).

Intersectionality recognizes *social inequality*, or unfairness and injustice

experienced in the world, is caused by multiple factors, and indicates the importance of

needing to understand the way multiple social identities intersect to comprehend

inequality more completely (Collins, 2015; Dill et al., 2011).  In being cognizant of social

inequality, I attempted to be intentional in ensuring multiple and varying identities were

represented in the study. For intersectionality, it is important to ensure social inequality is

not viewed through a single lens, as there is rarely a single cause. I was intentional in

asking questions of participants about identity and life circumstances and related impacts.

In this research, it was important to focus on the way multiple aspects and

identities influenced systems of *power* (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), and the way these

systems interlock and provide meaning to one another, a concept explained well by

Collins and Bilge (2016).  The authors discuss, for example, that neither sexism nor

racism occur independently, but rather, inform the meaning and interpretation of one

another.  Further, intersecting social identities inform social relationships, perhaps even

with whom relationships can be formed and dictate how rules are interpreted and

enforced in organizations and society, all while citizens of these organizations and

societies receive messages of justice and equality, despite multiple systems that provide

privilege to people who identify in specific ways.  For this research, intersectionality

helped make clear concepts such as social identity, perceptions of identity, context, and

the interactions between them. Systems of power could not be examined in a vacuum, but rather, it remained a priority to remember the interconnectedness of all aspects of social identity and the systems in which they exist as it guided question formation, informed emerging knowledge, and steered data analysis.

Further, when exploring *relationality* (Collins & Bilge, 2016), it was important to focus on similarities as opposed to differences.  For example, when discussing multiple identities, the research can shift a conversation from *either/or* to one that creates a *both/and* framework for exploration of how identities combine to form systems of power. During this study, for example, if a participant spoke about a specific experience as a woman, I asked a follow up question about what the same experience meant as a Black Woman, White Woman, or other intersecting identities, dependent on the participant, and the way these identities combined to inform experiences.

With *social context*, it is important to focus on the specific context that creates inequality, as the development of power is due to specific circumstances, for specific groups of people, and may vary based on context, even for separate groups of people with similar intersecting identities.  Based on identities provided, no two participants identified in exactly the same way.  This meant students existed within the same context, and even had similar experiences, but were able to provide different views and interpretations.

Additional considerations for using intersectionality as part of research design (Collins & Bilge, 2016) included *complexity* that highlighted the guides of *social inequality*, *power*, *relationality*, and *social context*. They are interwoven as research on intersectionality is never neat or simple.  Assuming complexity meant designing the

study in a way in which meaning could be explored as needed and changes could be implemented as required. I conducted successive interviews to clarify findings, and waited until after the first two interviews and focus group to design questions for the third one-on-one interview. This schedule proved vital in managing some of the complexity of this research, as I was able to adjust the study as appropriate.

Finally, the view of *social justice* in intersectionality research is different for every individual and it is likely each participant views an equitable society differently. Findings from intersectionality-based studies should move social constructs toward fairness and equality. For this research, findings are used to inform practice and offer recommendations for future research. Further, when intersectionality is applied to research, the voices of persons with privilege are often ignored in favor of attempts to understand the experiences of the minoritized group (Walby et al., 2012). Appropriate methods, discussed later in this section, were used to ensure this did not happen and all voices were heard.

As I used intersectionality to guide the research process and understand students' social identities better, the guides were important to inform the understanding and meaning of individuals and the social systems students' experience as employees of a student affairs division. Through the voice and stories of each student, I created meaning around individual identity, but more importantly for intersectionality, formed a foundation for understanding social groups and the connection to systems of power in which they exist (Museus & Saelua, 2014; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). For this study, student stories help me understand the context of student affairs employment more completely, the ways intersecting identities are understood from this perspective, and

how such an experience fits, or does not, into systems of power on campus. The goal of this research was to add to a foundation of knowledge of the way students understand their intersecting social identities in a specific context. It was important to maintain a strong connection between intersectionality and student identity, requiring a more in-depth look at how the two concepts are related.

Using intersectionality as a guide also required me to maintain awareness of the multiple minoritized identities of participants, including how identities are similar and how they differ between participants. Further, I needed to be aware of the salience of individual identities, the way prominent identities inform experiences, and the way social identities and groups connect students to systems of power, including their awareness of power and privilege (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Having a comprehensive understanding of theory on individual, multiple, and intersecting identities allowed me to maintain this awareness. During data collection, as students focused on an individual identity, I was able to ask questions and guide discussion toward other identities and intersections.

Ultimately, while all participants were student employees, and some even shared dominant social identities, it was important to view each student as a whole with different identities and experiences, while also recognizing a dominant identity may heavily influence perceptions of experiences and meaning making. Despite the way a dominant or more salient identity can significantly affect perception of reality, it was important to remember, from an intersectional approach, multiple social identities simultaneously shape experiences, and no individual identity can be explored as separate from the others

(Collins & Bilge, 2016; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014), though students often spoke to individual identities.

Perhaps one of the most effective ways to explain the intersectionality of social identity is tapestry model (Goodman, 2014). The tapestry model proposes intersecting social identities are interwoven, where each color thread represents a social identity, and is woven with other threads, or identities, to create the tapestry. While a red thread, perhaps representing class, may be more prominent and brighter at times, there are always other threads that accompany the red thread in holding the tapestry together. Further, even when the red thread fades to pink as it rests next to a white thread, perhaps representing sexuality, both the red and white thread exist, and the appearance of pink is a result of interconnecting. Thus, each thread remains individual, but comes together to form a whole, and the way the threads interact and interconnect can be observed. As a comparison, a striped cloth can also be viewed as individual colored stripes that comprise a whole. However, each stripe always remains parallel to another and separate, and never interacts with any other stripes. When observing the striped cloth, it is possible to view a single stripe, or identity, separately from the others. The tapestry model, however, demonstrates an individual embodies all of their social identities at all times, and cannot experience any single identity without influence from the others (Goodman, 2014).

A final consideration for using intersectionality as a part of this research was to focus on the ways in which my identity, as the researcher, also informed and influenced the creation of knowledge and understanding of the data. My intersecting identities, along with all of my experiences and meaning I have derived in my life influenced this research (Tillapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2014). Understanding this, the *Research Positionality*

is at the beginning and woven throughout this document, through which I explore and explain my intersecting social identities and place them in systems of power, including privilege and oppression.

## Narrative Inquiry Methodology

Using constructivist intersectionality as a guide, the goal was to understand the student experience, specifically, the role on-campus work experience may have had in informing students' social identity. Because experiences naturally happen through narrative, it was appropriate to study student work and identity narratively as well, to explore socially-constructed realities and the meaning of multiple truths and intersections, as meaning and understanding emerged (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, narrative inquiry, served as a way for me as the researcher, and my participants to collaborate and develop understanding.

Narrative inquiry served this study especially well as intersecting identities are explored in systems of power and oppression as it is through dialogue minoritized identities can be understood. Paulo Freire (1970) emphasized the importance of such discussions as he explained;

> If it is in speaking their word that men, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which men achieve significance as men. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity. Because dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between men who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. Because dialogue is an encounter among men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some men name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one many be another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of men. (p. 77)

The design of this study aligns Freire's quote as I recognized the need to hear student stories through dialogue in an attempt to understand their experiences and interpretations of the world, contexts within which they exist, and the way these experiences are interwoven with their understanding of their intersecting identities. Through dialogue, an understanding of the situation of individuals can be constructed from the bottom up (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Even though I also was a student employee, it is impossible for me to tell other student employees what their experiences are or should be like. I cannot "name their world" because my White, male, working class identities informed my experiences in different ways. However, through dialogue with student employees I can be part of constructing an understanding that helps students name their own world.

To understand work experiences narratively through dialogue with students, this study was designed for participants to provide data by sharing their experiences and telling stories of how they understood the world around them (Merriam, 2009). A primary component of the constructivist paradigm and narrative inquiry methodology is the co-creation of knowledge between and among participants and researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). The researcher is not removed in any way from the research process and his socially constructed realities inform the creation of understanding and knowledge. In-depth discussions with students, facilitated via semi-structured interviews, served to explore students' lives as college students, backgrounds, personal histories, current work experiences, relationships, and intersecting identities, as well as any other emergent topics. Having also worked in a division of student affairs as a student employee, I shared stories to co-construct meaning of the realities and multiple truths around the phenomenon of work and social identity. Further, as this research

involved multiple interviews with each student, I examined data between each session and then clarified and explored further as needed in each subsequent interview.

Narrative research is complex, and an emergent design meant there was no way to know the specific ways the research process would develop (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Schwandt, 1990).  To create shared meaning from experiences, it was important to focus on personal characteristics, and the environment and time when experiences happened (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).  Research based on storytelling emphasizes the need to explore experiences and the personal interactions in those experiences, to understand people more completely (Dewey, 1938; Wang & Geale, 2015).  In attempting to understand intersectionality, an emphasis is also placed on individual experiences:

> Personal stories are uniquely powerful.  Stories connect us to one another.  They reveal  people and their circumstances, inviting others to develop new understandings, awareness, and at times, empathy.  Whether our experiences are similar or different, authentic stories resonate.  We are each an authority on our own story.  (Leavy, 2017, p. 4)

Viewing storytelling in this way meant an emphasis on aspects of interaction, both personal and social, continuity, across past, present, and future, and situation or place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wang & Geale, 2015).  Intersectionality theory posits that through stories we come to understand others, become aware of their specific situations, develop empathy, and form alliances (Collins & Bilge, 2016).  For this shared research, an awareness of the different contexts of stories was key.  Each participant, as a narrator of their experience, offered details and stories supporting their understanding of the world and their development.  Further exploration of environment, personal characteristics, time, and interactions within experiences became part of the narrative process as data were collected and meaning and understanding of experiences developed.  While I

engaged with participants in a one-on-one setting to hear their stories, the focus group served as a forum where participants could hear each other's stories and come to understand one another and their shared experiences.

**Narrative Inquiry as Method**

Using narrative inquiry meant being adaptable, open, and flexible as the study progressed, while remaining fully aware of emergent design (Schwandt, 1990). While the emergent design and flexible nature of this research were crucial to success in a constructivist paradigm, initial design choices were made to guide the research, while continual reassessment adapted the design throughout the process (Morgan, 2012). I selected the methods to account for this quality, and because I believed these data collection methods and analysis were best suited to explore answers to the research question: How do student affairs student employees make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment experience?

While this question guided research decisions, it was impossible to determine the direction of conversations and anticipate the stories shared. Interview questions served only as a means to initiate the narrative process, while the stories and their meaning, which emerged during conversations, guided data collection. Conversations often led to combining, reordering, or skipping questions. Thus, while stories informed meaning making, it was most important for me to be involved, as the lead researcher guiding conversations and also as a former student employee engaged in dialogue with current student employees in the narrative process fully, while constructing meaning alongside participants throughout the experience instead of proactively assuming the questions

would be answered, prior to hearing and sharing personal stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).  This approach allowed the emergence of meaning (Schwandt, 1990).

## Research Participants

Research participants consisted of four students from Southeastern State University and 12 students from Mountain State University.  Participants from Southeastern State University are referred to as current students, as at the time of the study they were enrolled as full-time students and were working jobs within the division of student affairs on campus.  Table 1 lists each student's name or pseudonym, area of employment within the division of student affairs, identity, and major.  The column listing major also dictates whether they were an undergraduate or masters level student at the time of data collection.

**Current Students**

Table 1

*Current Students*

| Name | Area of Employment | Identity | Major and type during employment |
|------|--------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Monica | Campus Life | Queer Woman of Color | Chemistry Undergraduate |
| Alex | Campus Recreation | Middle class, White, Hispanic Male | Accounting Masters |
| K | Campus Recreation | White Female | K-12 Education Undergraduate |
| Rachael | Campus Recreation | White, Pan-sexual, Able-bodied Female | Marine Biology Undergraduate |

**Monica.**  Monica is a Campus Life employee majoring in Chemistry who works as a technician for special events, which also includes event set-up and tear down.  She

identifies as a queer woman of color with a fun-loving boisterous personality for which she has a huge sense of pride. Monica values family and education and is a lover of food, cooking, and fun.

**Alex.** Alex is an operations employee with Campus Recreation who works in multiple roles as a student employee. Alex is a master's student completing a degree in Accounting at the time of this study who worked at Campus Recreation since he was a sophomore undergraduate student. He was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey and moved with his family to Brazil when he was 6 months old before moving to the southeast United States in 2000. He identifies as a middle class, White male and Hispanic ethnicity and has dual citizenship in Brazil and the United States.

**K.** K identifies as a 21-year-old White female from the southeast United States who works as part of the Marketing staff with Campus Recreation and is completing a degree in K-12 Education. Many of K's stories reflected her struggles with anxiety and shifting back and forth between middle and lower socioeconomic classes. K considers herself a "helper and a fixer," is an education major, and values family. K feels a sense of pride in the way her mom raised her and her sister to be open minded and to view the world through the perspective of others.

**Rachael.** Rachael is a junior originally from New Jersey who works as a Challenge Course facilitator at Campus Recreation. She identifies as a White, pan-sexual, able bodied, and female. Rachael values family, enjoys broaching informative conversations about identity with her parents, and chose to attend the institution for its Marine Biology program.

**Former Students**

Participants from Mountain State University are referred to as former students, as at the time of the study they were no longer enrolled as full-time or working as student employees.  All former students worked within the division of student affairs as student employees and were no more than five years removed from their student employment experience. Table 2 lists each student's name or pseudonym, area of former employment within the division of student affairs, area of current employment, identity, and major. The column listing major also dictates whether they were an undergraduate or masters level student during their time of student employment referenced for this study.

Table 2

*Former Students*

| Name | Area of Student Employment | Area of Current Employment | Identity | Major and type during employ. employment |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------|------------------------------------------|
| Jessie | Campus Recreation | Not disclosed | White, heterosexual, female | Not disclosed |
| Brit | Campus Recreation | Not disclosed | White, woman | Not disclosed |
| Renee | Transition Programs | Not disclosed | Bi-racial, White, Latina, woman | Not disclosed |
| Jensen | Campus Activities | Graduate Assistant, College Student Services | White, queer, cisgender woman, raised middle-upper class | Communication Studies & Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts Undergraduate |
| Monica | Campus Recreation | Not Disclosed | Hispanic, woman | Sport Management Undergraduate |
| Carrie | Campus Recreation | Graphic Design | White, heterosexual, woman | Art Undergraduate |
| Anthony | Campus Recreation | Campus Recreation | Caucasian, heterosexual, male | Natural Resource Management and Forestry Undergraduate |
| Alyssa | Campus Recreation | Receptionist, Medical Field | Straight, Bi-racial, woman | Human Development and Family Studies Undergraduate |
| Jamie | Campus Recreation | Wildlife Care Network | White, female | Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology Undergraduate |
| Nina | Campus Recreation | Not disclosed | Queer, Hispanic, female | Not disclosed |
| Tabatha | Campus Recreation | Staffing Agency Recruiter | Biracial, woman | Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts Undergraduate |
| Michael | Campus Recreation | Campus Recreation | White, straight, Jewish, Male | Liberal Arts Undergraduate Leisure Studies Graduate |

**Research Site**

I selected current student participants from the division of student affairs at a public, predominately White institution in the southeast United States with approximately 14,450 undergraduate students and 2,300 graduate students. The student body is 60% female and 40% male with 15% of students attending from out of state and from 26 countries. The institution offers 55 bachelor, 35 masters, and 4 doctoral programs while employing 965 faculty and 1,333 staff. The Division of Student Affairs has 14 departments and as its core values list student-centered, pluralism, integrity, collaboration, and engagement.

The interviews with participants took place on the second floor of the campus library in a small group study room that could be reserved. Each interview took place in the same room, a space with a small round table, four chairs, a white board on the wall, and trash can in the corner. While noise was not a distraction and there was no concern for privacy, murmurs of groups working in the rooms next to our chosen interview space could be heard finding their way through the partitions separating the spaces.

Students and I gathered for the focus group on the second floor of the campus library, however, in lieu of the small group study space, a conference room was secured. The conference room was in the office space of the Center for Teaching Excellence and was set with a large table surrounded by approximately 15 chairs. The focus group took place after business hours concluded, and no other individuals were present in the space at the time of the group interview. The focus group occurred on the Monday of finals week during the fall 2018 semester, and while there was some thought this may lead to a

hurried experience with participants lacking focus, getting to know one another as we sat around and ate pizza, and worked our way through the focus group experience ended up being a welcomed distraction during an otherwise stressful and hectic week during a traumatic semester.

I recruited former student participants from the division of student affairs at Mountain State University, where I was previously employed.  Mountain State University is a public, predominately White institution in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States with approximately 26,400 undergraduate students and 7,300 graduate and professional students.  The student body is 51% female and 40% male with approximately 1,000 international students.  The institution offers 76 undergraduate, 105 graduate, and 27 professional degree programs while employing approximately 1,850 faculty and 5,375 staff.  The Division of Student Affairs includes nine clusters and includes access, engagement, student learning success, and inclusive excellence among eleven strategic goals.

The research site differed for each former student participant, as they shared their stories via email during a time and from a place that worked best for individual circumstances. The one phone interview was completed from my home in the southeastern United States, while the participant was in a west coast apartment after work at 6PM PST.  Each campus participant and former employee made valuable and significant contributions to the data for this study. Following is an introduction of the research participants and a presentation of the themes and understanding found in each of their unique stories.

**Population and Sampling:**
**Current Students**

The first population, referred to as campus participants, consisted of students at a mid-sized public institution in the southeastern United States who worked in the Division of Student Affairs as student employees for at least two academic semesters and were still employed at the time of the study.  Because the purpose of this study was to explore multiple and intersecting identities for students in the context of their employment experience, it was necessary for a student to have been employed in a student affairs division, immersed in its culture, participated in training and development opportunities and experienced day-to-day interaction and communication to the point where work had become a consistent and influential part of their lives. It was assumed after two academic semesters, the equivalent of one academic year, students would have substantial experience in their employment from which they could derive meaning.  Direct supervisors verified employment duration and participation in training and development opportunities, while interviews, a focus group, and participant journals were used to capture the resulting interactions and day-to-day experiences.

My original goal for this study was to identify participants without using students' direct supervisors as gatekeepers.  Through the dissertation proposal process and discussion with my committee, we agreed the inclusion of supervisors as gatekeepers would create an unwanted power dynamic, specifically if students felt supervisors were encouraging them to participate and there would be negative job-related consequences for opting out.  However, IRB at the institution where the study was being connected refused to approve data collection unless I agreed to involve supervisors in the selection of participants and obtain written approval of their acknowledgement of student employee

involvement via a Direct Supervisor Acknowledgement form.  While this likely inserted an unavoidable power dynamic into the study, students never mentioned feelings of being coerced to participate.  Rather, students mentioned their interest in and importance of the topic as reasons for volunteering as participants.  Further, via an informed consent form and individual discussions, students were repeatedly made aware their involvement was strictly voluntary and they could opt out of the study at any time, which would include the deletion of any data collected up to that point in time.

I initially, identified participants using gatekeepers (Creswell, 2013) selected from Campus Life, Campus Recreation, Disability Resource Center and Office of Student Leadership and Engagement.  I chose these departments due to existing relationships and the high number of student employees in each department, but a lack of responses meant additional gatekeepers needed to be identified.  The institution's website was used to identify all directors and assistant directors in the division of student affairs.  Each of these individuals received an email that explained the study and were asked to identify students they thought to be a good fit for participation or share contact information for other professional staff members who could identify said students.

Initially, only a director from Campus Recreation responded.  However, originating through conversations with a colleague about research, a meeting was arranged with an assistant director in Campus Life.  Despite multiple supplementary emails and attempts to connect with additional professional staff members who supervised students in the division of student affairs, the Campus Recreation and Campus Life staff members were the only two staff members who agreed to assist with the study.  Relying on only two staff members meant I needed to sacrifice my desire to be

intentional with my sampling technique.  While my original goal was to select students who had the capacity to speak in depth about their intersecting identities, I ultimately relied on convenience.  In-person meetings were conducted with each gatekeeper to explain the study and goal for the selection of participants and allow for an opportunity for questions and clarification.  The Campus Life gatekeeper provided a list of four student names and contact information.  The Campus Recreation gatekeeper emailed a list of 12 student names and contact information approximately 2 days after our meeting.

Each of the 16 students received a recruitment email for the study, and a follow-up email 2 weeks later.  The plan for the study was to meet with each interested student and afterwards, use purposive sampling, appropriate for narrative inquiry, to invite specific students to participate in the study, as it would allow for the selection of participants who could provide the most relevant information for the study (Jones, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Narváez et al., 2009) allowing for a multitude of varying social and intersecting identities to be represented.  Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling strategy similar to convenience sampling, but rather than focusing on availability and accessibility criteria, the researcher makes judgements about specific qualities of potential participants and their ability to provide rich data to best answer questions (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).  However, as only five students were interested, I ultimately relied on convenience sampling (Creswell, 2013).

I met with each of the five students individually to discuss the study and their participation.  Each individual meeting lasted 30 to 60 minutes.  I explained the study and students were given the opportunity to ask questions and each student, without prompting, talked about their identities, background, and why they wanted to participate.

While each student was ready to participate as the meetings concluded, they were asked to think about the discussion for a couple of days. After two days they received a follow-up email to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. Four students agreed to move forward in the process while a fifth chose not to participate, citing a lack of time to fully commit to the requirements. Each student was given two copies of the informed consent form at our initial meeting. Students kept one copy of the form for their records and returned one signed copy of the form to me prior to our first interview. Each student's direct supervisors signed the direct supervisor acknowledgement form prior to the start of data collection. Prior to the start of interviews, participants were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym, to maintain anonymity. Two participants chose to use pseudonyms while others were adamant about using real names, partly because they thought the research important enough to connect their names to it.

While four participants did not seem ideal, the narrative nature of the study offered hope students would provide enough data to inform answers to the research question, and represent multiple viewpoints, realities, and truths, comparable to those of similar studies (e.g., Abes & Jones, 2004; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). However, as information and data were received from participants, it became apparent additional participants would be needed. Snowball sampling was used and two of the participants indicated they knew co-workers who would participate, but additional students would not commit to the study, citing similar reasons as students who previously declined to participate. After exploring options that included adding another institution to the study, it was determined former student employees could offer important perspective to the study.

**Population and Sampling:**
**Former Students**

Involving former students in the study allowed for participants to be added who were removed from student employment experience and could reflect on their time as student employees to identify experiences they deemed valuable to the development of understanding their intersecting identities. I emailed student affairs professionals at Mountain State University with whom personal and professional relationships existed. The email explained the study and participants being sought and asked these new gatekeepers to identify former employees who were no more than 5 years removed from their student employment experience who would be a good fit. Gatekeepers connected with former students to gauge their interest in participating and shared the names and email addresses of all students willing to participate.

Through this process, a list of 22 student names and emails was compiled and became a participant population named former students. The former students received an email explaining the study, provided an opportunity for questions, and explained next steps if they were interested. Students who did not respond received a follow-up email two weeks after the initial email, and then a final follow-up email an additional two weeks later. Students were given the option of participating either via email or phone interview. Ultimately, 12 of 22 students participated, with 11 choosing to respond via email and one choosing a phone interview.

**Data Collection**

To understand student stories, data were collected from campus participants through interviews, participant journals, document analysis, and a focus group, all methods appropriate for narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008). Data were collected from

eleven former students via written email statements and one former student via a phone interview. In addition, I maintained a journal, which included a collection of observations and reflections throughout the research process (Corbetta, 2003). The thought that "…life is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon…" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17), adds to understanding that every individual has a story. The specific data collection methods were chosen to understand socially constructed realities and discover meaning as the voices telling stories were highlighted throughout the research journey.

I started data collection by scheduling interviews with the four current students. It became apparent after the first round of interviews started I would not be able to recruit additional current students for the study, thus I initiated the recruitment process for former students. From that point, I continued with interviews and data collection of current students and focused on including former students as an integral part of the research. Figure 1 provides an overview of the data collection process for all participants.

Three current students and I maintained journals throughout data collection

**Current Students: Interview One**
*Purpose*: Build relationships and get the wheels spinning
*Strategy*: Encourage students to begin thinking about their understanding of identity and the way it impacts their experiences and the way identities intersect, including an initial exploration of self

**Current Students: Interview Two**
*Purpose*: Dig deeper into identity and relationship to work
*Strategy*: Understand student's processing of original discussion and ideas, begin to explore intersecting identities in the workplace, and encourage students to process through specific ways work has informed an understanding of their

**Current Students: Focus Group**
*Purpose*: Share experiences to construct knowledge
*Strategy*: Allow students a forum to share individual experiences, and recognize and appreciate the experiences of others, while continuing to process their own experiences at a deeper level

**Current Students: Interview Three**
*Purpose*: Students put it all together and make defining statements about intersecting identities and work
*Strategy*: Guide students through a discussion specific to their intersecting identities and the context of student employment while being intentional about discussions of

Submission of training documentation by one supervisor

Data Analysis

**Former Student: Phone Interview**
Phone interview conducted with the one former student who chose this option of response

**Former Students: Initial Contact**
Potential participants receive an email invitation to participate, include an overview of the study and details of participation

**Former Students: Clarification**
Many former students reply, indicating interest and ask clarifying questions, which I answer via email response

**Former Students: Email Statements**
Former students submit email statements and respond to follow-up questions I ask after reading their initial statements

**Former Students: Reminder and Additional Responses**
An email reminder to former students who have already indicated interest in participating elicits additional email statement submissions
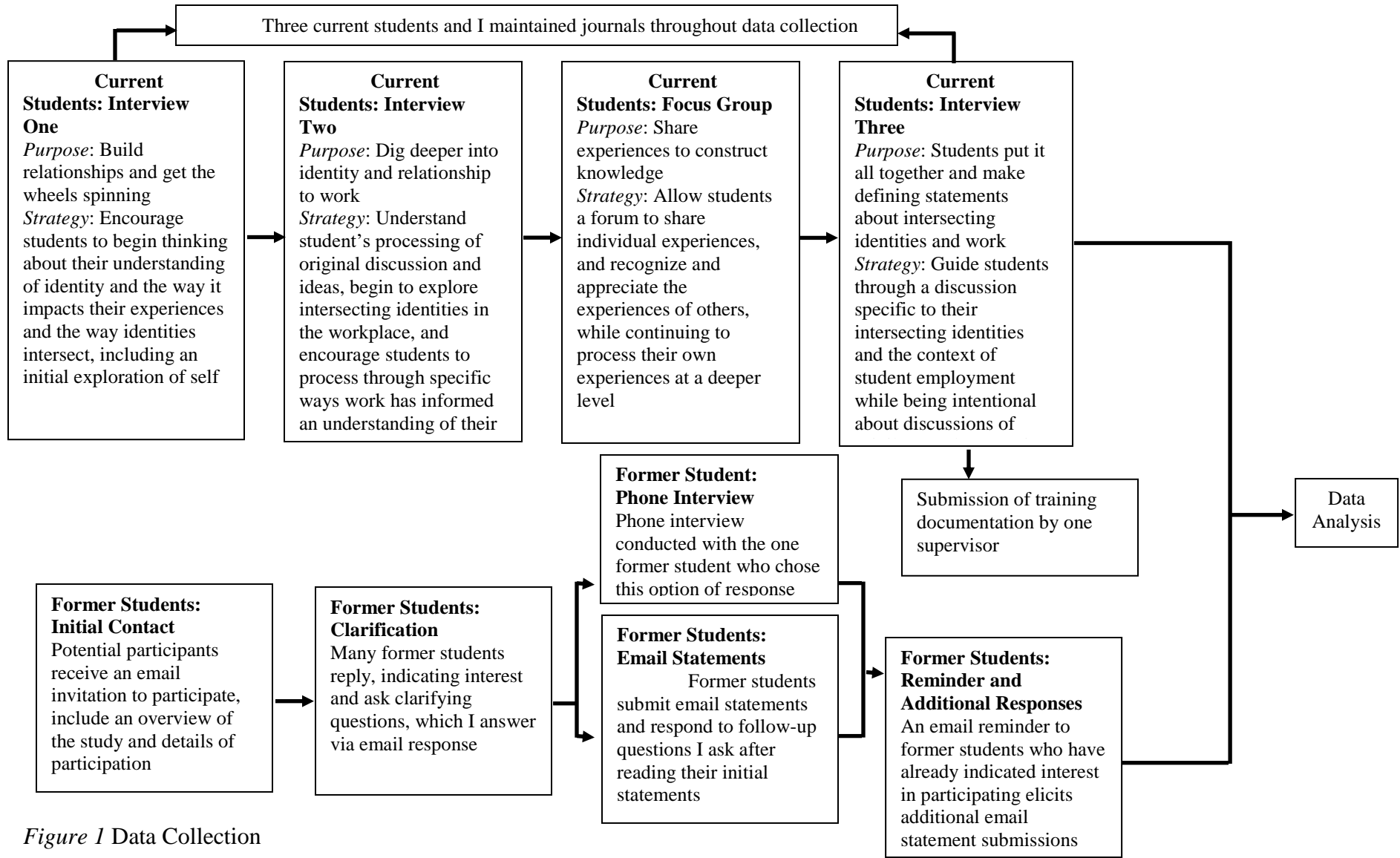
*Figure 1* Data Collection

**Interviews: Current students.** Interviews are widely used in narrative inquiry to collect data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Specifically, the interviews in this study were semi-structured, with original guiding questions (Appendix F). The flexible structure allowed both researcher and participants to discuss and explore identities and acknowledge and investigate new information as the conversation developed and meaning and truths emerged (Morgan, 2012; Narváez et al., 2009). The goal of the interviews was to collect data by creating a setting where an interviewee became a narrator, sharing multiple stories alongside the interviewer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For this research, there were three 60 to 90-minute, semi-structured interviews with each campus participant, with two occurring prior to the focus group and one after. I chose to use multiple data points to support the design of this study. Narrative inquiry often relies on data from in-depth discussions as meaningful relationships and bonds develop between the researcher and participant. Expecting difficulties with a student, let alone several students, agreeing to commit to hours of interview over a duration of months, I instead chose to still achieve richness in the data by meeting with multiple students multiple times, while also limiting the commitment required by participants. Further, I assumed difficulty in identifying student participants prepared to discuss intersecting identities in a purposeful and constructive way. This led me to design the first and second interviews to introduce the research in a way to initiate intentional processing by students about their intersecting identities.

Multiple interviews, demonstrated in other research as a useful technique to explore participants' intersecting identities (Stewart, 2002), allowed an opportunity for students and the researcher to share their histories and acknowledge their social identities

in an initial interview, while they further explored identities, intersectionality, and the way intersecting identities may influence understanding of experiences during a follow-up interview.  Interview questions (Appendix F) were designed to promote intentionality in speaking to intersecting identities in answers, and to help students process the ways they experienced power and oppression in the workplace. Further, I designed questions so the I could construct meaning and understanding about students' intersecting social identities in the context of the participants' individual work experiences.

The first interview focused on students' sense of self and experiences that informed their understanding of their world.  Recognizing a sense of self is mentioned as a pivotal step in overall development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Torres et al., 2009) and within individual identity development theories such as sexuality (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Cass, 1979), ethnicity (Torres, 2003), and race (Cross, 1995).  Further, through development of a sense of self individuals explore multiple (Reynolds & Pope, 1991) and intersecting (Crenshaw, 1989) identities, foster the growth of empathy and have a more complex understanding of others.  Recognizing the importance of a sense of self to understanding identity, I asked questions in the first interview about sense of self and how students see themselves in the world, how this has changed throughout their life and since arriving at college.

Further, interview one served to build on the relationship I began to form with students during our initial meeting.  I asked participants to share stories of their background and life journey.  Finally, I wanted to gauge students' ability to speak to intersecting identities without directly telling them what I was looking for or overwhelming them with jargon.  I asked students to share aspects of their life that they

perceived as advantages and disadvantages and what terms, such as identity, privilege, and oppression meant to them.

The second interview built on the first and focused on connecting personal stories to work experiences in the division of student affairs. I wanted students to reflect on thoughts pertaining to, and since, the initial interview, discuss emerging topics from the previous session, and clarify and expand on their stories.  The goal of this interview was to further explore identity and the way it informed work experiences.  I asked students to discuss the role employment played in their life and how work was represented in their sense of self and how this had changed overtime.  Further, I asked students to share work experiences that caused them to reflect on aspects of their life or view interactions with others differently.  Approximately two thirds of the way through this interview I directly asked students to share stories about the way their identities showed up in the workplace.

The third interviews were conducted after the focus group.  Questions for the third interview were not developed at the start of data collection, but rather, were created after understanding emerged during the first two interviews and focus group that supported crystallization of the data (Richardson, 2000).  Meaning emerged during each interview and following up on previous interviews with students at the beginning of successive interviews proved beneficial in clarifying understanding of what had already been shared. The focus group was also important to solidifying understanding as students rehashed stories with one another and asked for clarification from each other.  Throughout all of this, I maintained notes in my research journal and upon review, the direction needed for interview three became apparent.

Interview three needed to be created in a way to get students to talk about intersecting identities and context without directly using this terminology to ask questions. It became apparent by this point not all participants were equally prepared to discuss intersectionality. Before beginning the third interview I shared the model of multiple identities with students. The intent was to give students a visual tool to demonstrate how we all have multiple identities and we may understand them differently depending on context. I shared examples of how my own intersecting identities showed up in different settings and how this was informed by where I grew up and my own understanding, or lack thereof, of diversity and privilege. As students acknowledged the benefit of seeing this model, I became hopeful my questions would get them to speak to their intersecting identities. I asked questions about salient identities, explained this as needed, and asked students to connect different salient identities to different settings, including the workplace, before asking students to explain how multiple identities intersect to shape who they are as a person. I was also intentional about including aspects of power in this interview, and asked students to discuss privilege, discrimination, and oppression in the workplace, and to discuss times their identities either gave them a voice or silenced them at work.

Despite students sharing multiple stories about work experiences they deemed important to helping them understand their identities, it became apparent after the first two interviews and focus group that students were not always able to fully verbalize the significance of these experiences. Students were able to easily identify experiences as significant in helping them to better understand their intersecting identities but could not always explain how or why. To support discussion during the third interview, I shared the

model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes et al., 2007) with each student to

facilitate conversation on intersecting identities and how they show up in the work place.

Discussing the model with each participant allowed them to gain a better understanding

of identity as a fluid construct and the way it is informed by various contexts. The visual

aid worked, as after reviewing the model students felt more confident about being able to

speak to the role their student employment experience played in understanding and

making meaning of their identities. An adapted model of multiple dimensions of identity

is included as Appendix G.

Interviews were recorded by a digital recorder and transcribed (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). Temi speech recognition and automated transcription software was

used to transcribe the interviews, which I then checked for accuracy and made corrections

as needed. The transcribed interviews were then downloaded from the Temi website,

transferred to Microsoft Word documents and saved.

**Participant journal: Current students.** Participants were asked to maintain a

journal throughout the research. I provided composition notebooks to each student and

gave them the option of journaling electronically in a Microsoft Word document and then

sharing it via encrypted email. During initial meetings with participants and at the

conclusion of the first two interviews and focus group the researcher and participants

discussed topics for journal content. Participants were asked to journal about work

experiences, those discussed during interviews and others that were not, process thoughts,

react to the research process, and if appropriate, to include documents, paste photos, draw

pictures, and create a collage, or any creative endeavor they choose. At the start of the

second and third interviews, students were asked to provide thoughts on any reflection that had occurred since the prior meeting, including thoughts on their journal content.

The goal was for the journaling to create an opportunity for students to reflect deeply with no time limit, in an environment they were most comfortable (Renn, 2000) and to provide them with an additional opportunity to discuss their views, understanding, and perceptions and to tell their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Three of four participants submitted journals within a week of the final interview. Each of the three submitted electronic journals via a Microsoft Word document included as an email attachment and none of the participants chose to encrypt an email to make it more secure. I used journals to support and complement data from the interviews and focus group. Coincidentally, Monica chose not to submit a journal but was best able to speak to her intersecting identities and experiences during the interview process. While K, Alex, and Rachael at times struggled to verbalize experiences, they wrote journal entries that often advanced the understanding and reflection they demonstrated during the interview process.

**Document analysis: Current students.** Document analysis provides a means for a researcher, as part of an overall research process, to elicit meaning and understanding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) from sources that commonly include public records, personal documents, and visual documents, including "…films, videos, and photography" (Merriam, 2009, p. 140). During each interview and the focus group, I made a request of participants to share work related documents. I specified to students these documents could include training materials, policy documents, staff manuals, staff photos, email communication, and any other type of documentation that may provide understanding

and support their stories.  Further, I looked at workplace websites, paid attention to items such as wall hangings, placards, stickers, and other documents present in student workspaces, and requested training documents from direct supervisors.  None of the students chose to submit additional documentation, and nothing significant was found on websites or in work spaces.  However, Monica's direct supervisor provided documentation that outlined and detailed a semesterly training all student staff were required to attend and provided assessment results of the intended learning outcomes for the training.  I received this documentation after the conclusion of interviews.  However, the documentation served to support and confirm the training experience Monica discussed and demonstrated the accomplishment of student learning outcomes via data collected from students who had participated in training.

**Focus group: Current students.**  While the focus group questions (Appendix H) were designed to facilitate conversation between students pertaining to the context of their similar and different identities and context of experiences, the goal was to construct understanding of students' intersectional social identities as they experienced privilege and oppression in systems of power.  In an addition to individual interviews, a group interview, or focus group, served as a data collection opportunity for the study.  All current students, Monica, Rachel, K, and Alex attended the focus group interview.   I designed focus group questions (Appendix H) to facilitate conversation between students pertaining to the context of their similar and different identities and context of experiences.  The goal was to construct understanding through discussion of experiences within a shared context.  The focus group was an important component of the study as "…interaction – particularly among members of a group – may produce deeper

discussion, thereby aiding the researcher's understanding" (Corbetta, 2003, p. 276).

Also, the group discussion allowed participants to share intense emotions and created

affirmation between group members.

Similar to the interview process, the focus group topics, and thereby the potential

derived meaning, emerged as discussion progressed (Schwandt, 1990). For research with

an emergent design, it was necessary to allow the discussion to develop an exploratory

flow, encouraging development of additional questions as data emerged. I, however, had

the obligation to ensure the discussion continued in a productive direction to inform the

purpose of the study. The focus group questions (Appendix H) were used as a broad

guide to initiate and create an environment of free-flowing discussion (Krueger & Casey,

2014).

The focus group was recorded via a digital voice recorder and transcribed using

Temi speech recognition and automated transcription software, which the researcher then

checked for accuracy and made corrections as needed. The transcribed interviews were

then downloaded from the Temi website, transferred to Microsoft Word documents, and

saved. The focus group was conducted at 5:30pm on the Monday of finals week, not

ideal, but necessary due to changed and condensed schedules after a major hurricane.

However, students were fully engaged in the process and stayed to talk with one another

for approximately 15 minutes after the focus group concluded.

**Email statements: Former students.** While not always considered when

thinking of ways to collect qualitative data, "online data collection offers an electronic

extension of familiar research techniques, widening the scope of data available to the

researcher" (Merriam, 2009, p. 157). As the hurricane created obstacles for data

collection, it became apparent a creative approach would be needed to secure additional participants for the study. The option of having students share their stories through emailed statements was appropriate and aligned with the way students preferred to share information, as 11 of 12 former students chose this approach to participating in the study. In addition, as students emailed statements, I was able to reply with follow-up questions and to ask for clarification.

I provided the prompt and guidance for email statements in the recruitment email (Appendix E), which was sent to students' former supervisors who then reached out to former employees on my behalf and confirmed their willingness to participate. The content of the recruitment email informed students they would be sharing stories about their understanding of their intersecting social identities in the context of their student employment experience. Further, I used the email to provide a brief background on literature pertinent to the study and emphasized my goal of hearing stories specific to intersecting identities and explained this may be connected to their experiences of privilege and oppression. As students followed up to confirm interest and ask clarifying questions, I provided examples of the type of stories I was looking for and further explained the idea of identity and intersectionality as needed.

**Phone interview: Former student.** One of 12 former student participants elected to participate via a phone interview. Phone interviews allow individuals to participate from a relaxed and comfortable location while still providing rich research data (Novick, 2008). The phone interview was ideal for this participant, who lived on the west coast as I was on the east, as she thought she could better provide quality information and more accurately share her story via phone. I relied on questions

developed for in-person interviews to develop phone interview questions. Recognizing I would have a finite amount of time for the phone interview and could not ask all questions I had asked of current students, I combined and refined questions in an attempt to create a guide that would allow me to build a quick connection with the phone interviewee and lead to the sharing of quality stories. I asked the former student to explain her sense of self and connect this to work experiences, inquired about stories from work that helped her understand her intersecting identities, and ensured I included questions about privilege and oppression. The interview flowed smoothly, and I was able to ask clarifying questions and for further elaboration throughout the process.

       **Researcher journal.** The researcher journal was a vital component for recording data and was important in the development of overall understanding of the researcher's perspective. Memory alone is not reliable, and failure to document interactions, reflections, thoughts, and observations will result in the loss of important data and overall meaning (Corbetta, 2003). Continual review and reflection on the information in the journal determined which concepts were understood well, and the thoughts and interpreted meanings needing further exploration (Morgan, 2012). The journal served as both a log of a description of facts and my interpretations of events (Corbetta, 2003), as well as a component of a more comprehensive audit trail, as it included details on research decisions, investigative notes, and thoughts on meaning making (Schwandt, 2001). Throughout the research process I wrote about research decisions as well as initial thoughts, reactions, and reflective commentary on data as it was being collected. While writing this dissertation, I was able to use my journal to heavily inform this chapter and

was able to consider initial reflections as I worked through coding, themes, and conclusions.

## Data Analysis

Analysis of data provided by current students and former students was handled similarly, though the two were treated as independent sources of data and analyzed separately. Data for current students included the transcribed focus group and interviews, written journals, training documentation, and thoughts and meaning making from the researcher's journal. Data for former students included written email statements and correspondence, and the transcribed interview.

With minor exceptions due to scheduling conflicts, interviews with current students were conducted in rounds, meaning all participants completed one interview prior to a second interview being conducted with any participant. Similarities and overlapping messages were apparent between participants through each round, and commonalities were discussed with students as part of subsequent interviews, with themes developing more clearly during the second interviews. These initial themes were noted in the researcher's journal, discussed, and confirmed by students during the interviews.

Data from each group of students were analyzed through a process of inductive discovery (Morgan, 2012; Richardson, 2000). Each statement and story was analyzed for commonalities, themes, and overlapping messages. This exploratory process of searching for themes and sub-themes helped me identify key phrases, common interpretations of experiences, essential meaning making information, and recurring

thoughts and emotions, which were then set aside as data were reconstructed and the process repeated (Meadows & Morse, 2001).

I reviewed transcripts of data within Word documents and as I interpreted data through each lens I recognized overarching messages within the data and used different colors of highlighting and font as I recognized key words, terms, phrases. For example, early analysis of the data resulted in highlighting any mention of negative experiences at work in pink, taking pride in work experiences in aqua, and messages about support from supervisors being highlighted in teal. Colors were chosen randomly as statements seemed important, and as I was limited by the number of colors I could use to highlight and still be able to read the text, I also resorted to changing the font color to red for any mention of processing identities, and green for any mention of recommendations about the employment experience. If statements from participants fit within more than one category I highlighted half the sentence one color and the other half another, or perhaps had a sentence in green text highlighted pink.

The list of developing themes was created as I reviewed and tried to make meaning the data. As I began reading, I did not have themes developed or in mind. For example, a student shared a story about a negative interaction with a co-worker and because it seemed as though this would be important I highlighted it in pink and from this point forward, any story pertaining to a negative experience at work was highlighted pink. Table 3 provides an overview of themes and messages that emerged as I reviewed data and how they were marked within the transcripts.

Table 3

*Emerging Themes and Messages*

| Emerging Themes and Messages |
| --- |
| Negative experiences at work related to identity (pink highlight) |
| Work as support/family/people to confide in; Relationships are vital; Feelings of safety; I can be myself; I see positive examples at work (bright green highlight) |
| Pride in my work; Increased confidence allows me to by my authentic self (aqua highlight) |
| Powerful experiences but failed to process/unpack it (yellow highlight) |
| Support from supervisor (teal highlight) |
| My privilege puts me at a disadvantage (red highlight) |
| A specific identity does not play a role at work/how identities show up at work (maroon highlight) |
| My identities mean I have to think before I act (blue highlight) |
| Intentional development opportunities; Training and training recommendations (gold highlight) |
| Dynamics at work/code switching (dark green highlight) |
| Job and life preparedness (dark gray highlight) |
| Sense of purpose and/or opportunity (purple highlight) |
| Being involved in this research helped me better understand my identities (light gray highlight) |
| Processing my identities (red text) |
| Recommendations (green text) |

With this initial coding in place I read the data again and recognized additional

categorization and coding was needing.  For example, not all negative experiences,

highlighted in pink, were the same, as some pertained to experiences with co-workers

while others we about patrons, supervisors and administrators. I created bolded headings

and sub-headings within the Word document and began to cut and paste statements

within these more accurate emerging categories. However, I quickly realized as I cut

statements from the original transcripts I was losing track of which student was speaking,

thus I assigned each participant a specific font color and when their statement was moved

under the headings and sub-headings in the document, the font was changed to the color

assigned to that student. Because the headings were now in place, it was also okay to

change the color of statements previously coded with red and green font, as this indicator

was no longer needed. Table 4 provides an overview of the headings and sub-headings

used.

Table 4

*Emerging Categories*

| Headings and Sub-headings |
| --- |
| Work Experiences Matter<br>    General thoughts<br>    Interactions with participants, clients, and others<br>    Interactions with co-workers<br>    Interactions with supervisors and administrators<br>    Intentional development<br><br>Pride, confidence, and authentic self as a result of work<br><br>Support from relationships at work<br>    Co-workers<br>    Supervisor<br><br>Understanding identities in the workplace<br>    Awareness of marginalized identities<br>    Awareness of privileged identities<br>    Identities do not play a role<br>    Development and processing opportunities needed<br><br>Benefits of participating in this research |

While I processed data from current students and former students separately, I lumped emerging ideas together as I analyzed both sets of students' stories and statements. While the data from former students did not span as many of the headings and sub-headings as that from current students, neither did any additional themes or categories emerge. I treated data from each group of students as separate data sets but combined overall thoughts into categories during the analysis process, since I was working toward findings for all participants as a whole, before ultimately identifying themes that best fit the groups of students individually after reviewing data a final time.

Having data somewhat organized and categorized, next I viewed the data from multiple perspectives in an attempt to look past the words and statements in search of meaning. I first interpreted experiences through my own lenses of being both a former student and employee supervisor. For example, as students shared stories about the friendships they made at work and the value of these relationships, I recalled the way my co-workers as a student employee became a major component of my social network and made work a place I wanted to be. As I read this reflection in my journal during data analysis, I also recalled how my time as a student employee was one of the first when I interacted with individuals who identified in ways different than me, and how the stories they shared increased my understanding about what this meant for their experiences on campus, with family, and in society.

I then moved on and recalled higher education's goal for development of the whole student and looked for support of this within student stories. I explored data for connections to specific environments as well as understanding of individual and multiple

identities and whether students felt supported in and open with these identities in the workplace. For example, I was able to personally connect and share my own stories with students as they talked about the importance of intentional development opportunities in the workplace.

When reading stories of blatant discrimination, I attempted to empathize with participants and understand pain and heartache. I reflected on what it may be like to always have to be aware of a given identity for fear of negative interactions and consequences. Through this I attempted to maintain a lens of intersectionality as I thought not only about students' identities, but also the way their minoritized identities intersected with the work environment and their experiences on campus.

As I worked though environment, identity, and the other perspectives, I recognized the way one student felt silenced at work because of her identity as a Black woman and failed to recall a time I felt silenced as a result of any of my identities, adding to my awareness and understanding of oppression and identity and the way this showed up for students at work. I recognized how instrumental work was for helping students feel confident, comfortable and welcomed on campus, but then through my own privilege recognized how I likely would have made it through college in a similar fashion even without working on campus, albeit with a few financial consequences. Only through multiple reconstructions and exploration of the data could the voices in a story begin to resonate to create understanding and meaning, culminating in final themes. I organized an overview of the different perspectives I used, noted emerging themes and ideas, and summarize the previously mentioned headings and sub-headings, along with final themes, in Appendix I.

The ultimate goal of analysis was *crystallization,* (Richardson, 2000), a metaphor for the lights emitted from the data to interpret the subjective nature of data and knowledge created with participants. Light may emit from a crystal in multiple ways, dependent on many conditions, including the way the light enters, what happens once it is inside, and the position of the observer as the light leaves. Each of these circumstances affects how the light is viewed. As data were analyzed, specific attention was paid to personal backgrounds and experiences to interpret how context and intersecting identities inform understanding, not only in the way stories were told, but also in how everyone involved listened to and heard one another. In addition, my interpretations and understanding of the data is just that, and those who read this research may connect with the data and findings in unique ways.

Researcher and participant stories and interpretations were viewed from many angles to understand experiences through the deconstruction, exploration, and reconstruction of the data. Member checks and peer debriefings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used to confirm emergent meaning and understanding. Natural opportunities for member checks occurred at the end of the first interview, throughout the second and third interviews, and during the focus group. Peer debriefers were asked to provide feedback on transcripts, themes, and findings, and are introduced in the *Dependability* section below, and served as a means of supporting the rigor of the study.

## Rigor: Trustworthiness Criteria

One type of rigor for this study included trustworthiness criteria that ensured findings provided truth about the social construction of reality and that the implications

of such findings can be trusted (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Self-awareness, openness to the perspectives of others and self, and building trust with research participants and proper documentation of the research process are practices to strengthen overall trustworthiness (Donovan, 2006). Specifically, criteria used to support the trustworthiness of qualitative research include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Credibility.** Credibility may be the most important component to reinforce the trustworthiness of a study, and researchers often use prolonged engagement, crystallization, and member validation as approaches to meet this standard (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was difficult to satisfy with the methods of this study involving personal contact only during three interviews and a focus group. However, the researcher and participants got to know each other, initially, during the selection process and then spent time together during data collection (i.e., interviews and focus group). Further, credibility increased as discussions with participants prior to digital recorders being turned on and after they were shut off became vital to building relationships, as well as understanding the data as they were collected. These conversations became one of the more enjoyable components of the research experience, as conversations covered topics such as family background, popular culture, and everyday life.

In addition, credibility relied on the shared experiences of the researcher, former students, and current students. These shared experiences were based primarily on student employment in a division of student affairs while at college. While intersecting identities varied between researcher and participants, all involved with the study had the capacity to

understand, empathize with, and appreciate the struggles and celebrations experienced day-to-day during the college experience and accompanying on-campus employment opportunity.

Crystallization (Richardson, 2000) as a component of data analysis added credibility to the study as data were viewed and interpreted from multiple points of view. These points of view included the researcher and peer debriefers, who were all informed by their experiences as well as the theory and literature used to add meaning to this study, participant experiences and their interpretations of data, and the construction of meaning and understanding from interactions between the researcher and participants. The multiple sources of data (i.e. interviews, participant journals, document analysis, researcher journal, focus group, and two separate populations of students) allowed for a multitude of interpretations and views, and for questions to be asked and data to be processed in different ways by all involved. Combined, these methods created a crystallization of data that created meaning impossible to derive from any single interpretation, point of view, or source of data alone.

Member validation, or member checks, may be the most important technique used to help determine the study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal was to ensure participants considered their words and meaning to match their intended purpose, and the researcher interpreted participant stories and confirmed analysis with them. As the researcher, I summarized and paraphrased my interpretations of the meaning in each story and shared these interpretations verbally to elicit discussion with participants during the interviews and focus group to create meaning. Further, email communication allowed me to follow-up and clarify stories and meaning with former students.

Techniques such as using research methods previously established in other scholarly work, peer debriefing sessions, and providing reflective commentary also augment credibility (Shenton, 2004).  The research methods chosen for this study closely align with existing studies similar in topic, intent, and guiding methodology (e.g. Abes et al., 2007; Abes & Jones, 2004; Evans & Broido, 1999; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012), and with widely accepted techniques and principles for constructivist, narrative research (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Schwandt, 1990).  Throughout the research process, I also debriefed questions, ideas, data, interpretations, and observations with peers.

Finally, reflective commentary (Shenton, 2004) was collected via a researcher journal and discussed with participants, and included initial impressions of the study and participants, potential research bias, interview follow-up thoughts, challenges experienced during data analysis and reflections and thoughts on every other experience throughout this research process.  As part of an overall reflexivity process (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006), I understood each research decision, and intersecting identities and role in the research, including how my presence affected the overall process.  The "Researcher Perspective" section in Chapter 1 helps achieve reflexivity in this study, as did continued honesty and openness with myself, peer debriefers, and participants during the study.

**Transferability.**  To bolster transferability, researchers should provide as much detail as possible about the various contexts and design of the study through thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).  Thick description included explaining the various nuances, as in-depth as possible, of the participants, settings, findings, relationships,

methods, and all other details of the study design, data collection, and analysis (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).  For example, participant descriptions include the number of people participating, their histories and backgrounds, identities, experiences, and any restrictions with who was not able to provide data (Shenton, 2004). The history, intersecting identities, experiences, background, and distinguishing characteristics for each participant and the researcher is discussed throughout this document.  Additionally, a detailed explanation of the research setting, data analysis techniques, research design, and multiple methods that included interviews, participant journals, document analysis, a focus group, email statements, two populations of students, and a research journal, is provided throughout this chapter, with the goal to answer and eliminate all questions associated with research design and practice. Ultimately, an individual reading this chapter should be able to reproduce the research design and methods without needing to ask clarifying questions, as duplication reinforces transferability.

Sound logic throughout the research process also supported transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).  As there is progress toward the creation of meaning, it is necessary to ask, during all phases of the process and perhaps multiple times, via the use of peer debriefers, if assumptions, decisions made, and interpretations can be viewed as consistent with those that would be expected from peers and other researchers.  While the thick description and use of sound logic support transferability, dependability additionally bolsters the rigor of the study.

**Dependability.**  Dependability can include an audit of the study to check design, methods, data, and the construction of knowledge, and is performed by an impartial party

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To bolster dependability, there should be a thorough description of the research design and how it was implemented, details of data collection, and reflective commentary on the effectiveness of the project (Shenton, 2004). Further, once findings and conclusions begin to emerge, I provided additional written commentary on the data and analysis of all other research decisions

Two peer reviewers evaluated and provided feedback on the design, methods, knowledge constructed, and conclusions of this study. The two peer reviewers, who each chose a pseudonym, are Jordan and Mateo. Jordan identifies as a White, cisgender, woman and has 12 years' professional experience in higher education, including eight years in a division of student affairs. Jordan is completing a Ph.D. in Sport Administration, and is currently finalizing her comprehensive exam process, with a focus on social justice in sport organizations. Mateo identifies as a Latino, cisgender, man and has 10 years of professional experience in higher education in a division of student affairs. Mateo is currently completing a Ph.D. in Higher Education and is ABD with a dissertation topic focusing on campus ecology.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability in a study means the findings, interpretations, and conclusion are representative of the actual data collected (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Essentially, it needs to be demonstrated the research process is sound, of high quality, and actually leads to the results and conclusions of the study. Stated simply, findings must be representative of the data collected (Shenton, 2004). These steps center on an audit trail, allowing a researcher to explain in detail the study design, methods, data, and construction of knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to explaining these facets of the study, the research should also explain why decisions pertaining to specific

methods and design were made, the reason certain techniques were used in lieu of others, and the motive behind dismissing certain conclusions or findings while others are accepted (Shenton, 2004).

Three, 60 to 90-minute interviews, were conducted with each current student participant, with the first two occurring prior to a single 60 to 90-minute focus group session, then the third interview.  The goal for the focus group was to have all current student interview participants present, which was achieved.  Throughout data collection, sessions were recorded and later transcribed.  The interview and focus-group methods were chosen as they aligned with a constructivist paradigm and are forums for the co-creation of knowledge between participants and the researcher.  Written notes on thoughts and reflections as to what finding crystallization reaps as they develop were recorded throughout the research process and discussed with participants and debriefers.

**Rigor: Authenticity**

Authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) refers to research being genuine, meaningful, useful, and able to affect social change (Bryman, 2008; Manning, 1997) and "…involves an assessment of the meaningfulness and usefulness of interactive inquiry processes and social change that results from these processes" (Shannon & Hambacher, 2014, p. 1).  Authenticity is bolstered by five separate components *fairness*, *ontological authenticity*, *educative authenticity*, *catalytic authenticity*, and *tactical authenticity* (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

*Fairness* determines whether voices and viewpoints are represented fairly and accurately; *ontological authenticity* questions whether the research experience increases participants' consciousness and understanding of their world; *educative authenticity*

addresses whether the research experience helps participants better understand the experiences of others in their social setting; *catalytic authenticity* demands the research facilitates action; and *tactical authenticity* is a matter of whether the research empowers members to take action (Bryman, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Manning, 1997; Shannon & Hambacher, 2014).

**Fairness.**  Fairness represents the idea that "…all stakeholder views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices should be apparent in the text" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.207).  The question becomes how a researcher makes this a reality.  Including direct quotes from each of the three interviews, focus group, email statements, and phone interviews in the final research product gives an authentic voice to participants.  Further, there was a reliance on informed consent, member checking, reflexivity, and peer debriefing to demonstrate and improve fairness (Manning, 1997).

**Ontological authenticity.**  Ontological authenticity is supported by conversations, openness of purpose, assuming an emic perspective, a trusting researcher-respondent relationship, and participants' statements attributing growth (Manning, 1997; Shannon & Hambacher, 2014).  Rather than approaching interviews as a means to ask questions and gather information, these sessions took on the identity of conversations and storytelling (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).  I came to know each participant on a personal level and worked to create an environment in which they were able to speak freely. Importantly, I was able to build trust and never assumed an authoritative role in the process.  Further, it was important to establish open communication with participants and consider their purpose and desire for participating in the research.  As a former student

employee and professional staff member in a division of student affairs, my emic perspective was vital to sharing stories and information.

     **Educative authenticity.**  The purpose of educative authenticity is to ensure stakeholders realize increased understanding (Shannon & Hambacher, 2014).  To best augment educative authenticity, and determine if participants' complex understanding of others improved, an internal audit was implemented (Manning, 1997).  Participants were involved in this process and were able confirm themes, offer conclusions, correct and clarify interpretations, and offer suggestions.  Educative authenticity is perhaps best confirmed by participants' quotes about their participation in this research.  K stated her involvement in this research made her "much more aware of my identities and how people perceive me," and added "after the second interview I noticed myself paying more attention to my identities at work," indicating she has increased her awareness of the topic of identity.  She confirmed this in her own words by stating, "These interviews and this experience has really opened my eyes to things about myself and the world around me."

     Similarly, Rachael referred to the research experience as "very insightful in regard to how my job at the challenge course relates to my intersectionalities," and that it made her "more aware as to how my job influenced my confidence in expressing these intersectionalities."  Alex also explained the research experience as "a good opportunity to learn about people and different experiences," and felt being involved as a participant "solidified my understanding of how people are different."  Finally, Monica explained how it was beneficial for her to be involved as a participant and credited our last interview specifically for helping her "put into words exactly how my job has affected

my confidence, which in turn has affected how I see myself in this world and how I make sense of my intersecting identities." She also grateful for the experience as it helped her realize "there are people who are willing to listen and willing to hear my story."

**Catalytic and tactical authenticity.** Working toward catalytic authenticity means a researcher ensures information gleaned from the research is useful and informs and promotes change, while tactical authenticity represents the extent to which participants are prepared to effect change based on the knowledge gleaned from their participation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Both were and will be supported by jointly developing interpretations, confirming via member checks, making the research easily accessible and widely disseminated, and establishing context and interpretations relevant to all stakeholders (Manning, 1997). Further, tactical authenticity was supported by the use of consent forms and conversations (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Summary

Approaching this research from a constructivist paradigm (Crenshaw, 1991; Guido et al., 2010; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014) the goal was to explore the research question: How do student affairs student employees make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment experience? This research was designed to address needs such as focusing on underrepresented groups, concentrating on specific contexts and environments, exploring development as it relates to privilege, power, and oppression, and examining development in a manner not relying on dominant culture models (Patton et al., 2016). While existing research explores student development, identity development, and intersectionality, this research focused

on students' understanding of their intersecting identity in the context of their employment experience in the division of student affairs.

Guided by a constructivist paradigm and a lens of intersectionality, this research acknowledged systems of power and privilege as narrative inquiry methodology was used to construct knowledge from participants' stories.  Seeking crystallization (Richardson, 2000), data were collected from division of student affairs student employees via interviews, participant journals, document analysis, email statements, a phone interview, and a focus group, and was supplemented by the researcher's journal.  Rigor for this study was bolstered by researcher and participant experiences, crystallization, peer debriefers, member validation, chosen methods, thick description, a design audit, ensuring findings were representative of the data collected, and working toward an increased understanding for all involved.

CHAPTER IV

THEMES AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways student employment in a division of student affairs informs students' understanding of their intersecting social identities. I chose narrative inquiry as the guiding methodology in a constructivist paradigm to explore the research question: how do student affairs student employees make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment experience? Exploring this question involved collecting data from two sets of participants using multiple collection techniques. Involving two groups of research participants and incorporating a variety of data collection methods supported an inductive process of discovery and allowed for crystallization of the data (Morgan, 2012; Richardson, 2000), while supporting trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This chapter presents themes and supporting data for the campus participants and former student participants. Throughout this chapter, I attempted to honor participants' word choices. For example, if a participant spoke to feeling marginalized as a female, I did not change this to woman. If a participant used both Black and African American as identifiers across stories, I attempted to maintain consistency and used their terms as and when they did.

**Themes: Current Students**

Throughout the data collection process with campus participants, I reflected in my journal on emerging trends in students' stories, such as the importance of peer

relationships, supervisor support, and the negative accounts of discrimination that were often experienced and witnessed.  As I continued with data collection and moved into analysis, themes began to emerge while some of original thoughts recorded in my journal, such as discussion about the development of career skills, became unimportant for this research.  As data analysis progressed, and I deconstructed and reconstructed the data, themes emerged. Themes for campus participants are summarized in Table 5 and are expanded upon and supported throughout the following section.

Table 5

*Current Students: Themes*

| Themes |
| --- |
| Experiences at Work Helped Students Develop Confidence, a Sense of Self, and an Understanding of Identities Different from their Own |
| Work Helps Students Discover a Sense of Belonging Often Connected to Supervisor and Co-Worker Support<br>        Developing a Sense of Belonging at Work<br>        Support from Co-Workers<br>        Support from Supervisors |
| Students Experienced and Witnessed Marginalization of Non-Dominant Identities at Work |
| Intentional Training Opportunities Helped Facilitate Processing |
| Privileged Identities Allowed Students to Forego Fully Processing Identity and Experiences |

**Experiences at Work Helped Students Develop Confidence, a Sense of Self, and an Understanding of Identities Different from their Own**

Students spoke extensively about the multiple ways work allows them to be a truer version of themselves and show up in the world in a more authentic way.  Through

feelings of increased confidence and developing a better understanding of themselves, students were better able to understand their own identities and those different from their own.  As confidence increased at work, students allowed their true identities to be present in environments outside of the work place.  Rachael wrote in her journal, "resources where one can feel comfortable expressing themselves in are extremely important, both in the workplace and out," while Monica acknowledge a combination of multiple work experiences made it "okay to be me" as she explained, "That's exactly what happened. And it was really hard to put that into words."

K added that work helped her understand her identities, and it has become part of her identities, as she adds "just walking around campus and like hearing people talk about the REC, I'm like, oh, like I work there!"  Monica also discussed work becoming a part of who she was and giving her a "sense of purpose."  She explained this part of her identity and the purpose it provided as being provided only by her work experience, as she shared "I can't get that from my chemistry courses or my music or even my Japanese courses, I can't get that anywhere else but here."  It appeared work itself became part of an identity students could relate to, and be proud of, leading to increased confidence in their other identities as well.

There were two brief mentions of the way interactions with patrons lead to an appreciation and better understanding of identities.  Alex stated he will sometimes speak to patrons "in Spanish or something, just to make them more welcome because they're guests.  I want them to enjoy it and want them to feel like they can come back."  This allows Alex to openly display and partake in a major part of his identity in the workplace, and make others feel more welcome to the space at the same time.

Next, Rachael spoke to how the opportunity to work with multiple groups of international students helps to be "more accommodating to their needs rather than just going through what I normally go through." For her, these experiences improve her recognition and awareness of how different people may show up in different contexts, and acknowledges it is "a learning curve for me." She found working with the group to be an interesting challenge that forced her to learn how to adapt and be better prepared to work with different groups of individuals, and to understand how her own identities and understanding inform a situation. When speaking to her multiple identities, Rachael stated "all of these identities are me," and added "me showcasing these specific identities shapes me as well of how I see the world and how I project myself," which indicates a recognition that both the way she perceives herself and the way she shows up in the world are based on her understanding of her multiple identities at a given time.

Students also talked about the ways in which the relationships with co-workers helped them be a more authentic version of themselves. K and Monica each spoke about the value of making connections at work with people they would not otherwise know. Monica explained she feels valued and supported at work because of the many friends she has there, and that even when she feels as though she is "about to be silenced" by a particular co-worker, the support she has caused her to "realize that I have a place here and then they (the co-worker) don't." Monica expanded on this thought;

> I've had to like rectify that with myself and be like, well no, you have a reason to be here. You're here for a reason. Um, but I think that it proved to me that this, that my identities aren't a problem. So working and knowing that I am still a valued member of this campus regardless of the fact that I look like I'm not the average face of this campus is really, um, it's empowered me to continue to do more.

While this explanation overlaps with a theme of support, discussed later, the most important part of this conversation with Monica related to the confidence she gained as a result of her work experience, emphasized by her recognition "You're here for a reason." Monica discovered a place on campus where she could show up as a true version of herself and be comfortable doing so. She explained this in her own words, "Working here has given me the opportunity to do that, to be more visible, to, not only as a queer person, but also as a Black person on a predominantly White campus." Work became a vital part of building confidence in her identities and existing as a more authentic version of herself.

Rachael also discussed the importance of having a close group of friends she could be her true self around and talked about how her role as a student employee made this possible, as her job lead to her participating in other opportunities that helped her create social connections.

> I think because, um, I was part of Scuba Club on campus for a while and then at the end of my sophomore year I decided to apply for a executive board position and I think I wouldn't have done that if I hadn't been through campus rec already and had started to make those connections to other people to try and get that leadership role like that.

In this instance, Rachael had previously been timid about or completely unwilling to try new activities and be present in settings she was not comfortable with. However, because of interactions and relationships she built at work, her confidence increased in herself and she became more willing to take advantage of other opportunities and activities, and made new connections with others, expanding her friend group further.

Messages of confidence continued to appear in student stories as K, Monica, and Rachael each spoke specifically to how confidence gained as a direct result of their

student employment helped them better understand their own identities and allowed them to show up more confidently as their true selves in other environments. K spoke specifically to the way confidence from work helped her manage the anxiety.

> Honestly, I would go right for and say campus rec like has helped me with my confidence and then, which also helps my anxiety. So the confidence I've gained from campus rec like helps me with my anxiety. And so I feel like a stronger person today because of the anxiety and then growing confidence and making it to college so far away from home. Um, is like how I'm able to sit here today.

K's statements provide an indication work served as a necessary constant in life and a vital component of helping her deal with other aspects of her life that were, at times, difficult to manage. Work increased her confidence in herself so much she was able to show up in other spaces as herself and take advantage of opportunities she never would have previously, such as participating in this research and sharing part of her life story with me, who she had only recently met.

I asked K to share a story about a specific instance at work that helped to increase her confidence. She shared the following.

> Campus rec forced me to get out of that shell a bit more and talk to more people because I have to do like tabling events. So that's like anyone and everyone who walks through, you know, cause we're at freshmen orientations we're at transfer events. Um, so I'm talking to strangers like a lot. And before I would not have done that because I would have been too anxious about it.

Performing a task that was a basic expectation of her job provided an experience through which K was able to take chances and interact with people she did not know. Without student employment experience, it is difficult to assess when or if a similar opportunity would have presented itself.

Overall, K stated the increased confidence helped her understand what it meant to be a strong woman in her student employment environment, especially in being confident

in her interactions with men, where she previously had reservations. She explained she "didn't feel confident enough" and was nervous they would "think of me in any of the similar ways that guys from high school thought of me," which she elaborated on experiences from high school when she felt minoritized as a female. She also felt that despite identifying as an introvert, her employment experience has given her the confidence to "talk to different people" and helped her realize she is a "more social" person than she previously thought.

Monica spoke to the way her confidence in job responsibilities affected her confidence overall as a person.

> I know I'm competent and I know exactly how to do this job. I know how to operate every piece of, every piece of equipment. I could explain it to you in detail if you really want me to and being visible and saying like, no, I can do this too. This is not exclusively for white men that you have interacted with in the past. I'm not them and that doesn't make me any less qualified. Right. So that, so this job has actually given me a lot to like work with like with, to be able to stand out with my identities and knowing that I'm in a place that respects them. Like Campus Life, like really does respect my identities.

Monica's reflection on work experiences indicates an increased confidence in her identities and pride in and recognition of being a Black woman *and* performing at a high-level. Often, dominant culture power structures alternatively lead to messages of someone doing a good job despite their identities, which is not part of Monica's reality, partly because of confidence gained in the workplace.

When asked to share a specific example of when she recognized her confidence increasing, she shared a time she felt validation when interviewing for a promotion at work.

> But I, I was able to do it so that like that was, gave me a lot of confidence and that was like, okay, no, that moment of I when, when I left that interview, I knew that I was supposed to be here and that I was doing what I needed to do and that I was

going to be a queer Black person in this role of the second level of my job. So that means that I'm, they respect me and they trust me enough with that kind of responsibility, which is really, which I think helped also boost my confidence in a lot of ways and helped bring my identities together even more. So my job has definitely been through every stage of my development as an individual I feel like.

Monica was expecting a different experience because of her identity as a queer Black person. This demonstrates the way she is always conscious of the way these identities appear and position her in a given context, and show she feels the need to prove herself again and again, knowing she has to constantly battle perceptions of others directly linked to her identities. Through student employment experiences such as being promoted, she discovered affirmation of "I'm supposed to be here" and that it was okay for her to show up as an authentic version of herself.

Rachael also shared messages of confidence gained at work, as she explained "I really came out of my shell, um, joining campus recreation or just student employment in of itself because it does force you to interact with more people." She spoke several times of her expectations of the way she would be treated at work, based on previous life experiences. As a woman she anticipated her physical ability to be questioned and that she would be quickly discounted or undervalued as a challenge course employee. She explained, "in the beginning of that program I was like, oh, I'm just going to step back like I've always done before. And you know, it's just how it is." However, she quickly recognized an assumption by her supervisor and co-workers that she would be able and willing to perform all of the tasks associated with the job. She shared, "after, you know, coming with them and becoming involved with them, it's like, oh, you know, they are actually cool with this and I can actually do this, and I won't get any like set back from this. And so that was cool." For one of the first times in her life, Rachael was in an

environment where people did not make negative assumptions about her ability due to her identity as a woman. This helped Rachael gain confidence and begin to understand it was okay to show up in an authentic way. Continuing with this story, Rachael explained further;

> I think going through the training and then learning skills and getting in that environment where I have to kind of prove myself to other people that I know it, um affected my confidence because it boosted my confidence internally. So I knew like I was confident in myself, so I was confident showing it to other people.

Similar to the understanding Monica shared in her stories, Rachael gained confidence in herself because of her work experiences, which then allowed her to show up as a more authentic version of herself.

As participants gained confidence at work, they began to recognize ways it was informing other aspects, contexts, and environments in their lives. Monica explained empowerment and confidence that directly resulted from her work experience allowed her higher levels of confidence in other settings as well. She talked about being invited to be part of the dean's advisor council, an invitation she would have previously been hesitant to accept, feeling as if she did not belong. Her increased confidence changed this and increased her sense of belonging in other environments as she explained "when I started to enter in more and more of these different environments, I wasn't afraid to do so. I was like, all right, I'm here. I deserve to be here. Let's do it."

Rachael also explained that she found her work experiences "leaking into my everyday life" in which it has "increased my confidence and adaptability in terms of school and life in general." She expressed feelings that the confidence from work allows here to be her true self in environments and settings outside of work and "definitely

helped me come to terms with me identity." She added, "But I'm very comfortable in my own skin and I think it, it did have to do with campus rec," and elaborated on the connection of this confidence to understanding her identities.

> I think that's really helped me personally kind of be more confident about my, all of these … aspects of myself. I guess too, the, being pansexual. I don't really like explicitly say it, but, I think being confident has given point, pointed … if, I'm in a, like a situation where other people are expressively LGBT, then I would have no problem also expressively saying, hey, I'm pansexual. Um, because that confidence has kind of given me the ability to really understand it and kind of delve into it because the confidence I got from the challenge course, is outward confidence but also inward confidence. And I think sexual orientation, especially in this day and age, sometimes if you think you're different from the norm, um, you don't really delve into that for some people because they don't want to think that they could be gay or LGBT or anything like that because they want to be straight. But being confident in the workplace and then expressing that confidence outwardly and giving me that individual confidence has really helped me dive into my sexual orientation and think about it some more and not hide from myself because it is who I am and I can't change that.

This was an extremely powerful statement as Rachael recognized the important role student employment on campus played in helping her be comfortable with her own identities and be more open in other settings and relationships. She added in her journal:

> Figuring out that I am pansexual and not having that expansive of a support group in the beginning (besides for my sister), I was less insecure about it than one would think, looking back on it. The support group of LGBTQIA friends came later on, but in the beginning, I was comfortable with myself and my discoveries due in part to the confidence I gained from my job.

Rachael talked about the importance of needing support from others who shared similar identities and now, because she gained confidence and a better sense of self, she has been able to be part of support networks for friends and other students as they come to understand their own sexuality. Work helped Rachael come to understand who she was, and gave her confidence to be open about it with others and become part of their journey as well.

Similarly to Rachael, Monica discussed the work environment as a place where she gained understanding of her identities she does not get elsewhere, as she stated, "It's definitely the vast majority of the reason that I feel safe and valued and, and able to understand the full breadth of my intersection, intersecting identities is definitely because of my job." As work played a major role in helping students gain confidence, they began to recognize that it was okay to be their true selves, both in and out of the work environment. As their confidence increased, they also came to appreciate and understand their own identities better, recognized a truer version of themselves, and developed a sense of belonging.

Monica emphasized she does not get these feelings from elsewhere on campus, and work provided the one environment where she saw and was able to interact with others who shared some of her identities. She spoke about walking across campus and not seeing other people who look like her, and specific to her classes she shared;

> I'm the only Black person. I'm the only person of color and I'm actually, I think the only female as well in one of my labs, the only female, the only person of color and the only queer. Literally the only person that looks like me, everyone else is a White man.

While Monica relied on work to interact with others like her, other participants spoke to their appreciation for work as an environment to interact with individuals different than themselves.

There were multiple statements and stories from participants in which they indicated work as a vital component to their understanding of diverse identities. Regarding work as a learning environment, Alex offered "I felt like it has been a way for me to learn things and experience things outside the class that I wouldn't necessarily learn inside the classroom." Work, for Alex, simply provided experiences he did not get

elsewhere on campus.  Rachael also appreciated the uniqueness of the work environment

"because sometimes when you're on campus you're like in your own little bubble," and

work offered an environment where she could interact with people who she otherwise

would not.

Interacting with individuals different than themselves became important as Alex

and Rachael learned about others. Alex explained;

> The different people I either work with that are different than me or that I
> experience and I just, just some interacting with them.  That's, I feel like how you
> make sense of it is from learning from those experiences and then kind of
> reflecting on, okay, what was different about it?

Alex explained these interactions helped him understand different identities.  Rachael

echoed this point when reflecting on her experiences at the challenge course, stating "It's

definitely increased my awareness of differences of like people in groups, um, because

every group we come across is different." Increased awareness, understanding, and shifts

in perspective are concepts that were interwoven into several responses during the

interviews.

K specifically stated interactions with her co-workers "opened my eyes to other

perspectives."  She specifically referenced the opportunity to work with multiple students

from Brazil and through her interactions with them "realized cultural differences in social

interactions and stuff."  Students made clear their interactions with co-workers, both

positive and negative, played a significant role in providing experiences that caused them

to reflect, and ultimately helped them better understand their identities and how they

show up in the world.  Often, simply having the opportunity to engage with those

different than us is enough to provide a new perspective, as K mentioned when talking

about her interactions with students from Brazil. Further, in his journal, Alex left the

following entry, which emphasized the significance of such interactions.

> I had a conversation with a coworker that is black and identifies as LGBT about understanding people's differences and listening to other viewpoints. It is interesting to think about how different people view the world around us based off how they identify themselves. She sees socio-economic issues differently than I do because of her sexual orientation. The conversation made me think about why it seems that my demographic is usually the one that appears to be the oppressor. It helped me understand that while my own personal beliefs about certain issues may be completely different from those that are marginalized groups, that does not mean I cannot find a way to make them feel included based off them not agreeing with me. I feel like many in my demographic are not trying to marginalize other groups, they are just so used to their own views being the norm that they do not know how to be more inclusive because they just are not used to it or do not think of it as a priority.

In the researcher positionality, I wrote about my lack of interactions with individuals

different than myself through my childhood, high school, and undergraduate career. I

also opened this dissertation with a short story of interacting with a Black student during

my time as a student employee and the failure to recognize the significance of her story.

Upon reviewing Alex's journal and the entry directly above, I wrote in my researcher's

journal about the failure to process this interaction. I also question whether Alex is

reflecting on his interaction specifically because of his involvement in this research, or if

he would have otherwise. As explained in my journal, I believe our actual and perceived

identities as White men allow us to decide on our own terms when and if we think about

identity, our experiences, and the experiences of others.

**Work Helps Students Discover a Sense**
**of Belonging Often Connected to**
**Supervisorand Co-Worker Support**

**Developing a sense of belonging at work.** Part of being true to one's self and

being able to recognize and express an authentic self means having a supportive

environment in which to do it. Monica and K each specifically spoke to the work

environment creating a sense of belonging. Monica shared her perception of work as "a

place for people to feel like open to be themselves and to exist and to talk." She

explained "if I'm in the campus at large, I'm not nearly as safe as I am in my little niche

environments that I've created for myself." K offered similar thoughts, stating "the rec

center has turned into like a safe haven on campus" for her when she had to deal with

issues in her life.

Monica expanded on this sense of belonging created by work and the way it

affected other areas of her life. She described the value of her employment, both from

the standpoint of keeping her in school, understanding her intersecting identities, and

serving as a role model for others who share her identities. The discussion had veered

toward whether Monica felt she would still be at the university if not for her student

employment.

> Probably not. Because I value opportunity and I value places that provide equal opportunity. And if I did not, if I wasn't working on campus, I wouldn't, I wouldn't see, I wouldn't be there to be a, a model for people who don't look like the average person on campus, either who aren't white aren't cis gendered, who are the people who are like people … queer people of color or just queer people in general, or just people of color in general and just people who don't or, people who don't identify like the vast majority of the campus. If I didn't see people like that or I wasn't one of them, it would be very hard for me to feel at home in a campus like that. Because then all the people in power, the people that have positions on this campus would not look like me. So I would look like it would feel to me like I was, I was actually just there for the numbers and that is one thing that I never want to feel is that I'm here for the diversity quota.

Monica recognized the sense of belonging she felt at work as one of the primary reasons

she was still in school. As she spoke to the importance of seeing and interacting with

people like her, we recall from the previous theme she stated work is the primary context

in which this happened.

Monica continued reflecting on this sense of belonging she experienced at work and elaborated further on the connection it had in helping her become comfortable with her own intersecting identities.

> So yeah, it's for the most part really a great experience being a student employee and really has positively benefited my like understanding of how I fit into the school and like the different parts of my intersecting identities. And like being college educated and being in a college setting, um, those, my job helped me feel more empowered to be Black and be in the setting. So to be in a college setting because I was beginning to feel like it was okay for me to be here and it was important for, it was important for me to be here and be visible and through working through, up through my job and becoming more visible and becoming a leader in these areas, that is where my blackness and my education kind of combined to create somebody who's really passionate about higher education and about student involvement. So if it weren't for my job, I don't think that I would have ever had that kind of realization that I need to be here.

In my journal I also wrote about the importance of work and the way it made me feel more comfortable at college. As a first-generation student, everything I experienced at college was new and not things I had heard stories about or was prepared for. This made the transition to college difficult at times. While my experience was likely different from Monica's, I can relate to student employment as a main factor in helping me feel more comfortable on campus and is if I was in a place where I belonged.

Each participant talked to some degree about the way work provided vital support that made them feel a sense of belonging on campus. Through relationships with both their co-workers and supervisors, students assembled major components of their support network through their student employment experiences. Students spoke about building connections with individuals who shared similar identities, creating relationships with friends they could confide in, and having conversations that helped them sort through their understanding of their identities while finding a space they could be themselves.

**Support from co-workers.** Rachael was used to being underestimated and minoritized throughout high school and other experiences due to her female identity. She stated, "I've seen me being a female affected how people saw me and my abilities in the past." However, she has had very different experiences throughout her student employment experience.

> So when we were doing everything for the rec center, um, and you know, I said an idea, or I started do something. I was so surprised that none of the dudes like stepped up and did it for me and I was just doing it. And they're like, oh yeah, sure, go for it. And I'm like, I can do this. Like, are you sure you're not going to stop me here? But they were just all for it.

When reflecting on why she had been treated differently she thought it may be due to maturity of those around her or because of the culture and environment created at work, and also referenced the potential effect of her supervisor on the staff by stating "maybe having very capable women work with them in the past and then them being like, okay, this is fine."

Alex focused on how his co-workers served as an important part of his support network at college because he was fortunate to meet people who shared similar identities. He became friends with two international students from Brazil who also worked at campus recreation and felt his job "gave me an opportunity to meet them." This may not have been likely otherwise, "Just because of the level of diversity, SSU is predominantly White." Meeting individuals like himself, giving him the opportunity to speak Portuguese and discuss the state of affairs in Brazil, helped that part of his identity remain prominent in the workplace.

Rachael talked about understanding her own sexual identity and reflected on how it was "kinda something that I figured out on my own and then I found people." She

contemplated how "being around people who are of different sexual orientations and being in the LGBT community really provides a comfort because you can talk about things like that and you are more open," and feels work is a place where these types of relationships can form, and people can find support as they explore their identities.

> I have like, I have some friends have come out to me, um, and then like I've come out to them in response, you know, say okay, like me too. This is cool. And I have seen that in some work friends too. I have seen them gravitating closer to me because we share something in common like that. Um, something that's I guess not expressed explicitly visual, which is, um, important for them. So, I think that kind of enforces relationships, strong relationships in that aspect in terms of student employment.

Through shared identities, recognized in one another because of relationships formed with co-workers, Rachael both developed a sense of belonging of her own and helped others do the same.

K spoke about how her co-workers "turned into some of my best friends" who then became an important part of her social network outside of work as well and helped her feel as though she belonged at college. She explained, "no matter what was going on anywhere else, I could walk in the rec center and have people there that genuinely cared about me." She credits these individuals with helping her through a serious "anxiety episode," and also reflected on how they became individuals she could be her true self around.

> Because well, the girls (at work) like I know they're not going to judge me for anything. Um, I don't feel like I have to prove myself to them in any way. Um, they've been through similar experiences with me. The guys (outside of work), I feel like there's some sense of I have to prove myself. Um, and I think that's not from any way they act that makes me feel like that. I think that stems from previous experiences all the way back in high school that I feel like I have to prove myself.

K's stories helped me understand the comfort she came to feel in the workplace. She viewed work as a place to turn during difficult times when there was nobody else around that she could count on and be her true self around. Work provided K a place where she could exist as herself and be supported by others without judgment.

Monica also focused on the way individuals with similar identities provided support, helped her understand her own identities, and provided reinforcement that she had a place where she belonged. Having connections to individuals with similar identities was vital to her experiences helped her to understand her identities better.

> I process these kind of experiences by like talking to people who would get it. Like turning to my queer friends, my Black friends, like my friends that understand that mine, whatever minority I am that is being oppressed at that moment in time. And I like just debrief with them. I'm like, okay, but let me tell you what just happened. And like how, and telling that story through my eyes and like having them validate that experience for me is really important.

Monica's explanation demonstrates the importance for students to find individuals who they feel can truly understand them, and for many, this means sharing similar identities. Work appeared to be a place where these connections were easily identified and supported.

Building relationships with individuals who share similar identities started for Monica at work when she connected with a co-worker who was also a fan of one of her favorite bands. The blossoming friendship was about more than connecting with someone with shared interests, but rather "was when I realized it was kind of okay to be myself," reinforcing a sense of belonging. As she recognized there were other people who shared her music interests, it "made me okay with that section of my identity," and served as a stepping stone to "realizing that there were other gay people, not only at my job but like other, like everywhere on campus."

Monica also explained she met other individuals on campus who shared her African American identity but "didn't fit in with them." However, when she met other individuals at work who shared this identity she realized "it's okay for me to be Black on this campus" despite not fitting in with everyone that shared this identity, which made her "okay with that part of my identity." Monica explains;

> So it really started with that first, like just having that shared interest in music and then it started branching out and it started opening my eyes to all these different pockets of people and I'm like, okay, no, I'm going to be fine because my identity is solid and I know who I am. But I didn't know if it was okay to be who I was.

It was challenging for Monica to be a member of a predominately White institution, as she first felt as though she needed to connect with anyone who shared her African American identity. Upon feeling out of place at the African American Cultural center on campus, she became concerned she would not fit in on campus. However, interacting with co-workers who also shared this identity, and others, made her accept her own identity and recognize she would not necessarily connect with every other student who shared a single identity with her.

Monica explained that as she explored commonalities with co-workers she was also "finding my own home in this campus." She expanded on this and added,

> This campus isn't particularly large, but it's large enough so that you can feel lost at times. So for me to be finding my home in this area of campus … So that's when I started letting my personality become more apparent because I was finding that people weren't put off by me, which is something that I had always feared and cause, and I feared it because it was true. In elementary school through high school, I didn't really have friends because people were put off by my personality. So, I just decided to hide it away altogether because it was easier.

Monica's statements on belonging and "finding a home" are consistent with Alex's stories of finding other students with similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds, Rachael's comfort with and recognition of other individuals in the workplace who identified as

LGBTQI, and K's ability to open up as her true self to her co-workers.  Each of these

stories helps to highlight the way work and co-workers created a sense of belonging for

each student.

Finally, Monica explained the ways that her discussions and connections with a

graduate assistant who worked in campus life with her was one of the most vital

components of support in helping her to understand her identities.  She spoke specifically

about how working alongside a graduate assistant who was also a member of the "queer

people of color" community allowed her to have conversations about how they "function

in the context of the staff" and that it was exciting to have those types of conversations.

Not only did it allow her to explore how her queerness shows up in a professional setting,

but she was also involved in conversations she likely would not have had elsewhere.

Monica explained why these conversations were so important.

> Decompressing and understanding the weight of what that means on a regular
> basis for me comes through having conversations with other people in my
> situation.  The GA at my job, um, is new this year and is Latinx.  They're
> awesome and we have really in depth and really deep conversations about the
> things that we experience on campus because they are also a queer person of
> color.  So, there are things that they can understand that nobody else on this
> campus can understand what I'm going through because they have to face these
> exact same things.  And, the best thing that I've learned to do is not only is to take
> that time and decompress with them or decompress with other queer people of
> color that will understand the level of like oppression that I face just existing on
> this campus.

Monica was able to find someone who shared similar minoritized identities and discuss

what that meant for the way they showed up on campus and in multiple other

environments.  The importance here is that Monica was able to find this support in a co-

worker, but not elsewhere on campus.  Working closely with other students likely

provided an opportunity to get to know one another better and in a more intimate way that other settings on campus.

In my journal I contemplated the reasoning for why students easily built more intimate and meaningful relationships at work than elsewhere on campus. I postulated work likely provides higher amounts of down time students use to get to know one another better. Also, students are only with one another in class for approximately three hours per week, and it is a time that is structured, limiting time for free-flowing conversation. Students may be together for twenty hours or more per week at work and likely have an opportunity to guide their own discussions.

I asked Monica to reflect on her multiple identities at work and she acknowledged, especially with people external to her department, that she shows up as "a woman first because I have, I tend to put my queerness more to the side during when I'm at work, like on the job." Putting her queerness to the side is sometimes difficult, and she explained, "I guess I always like felt safe in my job, but there were definitely times where I was like, do I mention, like they know I'm gay, but like is it appropriate for me to bring up my partner?" This awareness and contemplation resulted in conversations with her coworkers.

> And like, and we did like a few of us who were queer, on campus, like, on our staff like had like a long conversation about it. We're like, hey look, like these are the things that happened to us. These are things that like people bring up all the time, like about their partners. Right. And we have to gauge the room and figure out whether or not it would be acceptable for us to mention that we have, that we're in queer relationships or to, or say not at all.

Once again, this story demonstrates the way a student turned to co-workers for support during contemplation on identity.

Overall, co-workers provided support throughout many aspects of the participants' experiences and having the opportunity to build relationships with people who share similar identities seemed to be one of the most important concepts in helping them understand and appreciate their own identities. The opportunity to explore identities and experiences with people who would understand their situation seemed to be of utmost importance. However, co-workers were not the only source of support in the workplace, as participants also spoke about the level of support provided by their supervisors.

**Support from Supervisors.** All four participants recognized their direct supervisors as an important part of their support network. Monica referred to her supervisors as "a great support system," Alex used the word "mentor," K spoke about how working for someone who identified in a similar way to her allows her to be "comfortable" and allows her voice to be heard at work, and K, Monica, and Rachel referred to their supervisors as people they can "talk to about anything." Alex added that his supervisor helped support him "in terms of trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life," and is at least partially responsible for "helping me through college." K and Monica each expanded on their specific supervisor relationships a bit more.

Monica spoke about how her supervisor encouraged all staff members to express themselves in ways that were authentic. Mainly, Monica talked about her supervisors being accepting of her identities and providing support when needed. Regarding her supervisor's acceptance, she explained "they knew that my parents did not accept me as queer until literally on my birthday this summer." She also added, "I told my bosses the weekend my girlfriend asked me to be her girlfriend, because that was a big deal for me."

Her supervisors' acceptance of her has been important in the way she expresses and understands her identities. She explained that because of the relationships she built with her supervisors "my queerness and my blackness has never been something that I've taken out of the workplace, once I realized that I could put it in there."

Monica also spoke to two specific times her supervisors provided needed support. Once was during a disagreement with a co-worker about the need to include safe space language as part of the mission statement. When the climate become a bit hostile her boss "stepped in and was like, no, this is absolutely something that is a part of our job. And so, I didn't feel silenced because I was in an affirming place." She then detailed the second situation.

> Trump came to our campus and I, for whatever reason, I'm not a building manager but I had, they, there was nobody else on the schedule. So, they had me be a building manager that day and every like hour on the hour that I was on shift, I had a pro staff come up to me and be like, are you okay? Has anybody like done anything, is anybody harassing you? Because they knew I was scared. I had to pretend like I was fine, but I was scared because I had never seen that, that many confederate flags on this campus before. I was, I was petrified. I was like, Ooh, this is really bad. But I was in a comm, I was surrounded by a community of people who like recognize that this was a like the least ideal situation possible, but they were going to be supportive regardless. And if that isn't like a clear example of like intersecting identities and like playing into my job, I don't know what is.

This story provided insight not only on the way Monica felt supported at work from supervisors, but also provides a glimpse of how the macrosystem, in this instance national politics and ideologies, affected her experiences and comfort in her own identities.

K also spoke to support provided by her supervisors and explained her supervisor was always "just there ready to listen." She depended on her supervisor as someone she could turn to when she was "really struggling" and could talk with her about things she

"didn't share with anyone else." This included turning to her supervisor to talk through her changing social class, which was a conversation she was unable to have with others close to her, as well as confiding in her supervisor after negative experiences with her male co-worker and talking about how "he has no idea that my family cannot afford health insurance" and "I go to therapy once a week and he's just making these off the wall comments without realizing who he's talking to." Evident in each of these examples is the recognition supervisors serve in important role in students' lives as they sort through their experiences and attempt to understand them.

A final story by Monica provided an understanding of why supervisor support can be so vital. As a student manger, while developing evaluation forms, a co-worker disagreed with Monica's desire to make intercultural competency an important component of staff evaluations. Monica felt negative interactions like this "reminds me of who I am in the space and it then challenges me to either overcome that or to sit it out." However, because she knew her supervisor understood and supported her, she was able to decide what action to take in this situation. She explained,

> There are times where I'm going to, where I sit it out because I'm not obligated to speak up every time. That's not my job. Um, and having that realization for myself was really helpful because I thought at one, I, at one point in my life I felt that I always had to be the one, but I don't have to, I don't have to be the defender for my race or my intersecting identities if I don't want to. And I can sit them out, and that's fine. And having … but that reminder is that it'll, it reminds me that there are times where I need to and that that's okay and then I can, and if I feel comfortable and I'm in an affirming space, I will. So, having those little like reminders is, it's a necessary part of life that I've kind of gotten used to.

In this instance, it was specifically the perceived support from her supervisor that allowed her to "sit it out," knowing her supervisor would handle it appropriately.

Work experiences, often directly connected to support from co-workers and supervisors, were vital components in helping students feel a sense of belonging in their work environments.  Once students felt as though they belonged in their workspace, it allowed them to then be more confident in their identities and within other environments. Confidence gained from work seemed to impact the college experience overall and informed their view of themselves in the world.

**Students Experienced and Witnessed**
**Marginalization of Non-Dominant**
**Identities at Work**

Students shared several stories about the way they were treated poorly by others. In addition, they talked about witnessing people they worked with be discriminated against.  Many of these stories have a common theme of negative experiences involving an individual with White, male identities.

The student staff were regularly in customer service roles and directly responsible for delivering the programs offered by their departments. Working in roles that put them on the front lines meant students regularly interacted with clients and patrons, who were a primary source of discrimination.  Monica explained she experienced being treated poorly "on a pretty regular basis, especially from older, older men, is generally from the people that I get treated the worst by."

The theme of having negative experiences with men, and specifically White men, is one that was present in several stories.  Monica discussed interactions with one group that was "in one of our spaces and it was like rich, White, old people."  She explained they "did not want to give me the time of day, but I'm the one trying to make sure that our event goes off properly and that they have everything they need."  Although

experiences like this are difficult for anyone working events and attempting to do their

job, Monica explained why this experience was so significant for her.

> And it, as I was getting off, like one of my other coworkers was coming in to fin, finish up the shift who was also a Black woman and she, the very definition of the conversation that we had, explains how necessary it is for people of color to have each other's backs. She pulled me aside before she started her shift. She's like, I need to know people in there. Are they, are they good? But that was code for, are they racist, are they dismissive? Like anything like that. And I was like, they were being like mad rude to me at when I was just trying to get the client here, the clients arrive, we're good to go, everything was going to go off fine. Just be careful. And she was like, a'ight cool. And the fact that that is something that is so necessary that I feel like other people would not have to deal with is really annoying. It's very annoying that that's something that's necessary for our own survival. Like I don't know that other people would like walk up to their coworker and be like, is this event safe for me?

Monica's story indicates this type of treatment and discrimination is something she

experiences on a regular basis. Living in the southeastern United States may make this

type of discrimination part of the daily lives of those who are perceived as anything other

than White. Upon informing friends of my move to the southeast for a new job, I was

asked whether I had considered what it had meant to exist as part of an interracial couple

in the south. I had not, once again a product of my own White privilege, but this question

indicates a common perception of the everyday overt racism that exists in the

southeastern portion of the country, even by those who live thousands of miles away.

While I am often afforded the luxury of not considering my own racial identity,

Monica explained her identities meant she always had to be careful and more perceptive

of what was happening, and clients, specifically "older, White men," often did not give

her proper respect. Surprisingly, following the interview in which this was discussed, I

did not write a reflection in my journal specific to this statement, once again a privilege

associated with my White, male identity. I did not think about this because I did not have

to, despite a conscious effort during the last few years of my life to be more empathetic and come to better understand myself and others better. As a student employee, I do not recall ever being questioned about my capability to do my job and definitely never felt threatened or discriminated against by clients because of my identities. Having privileged identities, this makes sense, and illustrates the drastic differences in experiences directly resulting from identities.

Monica shared another example of disrespect she experienced when working in a role she had done numerous times and felt competent in her skills. She "was working a tech, a full table of tech with a video rack, a sound console, a lighting rack, everything laid out, doing multiple things at once." She described being "mansplained" by a White, male who was a presenter on how to start a PowerPoint presentation, when it should have been obvious she was responsible for technology of the entire event and it should be assumed anyone in her position would know how to perform such a menial task. She elaborated "And he was like, 'okay, no, you have to click start to, to get it to go.' Hmm. What? Yeah, no shit. Do you think this is the first time that I've been doing this for three years now?" Monica explained that his feelings about her as a female technician were directly confirmed by his comments to her.

> He really like thought I wasn't competent and he actually made a comment about it when he first walked in. He was like, wow, you're the first woman I've ever had as a technician. And then he, that's what the first thing he said when he realized that I was teching and then he proceeded to treat me as if I didn't know anything for the rest of the shift.

Monica explained his reaction to her as a female, but also specifically identified this individual as a White, male. It was not only her identity as a female she was conscious of in this situation, but also the way her female identity intersected with being Black.

Other students had their stories to share about interactions with White male patrons and clients. Rachael, who shared her negative experiences were also with "mostly older men," talked about a time she co-facilitated challenge course activities for a fire fighters academy, and how "two older firemen" scrutinized and disrespected her while she was processing activities with them. She stated, "their masculinity" stood out to her and "it made me feel like I wasn't doing my job right or I wasn't doing it correctly or I wasn't like asserting myself like I should have." This was despite being a competent and confident employee by this point in her job, as she explained "But last summer at that point I was pretty much like a lead facilitator, so I was pretty confident in my skills and I had been for quite a while at that point." She connected this experience to being a woman and how this identity means she feel "sometimes silenced" because of it.

Rachael explained another instance that occurred while working the challenge course and was asked a question by a participant.

> Um, and this one older man, he asked me a question about something about the equipment and I gave him the answer. Um, and then he shook his head, he's like okay. And he seemed okay with that answer. And then he walked over to one of our male coworkers and asked the same exact question. And I was standing right there and he got the same exact answer from him. And he's like, oh, okay. So it's like he didn't really like think that I knew what I was talking about and I didn't really like that. And especially cause he went to another male employee and asked the same exact question and I was standing right there. So that wasn't nice. I didn't feel too great after that.

Rachael provided a correct answer to the question, yet the male participant did not believe her until checking with another male. The participant further disrespected her by asking the question of another employee while she was still present.

Additionally, Rachael also witnessed similar situations with others, as she explained her experience of facilitating activities for a UNI 101 class "where the, um, the

male freshman would not let female freshmen start, a, a, challenging physical activity or they would, umm do something against what this one girl was saying or making a plan." Rachael spoke about how the experiences make her contemplate gender power dynamics and how she uses it as an opportunity to try to get participants to process through what they did. Specific to the UNI 101 experience, she explains:

> Whenever we finish an activity and something like that has happened, we will, after every activity we process it and we just talk about how, you know, that specific activity was important, how they addressed it, how that was important and how it kind of relates to life. And if I do see something that, like that happening, I don't specifically say like, why didn't you listen to her because she's a girl. I say like, you know, she had a really good point. Why didn't anyone, you know, pay attention to what she was saying?

Despite feeling discriminated against by disrespectful actions, Rachael continued to use situations to have other students understand their actions and defuse power dynamics.

Alex also shared a negative experience he was part of with an older, White male patron who was upset about a new dress code policy. The patron's complaint was addressed by a female employee, who the patron disrespected and then turned to Alex for help instead.

> And um, he's like, no, I want to speak to, and he says to the girl, no I want to speak to a supervisor, not a child. And then he, she was trying to explain to him the rules and he wasn't having it. And so he looks at me and goes, and is trying to get me to talk to him instead. Cause I guess he didn't want to talk to her or something. And I literally said the same thing to him.

Alex explained the patron continued with his complaints and took his actions and words to the female employee so far that he was "borderline sexually harassing her."

After this story was shared in the focus group, I wrote in my journal about the tolerance of discrimination by those with privileged identities. Alex's response to the patron highlights a major reason why discrimination continues to exist. He answered the

client's question but missed an opportunity to educate the individual on their behavior. Those with privileged identities need to begin to hold others with the same identities accountable when they witness such action.

While interactions with patrons often caused reflection as students experienced discrimination, experiences with co-workers also made students felt minoritized. In referencing one of her negative experiences with a co-worker, Monica reflected on the way that work is usually a place where she feels accepted;

> but there are like, every once in a while, I get a reminder that like that's not always the case. Just like a splash of cool water to, uh, remind me. It wakes me up from my little like daze of like everything's good to like, no you still got work to do.

Interactions with co-workers were often explained as a source of frustration and anger, events that caused students to question their identity and how they show up in their work context, caused them to reflect on truths they thought they understood about their identities, and raised their awareness to how they were perceived by others.

K explained the hierarchy of her work environment as being a succession of three White women, with the professional staff member at the top, then a graduate assistant, and then K as a student manager. She detailed a story which involved a male student co-worker.

> And we had one White male who is the youngest of our group and he refused to take constructive criticism or feedback on his work from any of us and only his peer who's, um, who's the only other male, but does not hold a leadership position. And, so one time the GA, graduate assistant, was helping him with the project. She said, do you understand what I'm asking you to do? He said yes. And she rolled away back to her desk and he said under his breath, uhk, women, and he is younger and does not hold a leadership position.

K's experiences with her co-worker are an extension of stories shared about male patrons, as the issue of discrimination by males is a message that runs continuously throughout this theme.

K continued with her story and emphasized that her male co-worker "will not listen or take constructive criticism or feedback from any three of us that he'll take it from the male that's at his same level," an action that made her reflect on her identity as a woman and traditional obstacles this creates as well as her co-worker's display of masculinity.

> He makes me like so … like you learn like, like about like the glass ceiling and like you'll have to like, because you're a woman, you'll have to, you know, work harder or whatever, whatever. So, but I'm like, well, I'm going to be a teacher. It's predominantly female. But then he was like my one experience where I'm like, oh my goodness. Like I do like that is prevalent and I am a female, so, and he's younger than me, but he still sees me as a woman, so therefore he is better or smarter or whatever.

K indicates she is well aware of societal messages on the limitations of females. It was almost as though she heard these messages but failed to fully understand what it meant as a woman until she had this experience for herself. It often takes a personal experience before being able to truly connect with a situation and other similarly situated individuals.

K had other negative experiences with this co-worker as well. She explained how both of her parents became unemployed in 2014 and her mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. The unfortunate combination of these two events moved her family from being in the upper middle class to living below the poverty line. This in turn meant she went from having private insurance, to student insurance through the university, and eventually to Medicaid when she could no longer afford student insurance.

> Um, so he had gotten an email and said, I need to get this, this student insurance taken off my, my bill. I don't even understand like why they have that. And I was

like, well they have that because you know, some students like need, their families cannot, don't have health insurance, so they need to just have student insurance even though they're families don't. He was like, what, what all it covers is like therapy or whatever. And I was like, well, it covers a lot more than just the therapy sessions that you would need. And he was like, well, I just figured everyone at Southeastern State University (SSU) like, has enough, is like, has enough money to pay for insurance. And I'm like, well you don't really know a lot of people at SSU.

She was angry because her family was barely scraping enough money together to pay for student health insurance at the time, and her co-worker had no recognition of the way students rely on such services. His comment about therapy added further insult, as K explains.

He also didn't know that, um, I suffer from anxiety. I was recently going back to therapy because I was having a rough time, so I was in therapy once a week. And I said to him so, well, some people can't afford health insurance. Well why don't they just get their parents to pay for it? I quickly ran to my supervisor's office and did not talk to him the rest of the shift

These experiences caused K to reflect in a couple of ways. First, "It hit me that like I hid my family's income so well from everyone around me that no one would ever even guess that my parents, that I was living off $40 a month." This became a huge part of who she was, yet she struggled with understanding this identity to the extent that she hid it even from those closest to her. In addition to recognizing the way she hid such a huge part of herself, she felt dejected by these experiences, while at the same time recognizing in astonishment that a single co-worker had managed to marginalize her intersecting identities of being a woman, her socioeconomic status, and her anxiety.

Monica also had a negative interaction with a co-worker and described it as "the one time that I really experienced homophobia on this campus." She explained

I said something, um, in reference to being gay, like as a joke, cause I joke about it a lot. It's part of my personal brand of humor and it helps me cope with

knowing that I'm in a predominantly straight, predominantly white campus [and that this] sometimes gets to me.

She described her co-worker "he's a WASP, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant," and shared

that after she made this comment, he "went off." The two were in the process of setting

up for an event in a room next to the LGBTQI resource center, and the co-worker went

on a rant about how he did not understand why the campus needed diversity resource

offices, that he should not have to pay for them with his student fees, and that diversity

offices "are essentially self-segregation," and people who use them are "closing ourselves

off instead of trying to integrate into the community."

Through shock, devastation, and "angry tears" Monica continued to listen as her

co-worker told her "you guys should just try to like assimilate," and "I could not believe

because at this point in time, the office had become so important to who I was, the

LGBTQI resource office." There was another coworker in the room who did not know

how to respond or intervene, and Monica was able to finish the set-up, clock out, and go

home. Monica was able to detail the feeling she had in the moment.

> I don't cry because I'm upset. Mostly, I mostly cry when I get really pissed off and I was mad. I was so angry that this had happened. And I could not believe that this had happened because all of Campus Life builds this, like is based in the idea that we all our collective group or a family. We are a group of people that support each other and here are my own staff members, can't even respect that this is something that's important to me and is destroying it to my face. Knowing that and like seeing, and he looked at me, so he knew that he was hurting me, and he did not care. And I decided from that moment on I was gonna do whatever I could on this campus to make sure that no LGBT had to feel like that ever again. And I have, I've kept up to it. I've led protests and for, um, our organization, our LGBT organization, I've advocated for my friends, for anyone who's needed me because I refuse to let that happen again. I just won't.

Monica's co-worker's attack on all resource centers was an attack against all of her

intersecting identities. Monica shared this story during our first interview and in my

journal, I pondered "How do we do better?" I can identify with Monica's co-worker because I have been there. I have had those thoughts and often question why. My background and lack of exposure to diversity are certainly a starting point, but not entirely to blame. It is likely impossible for most individuals to eliminate all bias from their perspective. However, it is possible to better recognize bias and process through understanding the effects it has on the views of self and others.

The experience left Monica contemplating whether work was a safe environment, as she explained "I had to go back into that questioning of like, is my job a safe place for me." She added "I was like, is this okay for me right now? Am I allowed to be here?" The situation also forced her to reflect on her identities on a grander scheme.

> Um, and so, but that experience really made me think about what my identities were in the context of the campus community. Like I've known, I've always been a marginalized person. Um, I may be cis, where I hold privilege is the fact that I'm cisgender and the fact that I'm able bodied, right? But I am also a black woman who's queer. So those three identities are my, the pinnacle of my essence. And those are all very three marginalized identities in this, in like the campus community and like the United States community at large. And understanding like the weight of that was, happened in that moment because I had never faced such discrimination blatant toward me until like that moment at work. And it was from there that I kind of threw myself into my identities and I started getting even more involved in all of my organizations and became E board of, two of the clubs that I'm currently E board of now, because I was like, well, if he's going to be mad that his, that his dollars are paying for these diversity offices, I'm gonna make sure that damn well that every dollar gets used right. And used to like, and used to benefit those identities that are being marginalized. So that was definitely one of the big moments that I really had to like understand that I as a marginalized identity and somebody who has a voice and the will to use it. I decided that I had to.

Monica's story is likely similar to hundreds, if not thousands, of students at the two universities where I collected data, and an even greater number throughout higher education. While it is impossible hear every student's story, the stories of students in this study can be used to move toward a more just education experience. Students should not

experience discrimination on campus, yet Monica's coworker's words paint a picture of how hate and intolerance exist in everyday life.

Some interactions students had were not necessarily negative, but similar to Monica's comment about having a co-worker present who was not prepared to intervene. Rachael shared a story about co-workers who simply do not see a problem. She spoke of medical forms that only have check boxes for male and female, which was bothersome to her, but the main part of her story focused on actions employees were required to take when working a special event called a Zipathon. She explained, as people are actively on the zipline "we have to make that assumption with them 40 feet in the air wearing a helmet and we have to check off like, okay, they look like a student and they look like they're male, let's check them off there." She reflected:

> I mean, I'm part of the LGBT community, so I mean that got me angry because we shouldn't be making those assumptions. And you know, there are like people who aren't either gender and we shouldn't be doing that. And having a box for male, female and having that for this is just for employees to see. So, we're not like showing it to participants, but that still doesn't matter because the employees are seeing this and it's enforcing these roles. So that really made me angry. And then having, talking to my other coworkers about that and they, they see no problem with it is really enforced how I guess I walk through life and who I am as a person because I was, you know, upset seeing that.

Rachael likely views experience at work with a unique perspective because of her identities, and her story also indicates those students without these identities may lack the awareness or understanding of how those with minoritized identities are affected.

Alex shared a story that also demonstrated the lack of understanding and awareness that students may experience during interactions with their co-workers. Alex, whose family is from Brazil, explained that he and one of his co-workers, who is also from Brazil, sometimes speak in Portuguese to one another, and there was one of their

other co-workers nearby.  He explained that he knew Portuguese because his family was

from was from Brazil "and she goes, oh, I didn't know White people were from Brazil."

Alex reflected, "It wasn't something where I think it was like her being prejudice or

anything.  I think she's just simply just have never experienced it.  And just didn't know."

In a similar situation, Alex talked about how he was having a conversation in

Spanish with patrons and a co-worker stated "oh, well I didn't know you speak Spanish."

Thinking back, Alex said "Yeah. Family's from Spain too … Surprise!"  As he processed

these experiences, he realized "sometimes it's just made me remember like how I'm

perceived as different than what I know of myself."  Realizing his perception of himself

may be different than perceptions other have of him, Alex explained interacting with two

female patrons who he asked to move from one court to another, so a specific set-up

could be completed, and the patrons responded negatively to his request, or perhaps the

way he went about it.  Alex stated, "So I have to think of what, like alright, how am I

being perceived as, you know, and I've been thinking of that thinking I'm being

aggressive, but it could be, you got to think of those kinds of things sometimes."  Alex

was not sure if he came off as aggressive or if his being perceived as a White male played

a role in his interaction with the two female patrons, however, this demonstrates that as

students are having these experiences, it informs their thinking and perceptions of how

they show up in situations afterwards.

Throughout the roles as employees on campus, students are put in positions to

observe and learn from their professional staff supervisors as well as other professional

staff members, faculty, and administrators throughout campus.  Students may simply

observe and process, often receive direct guidance, or similar to interactions with co-

workers, may have negative experiences that resonate with them. Supervisors and other

administrators often set examples for students and significantly inform the culture of

environments in which students exist.

K provided three examples of her perceptions of leadership in her department and

her experiences with these individuals. The first explains her feelings after a member of

the senior leadership team of her department confused her with a co-worker who was

adamant he had spoken with her. She felt the experience happened because most of the

marketing staff are White females, and this particular supervisor did not bother to take

the time or care to differentiate between them.

> I do notice more when I'm talking to like the senior leadership, like they're, I get
> the feeling, like they're very traditional, like, you know, like White men in the
> power position. It just kind of made me feel like, well, I guess I'm like
> unimportant in your eyes. Like I'm just like a little small thing.

As she had experiences like this at work, her perceptions of White male leadership

carried to other parts of her job. She spoke of a time she served as a member of a search

committee for a professional staff position.

> I interviewed the male and I was sitting there, and I noticed, I was like, cause we
> have to do like recommend with enthusiasm, recommend with reservations, just
> recommend, don't recommend, whatever. And I was like, what do I put?
> Because, if we have female and male (candidates), and if I say that like, like if
> they hired this guy, it's going to be yet another white male in a power position in
> this department. But um, when you've been there like three years, you pick up on
> things. Um, so like they don't need another white male in the department because
> like the female pro staff, like their voices don't get heard.

K's story indicates her recognition of the power held by White males in campus

recreation, which is common throughout the field.

K also talked about a time when her supervisor, a White female, was scolded for

being too emotional in a meeting, despite other professional staff members, who did not

identify as White females, also offering passionate opinions on topics and not being reprimanded.

> And so, my supervisor spoke up and got like passionate about what she was saying and another, um, and then after that one senior leadership said, you're, you're too emotional. You need, you need to calm down in staff meetings. You're not being professional. You're too emotional.

Each of these examples demonstrate K's interaction with systems of White male dominance in her student employment experience, though she was unable to provide further context as to how these experiences connected to understanding her own identities. This is discussed further in a theme about the ways privileged identities allow students to forego processing.

Alternatively, Monica spoke of a time she was put in a position to work an advisory council meeting in the division, an intentional move by her supervisors as they know she hopes to eventually work in student affairs for her career. She shared details of a faculty member who, during an open forum portion of the meeting, voiced disdain for the number of handicapped spots outside of the university building which housed disability offices and disability services. Monica was "really shook" and "really mad," but felt her identities silenced her in this situation.

> I got some words for you, but I, we can't have this conversation right now. And I'm also a student so I really, I can't have this conversation with you and I'm also like a Black woman that I know you're not going to take seriously, so I really don't want to have this conversation with you, but I'm sure I'll, everyone else was just like, we don't want to even give her the time of day to have this conversation with her right now and I, nobody said anything.

In addition to being silenced, Monica also witnessed an environment in which everyone else made the conscious decision to not act or intervene. In contrast to K's responses above, Monica was able to fully process what this experience meant and how it affected

her, likely connected back to the fact that she must always be aware of the way her minoritized identities inform experiences.

Student employees typically have significant contact with their professional staff supervisors, and it is not only the messages they send or things that are observed by students that stand out.  Often, direct interactions with supervisors have significant ramifications.  Monica explained a time when he supervisor unknowingly made negative comments because of the amount of time it took her to do her hair, which led to her being overly tired at work.  She explained that she "had always seen like on the news of like Black girls getting shamed for their hair, but I had never really felt it until like that moment and I was like, did you just?  But he wasn't, but it wasn't even intentional."  As she reflected on this incident, she expanded on her feelings as she tried to understand the situation.

> That's just, it's, that's something that that's a necessary part of my reality as a black woman.  So, I, so that was one instance where I think like his privilege of just not understanding and it's a privilege to not have to understand that because a lot of White people don't take the time to understand like the like the different kinds of struggles that people of color have to go through.

In conjunction with other stories throughout this theme, perhaps some of the most significant experiences for helping students understand their identities come from interacting with those who have low awareness of the multiple identities of those they work with closely.  This is discrimination that adds stress, anger, and sadness to their lives.  As employers within a division of student affairs, valuing diversity and inclusion, there should be some responsibility to educate students on equity, diversity, and inclusivity topics and create environments and support structures that help them intentionally process their experiences.

As students continued to share stories, their words reinforced the theme of marginalization and discrimination experienced as student employees. K talked specifically about being a female and needing to prove herself to male co-workers, saying she needed to "prove that I'm smart and I'm capable and that you can't walk all over me." She also briefly talked about only having a job because of her family's socioeconomic status, which means she directly connects this identity to her role as a student employee.

Rachael also shared about being a female in a physically demanding role and how her identity as a female is "always in the back of my mind." She felt male participants do not always respect her role as a lead facilitator and they "kind of write me off sometimes." To counter this perception, she will relies on her privilege of ability.

> Um, and kind of really highlighting some abilities in certain situations, like being able bodied on the challenge course, making that really well known, maybe doing something super complex when I didn't even have to. Just like get people's attention, like, I know what I'm doing type thing.

In this instance, Rachael used a dominant identity of ability to mask negative perceptions of her female identity.

Monica spoke the most extensively about recognizing the way her minoritized identities show up in the workplace and spoke often about "code switching" which she explained as "essentially changing how you act so that you are perceived the best to the people that you're talking to." She explained that "a lot of people of color, especially in predominantly White institutions" use code switching as a survival technique, and code switching in her role as a student employee is essential, but doing so "doesn't make me any less of who I am."

To further demonstrate code switching, Monica discussed a time she had to balance being a student employee and being a student. She organized a protest for a controversial state bill and "was worried that it would affect how I was seen by my staff." She was unsure what her role should be because a co-worker who identified as gay and was equally upset by the bill chose not to protest because of his role as a student employee. She decided to protest because "they can't fire you for protesting" but also because she was supported through work.

Monica is also aware of her minoritized identities at work in the sense they silence her at times. Regarding a time she disagreed with comments made by a "40 something year old white woman," and why she chose not to voice her opinion she stated,

> I'm not going to try it because another thing about being Black, is if you are that person, especially women, there's the in all of media about the angry Black woman. If I try to be the one to stand up for myself, that's going to be my label for the rest of my life. And I'm not willing to put up with that. There will be a time and a place where I will do that, but not while I'm at work. I don't feel that it's safe enough for me cause I don't want to risk losing my job or risk losing my standing or how I'm seen by the professional staff. I'm told on a regular basis by, um, staff members all over this campus that when they see that I'm the one teching, they know that everything's gonna be fine and that they're good, they feel very confident in my abilities here. I don't want to jeopardize that. And I really hate that. I have to think about whether or not I'm going to jeopardize it just by standing up for myself.

Monica added that if she "didn't have systems of oppression as part of my personal reality, I probably would be more of my most authentic self without any barriers all the time," but because of her role at work, this is not always possible and she "felt like I was being silenced, but I was almost silencing myself because I didn't want to jump in and be like, hey look, that's not okay." In a situation where Monica wanted to stand up for her identities and correct what she viewed as wrong, she could not because of fear of

repercussions to her work and personal reputations. This story once again highlights the need to support students' intentional processing of experiences and help them understand what their identities mean. Students' stories about training demonstrate the benefits of intentional processing opportunities.

**Intentional Training Opportunities**
**Helped Facilitate Processing**

Participants experienced some intentional development opportunities on diversity and inclusion and identified these as significant. Rachael confirmed the importance of these types of training informing her understanding of other contexts and environments by stating, "I think some aspects of training and processing and what not for work has really kind of seeped into my everyday life." Alex spoke more generally about the student recreation center placing "a huge emphasis on student development with the staff," and the way they encourage students to "take a leadership position and move up and challenge yourself to … live up to your fullest potential." He added "there's an expectation that everybody provides an inclusive environment," but he did not identify specific development opportunities through which this happens. Monica and Rachael both spoke to specific development opportunities they were able to be a part of at work.

Monica spoke to her experience in Campus Life and how "everyone is required to go through QPR suicide prevention training, a Safe Zone training with the LGBTQI resource office. Um, and we do a variety of other like formal trainings as part of our meetings." She felt these requirements were significant and helped provide employees with a better understanding of various identities. Rachael had a similar take away for the Safe Zone training she completed as part of the Adventures Program with campus recreation. She shared how they learned how to make the Adventures Program as a whole

"more inclusive" and they talked about "not assuming gender and asking participant pronouns."

Two other items stood out as important in Rachel's comments about training. First, she was ecstatic that her supervisors delivered a training that she deemed as important for the students:

> To have your boss telling you that, hey, these things exist and we should be mindful of them. You're like, wow. Like I feel so awesome right now. This is great that they're actually identifying them. So, that was really cool. It was really great. I loved every second of it. It was awesome!

These training opportunities likely also helped strengthen the sense of belonging discussed in previous themes. As students recognized the intentionality of training on topics important to them, they became more invested in their work environment.

Second, Rachael had never previously encountered an opportunity to receive training on a diversity and inclusion topic in a formal setting. While an assumption is made student employees, especially within a Division of Student affairs, would receive these types of opportunities, responses by K and Alex demonstrated this is not always the case. Rachael explained the training opportunity as "really awesome because I've never had that in a class, in a work place. I've never had that period. I've always just found out things by myself." She later expanded on this thought and added, "And that was my first time in a formal situation learning about those things because it's always just been, you know, with my friends or stuff like that, learning things on social media."

In addition to Safe Zone training, Monica shared other ways Campus Life attempted to make students aware of their identities. She explained being inclusive and understanding how different people show up in the world is a vital part of her role while working as a student employee as they "take intercultural part of ACUI very seriously

here at SSU," and the division "really values" inclusivity and intercultural understanding as they are "making it an intentional effort." One of the ways they did this was through the use of specific training scenarios that she had the opportunity to facilitate.

> One of the scenarios was somebody identifies with gender, with like genderqueer identities and how would you handle that situation if you heard coworkers talking about that and like talking about it negatively and you had to like intervene and be like, no, like why are you saying these things? Like they're not here. Like and having that, opening people's minds to that and knowing that that's part of my role as a minority that I choose to fulfill because not everyone needs to choose to, not everyone needs to be the spokesperson for their identity and we're not expected to be the spokesperson for our identities and we're not.

Through this training she tried to share her understanding that "gender is a construct, first of all, and second of all, as it is a construct, it is a spectrum." She viewed this as important for people to understand as there are an "increasing number of people who are coming out as outside of the gender binary," and she finds happiness in "knowing Campus Life is taking that seriously enough to put it as part of our training."

In addition to specific trainings, Monica also spoke to how Campus Life included understanding of intercultural competencies as part of their evaluation for student employees, a topic important to her as she identified with several minoritized populations. She felt training on intercultural competencies would create a better overall work environment and increase her co-workers' understanding of multiple identities, improving the overall work environment. This provides additional support in recognizing the steps student employers are taking to promote understanding of identities in the employees. Monica explained you "cannot get a raise without getting exceeds expectations in every area on your eval," which included intercultural competencies. She stated that Campus Life expects "every one of our employees to be interculturally competent." She elaborated and explained this stance taken by Campus Life.

> This is important to us and we want to make sure not only for the people who are culturally competent that like we're recognizing that, but the people who aren't that it's part of your job and we're gonna make you better people whether you like it or not.

As a student, Monica supported a recognition of work being part of the educational experience of the whole student, and that it should be more than collecting a paycheck.

Responses from students in campus recreation indicated their training was not as robust as that provided by campus life. Aside from the Safe Zone training mentioned by Rachael, students did not identify any other diversity training they had been a part of. While campus life and campus recreation are both within the division of student affairs at SSU, leadership teams and supervisors within each department develop their trainings agenda independently.

Documentation provided by Monica's supervisor supported the stories Monica shared. The documents show specific sections of training devoted to diversity and inclusion with goals for students to "feel more confident in approaching conversations about and across difference" and "have a more comprehensive understanding of issues of identity." There are outlines for specific scenarios, including the scenario Monica previously shared, in addition to topics such as service animals, Title IX, and inter-staff conflict. Monica's supervisor also sent a follow-up assessment to students after an all staff semester training and included this data with the training documentation and outlines she provided. Results showed 86% of students felt the scenarios were either effective or very effective in helping them learn a more comprehensive understanding of issues of identity. In addition, 91% of students rated the scenarios as effective or very effective in helping them feel more confident in approaching conversations about and across differences. These results, as well as stories from all participants, indicate

intentional training can be beneficial to processing identity and other diversity related

topics.

Monica added while she thought campus life offered diversity and inclusion

related trainings, "there's so much more that we could and should be doing," and "we

don't really go into the weeds of it I guess with like different intersecting identities." In

her journal, Rachael addressed development opportunities she has been a part of at work

and emphasizes why such opportunities are important.

> We discussed the Safe Zone training Adventures had during the summer, which
> was extremely important for talking about intersectionality and acceptance. We
> also discussed how it would have been that much more affective if representatives
> from the LGBTQIA center or the African American Cultural Center or the
> Disability Resource Center came and talked as well. But we agreed that it was a
> step in the right direction, nonetheless. And having an upper staff member
> proudly expressing the 'Safe Zone' sticker on her door is very important both for
> acceptance and reassurance. I guess what I am trying to say is that all work
> places should have something like this. It is uplifting and important, both for
> education purposes and for those people who actually need support. It is
> important for both the staff and the people who the staff come in contact with
> during their jobs.

This final information shared by Monica and Rachael demonstrates that not only do

training and intentional processing opportunities help students understand diversity and

their identities better, and students support these opportunities and view them as

beneficial and important.

**Privileged Identities Allowed Students
to Forego Fully Processing Identity
and Experiences**

Rachael, K, and Alex shared several stories that indicated a failure to fully

process work experiences in terms of identity. Not surprisingly, Monica did not make

any statements that supported this theme. Initially, and upon further reflection, I believe

the actual and perceived identity of being White allows Rachael, K, and Alex the

privilege of not needing to have an awareness of their identities within every context, while Monica's intersection of multiple minoritized identities means she is always conscious of her intersecting identities.

Examples by K and Alex indicated times when further guidance and intentional processing may have been needed. K spoke about being part of a student staff hiring committee, conducting interviews, and making hiring decisions and having a conversation with her supervisor about who they were choosing to hire.

> I don't remember exactly how she said it, but it was like, how would it look if we hired, cause based on qualifications alone, the, the White girl, the White girls were more qualified than the male, but she was concerned like how would it look if we hired what like these White girls, and then the only one we not hire is the Black male. I was like, well that's dicey. Like I don't know. Like I mean, like he was qual, he was qualified in a different position of marketing than what he interviewed for. So, he got that position. But I was like, I don't, I don't know how to handle this situation.

K's statement at the end indicates she did not fully understand the situation or which action was appropriate given the circumstances, or the impact of identity on staff hiring decisions.

Alex discussed a reoccurring experience in his role where non-students, who were perceived to be predominantly African American males, would attempt to circumvent policy to gain access to the recreation center. He explained the conversation his supervisor led with staff to provide support in this situation.

> So, my boss makes sure we understand that (the demographic of the group). Don't like, don't be surprised when you, when you see that, um, just treat them the way you would anybody else. Just ignore what their race is ignore why, like the fact that, just treat them the way you would anybody else. And if they you know, want to pull the race card or anything like that on you just continue to provide the same customer service, stay calm and if they become aggressive than let the police deal with it.

There appears to be othering language in the supervisor's message as well as tones of overt privilege. Alex added, "I think that's why she wanted to have that conversation with everybody just to make sure people are comfortable with it." This story was shared during the focus group, and Monica questioned why the supervisor had not included someone from the African American Cultural Center to help educate employees and develop a solution together. From Monica's view, it was not appropriate for White supervisors to educate White employees on policy obviously affecting a specific population, without inviting voices from the population present to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the situation and related factors.

Alex, Rachael, and K each spoke about their awareness of their privileged identities in the workplace. K recognized her "voice is heard and valued" because she identifies as a White female, which is similar to most of the people she works with directly and acknowledges this may not be the case if she "was working under one of the male pro staffs." Rachael recognized she worked in a physically demanding job and being abled bodied is part of her core identities always present at work. It is likely that their identities as part of a majority allow them to feel valued and comfortable within most environments they regularly exist.

K and Alex both talked about needing to be conscious of their privileged identities and how these affect interactions and perceptions about this. For both, this included an actual and perceived identity of being White, while for Alex his male identity was also involved. Each student felt their privilege could incorrectly be connected to a lack of understanding when interacting with those with minoritized identities, to the extent Alex felt being a White male "definitely silences me" because if he spoke up

people would question the validity of his privileged experiences. He felt there is a

perception of "What the hell do you know? What have you experienced? You're a white

guy who's gotten like anything he's wanted," and explained he is "afraid of that kind of

response from somebody." He also talked about enforcing policy, and even when doing

this as he was trained he is intentional and calculated with all of his actions because he is

"not trying to end up on the news." In this situation, Alex seemed to fail to relate to the

position of the other individuals, and his statement represented an extension of a false

national narrative that White people are under attack and being oppressed. With the

growth of cell phone and dashboard camera footage, a fear has developed of being caught

on camera acting racist, despite the actual intent. The true failure in these situations is

not that intent was misunderstood, but that people, typically White but those with other

dominant identities as well, fail to either care or fully understand the messages being

portrayed by their actions. This, once again, connects back to the fact those with

dominant identities never had to be conscious of their actions, and now when they are, it

is often out of fear of a damaged reputation.

To a limited extent, Rachael, Alex, and K made comments about how their

identities do not necessarily always play a role in their work experience, once again

supporting the narrative that they may not understand the roles their identities play

because they have not been challenged to do so, likely the result of a salient dominant

identity. Rachael specifically mentioned how her identity as pansexual is not something

she thinks about at work because she does not "really expressly say it unless, you know I

want to. There's so many other things I'm thinking about at work. Yeah. I don't think

about that at all." While Alex previously talked about needing to be conscious of his

privileged identities he also stated that being White does not play a role because "this

school is predominantly White and it's not as diverse as some other public universities in

the state," and that he thinks many of his interactions are "based off my personality, not

my race." He added he treats everyone with the same level of respect, regardless of

identity. Also, when discussing the role of identity in hiring practices he stated;

> I mean I've helped out hire. I've helped hire people for the past two years and I
> could care less if you're Black, White, female, male, whatever. We're going to
> hire the people that we feel like are best to do the job.

This statement primarily shows a disregard for the importance of hiring a diverse staff

and the role it plays in a workplace, and also demonstrates a belief in merit above all else,

representing Alex's privilege and denial of this privilege.

K stated that she is aware of all identities because she needs to be when creating

marketing materials, but overall, she does not often have to think about identity because

her sexuality "does not play a role in the workplace," it is "mostly women in marketing,"

and "out of the whole professional staff, there's one woman who is not White. Everyone

else is White." When asked specifically about the privilege afforded her because of her

White identity, K stated "I think being White has given me an advantage, but I can't think

of a specific time that it's like, that I've noticed it giving me an advantage." She also

explained being a white female does not create any barriers for her as a student employee

because she identifies similarly to most others in her immediate work environment,

which contradicts the feelings she explained when reflecting on the negative experience

with her male co-worker. Finally, despite providing several examples throughout the

interviews about student employment and the connection to her multiple identities, when

asked about this directly she stated, "I don't know that it's directly like taught me

anything more about my identities. Um, because like we talked about my, like where I was working, I was the majority." Similar to Alex's comments, statements within this paragraph highlight a denial of privilege.

While some of K's comments indicated her lack of understanding her privilege, she wrote a journal entry that demonstrated her recognition of this.

> After interview number one I realized how heavy discussing topics such as these can be. I always considered myself aware and knowledgeable about topics like race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc., however, I quickly came to realize I do NOT know how to explain or discuss my views/thoughts/ideas about any of them. During the interview I was also asked questions about how I feel/think other people see me and where my place is in the world based on my identities. I got emotional because it was hitting me all at once for the first time I didn't know. I didn't know how to discuss the topics mentioned above in a way that accurately conveyed my ideas and I didn't know how others see me. I remembered at times having to remind myself that I am not invisible.

K's recognition that she does "not know" how to discuss and explain her identities is further indication that work environments may not be established in a way to support this type of processing. A lack of processing was also demonstrated by Rachael's response when I asked her to share a specific story from work about an experience that helped to inform her identities and she responded, "Nothing really comes to mind. Yeah, I wouldn't say that." Alex also demonstrated a failure to find significance in, or fully understand, the role of social identities in certain situations. In explaining a negative response from female patrons and asked about the role his identities may have played in this, he answered "Not sure if that's cause I was telling them they had a move that you're like how the receptors receive authority or just cause I was a guy, I'm not exactly sure."

Additional comments made by Alex, K, and Rachael support the idea that work environments, or at least campus recreation at SSU, need to be more intentional about supporting processing of identities. They specifically spoke to the ways their training in

campus recreation lacked focus on social identities and other diversity and inclusion

topics.  Alex stated that "most of the training is based, is based on just what we have to

do for our jobs," while K explained all of the trainings she has attended have been "more

so operational, like how to operate stuff," and that she has "never gone to a training or sat

in a session at work that was specifically about diversity or inclusion."  However, she

does feel such trainings are needed.  When "non-binary" was discussed during the focus

group, K stated "there are so many people who work, who I work among that have no

idea what that is," and she acknowledged that while there are some professional staff

members who place student development as a priority, "there is not an official student

development training sessions and workshops."

Although not aware of what K had written in her journal or the many comments

other students made about failing to find significance in certain situations, when

discussing development in the workplace, Monica explained why she feels more

intentional opportunities are needed for students to help them better understand and

process their identities.

> Because the white people on this campus don't really have to think about it.  For the most part, the queer people on the campus do like Latino's, African American students have to think about it and I'm sure people have low, poor economic status do.  But the majority of students on this campus are white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, like middle class or upper middle-class individuals.  That's the big bulk of this university.  And they don't really think about, they don't think about how their identities intersect because they don't have to.  That's not something that they're presented with.  They're not faced with.  It's through oppression that we really have to think about those kinds of conversations or when it's brought to our attention.  So, like you as a privileged person, have, it's been brought to your attention.  So now you have, you think about those things.  They don't have it brought to their attention and they don't face oppression.  So, they have no reason. They have no reason to.

Monica's assumption that White people do not have to think about their identities is consistent with responses throughout this research provided by individuals with a dominant identity, primarily when it is a dominant White identity.

**Summary**

Current students felt their experiences as student on-campus student employees within a division of student affairs helped them develop confidence, a sense of self, and understanding of identities different from their own.  On-campus employment also helped students discover a sense of belonging, which was often connected to the support the received from relationships with co-workers and supervisors.  Students regularly experienced and witnessed marginalization of non-dominant identities at work, which added to their understanding of the way they show up in the work environment based on their identities. While intentional training opportunities appeared to help students process an understanding of identity, these opportunities were not prevalent for all students, and often a privileged identity, such as being White or male, allowed students to forego intentionally processing experiences.

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**Themes: Former Students**

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Table 6 summarizes themes for former student participants. The first theme, work experiences and interactions helped students gain new perspective on their identities, is similar to the first theme from current students, though former students did not specifically mention confidence and sense of self.  Themes two and three for former students strongly parallel themes three and four from current students.  Finally, the fourth theme, intentionality is needed to help students process the complexity of their intersecting identities, is similar to the fifth theme for current students, though the focus

is on creating opportunities through which students can process after they mentioned

gaining understanding from an experience or failing to find meaning until years later.

Table 6

*Former Students: Themes*

| Theme |
| --- |
| Work Experiences and Interactions Helped Students Gain New Perspective on their Identities |
| Students Experienced and Witnessed Marginalization of Non-Dominant Identities at Work |
| Intentional Training and Development and Departmental Commitment to Diversity Helped Students Understand Identity Better |
| Intentionality is Needed to Help Students Process the Complexity of their Intersecting identities |

**Work Experiences and Interactions
Helped Students Gain New
Perspective on their
Identities**

Multiple students who submitted email responses wrote about the general way

their employment experiences supported their development and helped them come to

appreciate and better understand their own and differing identities.  Jessie explained

interactions with co-workers as vital to understanding identities different from her own.

The first she wrote about was simply working with a fellow student who was "openly

gay" and because he was comfortable "in his own skin" and welcomed the "opportunity

to educate others on his true identity," she recognized a feeling of safeness in the

workplace where people could be themselves.  Often, people learn about and appreciate

their differences with others only by interacting and sharing experiences with individuals who identify differently than themselves.  Jessie's statement appears to support this.

Jessie also wrote about feeling comfortable as a "white, heterosexual, female" and never really questioning aspects of these identities until her interactions with a co-worker "who identified as nonbinary."  She recalled having several discussions that "opened my eyes to others who felt differently in their own skin than I did."  Similar to statements made throughout interviews by current students, this reflection offered by Jessie seems to support the narrative that those with dominant identities are not also challenged to be conscious of their own identities.

Jamie explained, "Attending trainings on inclusivity and leadership and getting to know and become friends with a diverse group of peers on a personal level really changed me as a person and how I view the world." She added,

> It wasn't until I began working for campus rec that I started to explore my identities beyond the surface level ones that I had created for myself and carried with me since childhood.  The more people I met, became friends with, and learned from, the more I was able to understand some other identities in myself

Jamie's comments indicated both intentional training and development opportunities and relationships with co-workers as instrumental to her exploration of identity.  Until she began working, she had not explored her own identities.  A theme discussed later in this section focuses on the benefits of intentional training, which Jamie touched on.  Further, her comments offered additional support for the importance of building relationships with others and engaging in meaningful conversations.

Finally, Tabatha credited her student employment for helping her recognize her identities as she explained "as a student employee at Campus Rec, I learned I was a leader and how I identified as a woman. These experiences helped me understand my

place in the world and how I came across to others around me." Similarly, Alyssa wrote "Working at the Mountain State University Recreation Center all through college was an experience that shaped me professionally as well as personally." While these two students failed to share a specific story about how their employment experience benefited their identity development, their credit to their former employment environments for doing so is at least enough to support the difference student employment can make.

**Students Experienced and Witnessed**
**Marginalization of Non-Dominant**
**Identities at Work**

Similarly to current students, former students shared several stories about discrimination and marginalization in the work place that forced them to reflect on their intersecting identities. Several former students shared stories about critical incidents that resonated with them and forced them to be more aware of their own identities. Jessie spoke of working the front desk of the student recreation center and overhearing many conversations as patrons passed by, checked in, and socialized in the lobby of the building. She mentioned hearing derogatory comments about race and gender which heightened her awareness around these specific identities, though she did not reflect further in the moment. While this indirect experience with patrons raised awareness of identities for Jessie, many of the former students spoke of their direct interactions with patrons.

Brit recalled attempting to enforce lifting policies with a male patron who "responded in a very aggressive manner and questioned my knowledge." Brit explained how she felt she was being "questioned as a female" about her knowledge of policies and Olympic lifting as a "short female," she felt "attacked." Tabatha also shared an

experience through which she felt minoritized as a woman. She attempted to enforce gym and equipment policies with a group of students playing indoor soccer. As she attempted to enforce the policies the students repeatedly told her "no" and continued to play. However, upon calling a male co-worker to assist, the students immediately complied. She recalled this experience as making her feel as though "women are below men" and ultimately confronted the group and told them they need to "respect and listen" to women, which made her proud, feeling she stood up for herself and other women. Both the experiences by Brit and Tabatha connect back to current student stories in which several females mentioned the push back they received when interacting with males.

Alyssa spoke about multiple interactions she had with patrons, the first of which was when "out of town athletes" touring the campus asked her "are there actually Black people on this campus?" She explained how she had "never really paid attention to having darker skin than some people" until she had people asking her these types of questions. While working at the equipment desk one day she also had a "White boy" ask her if she "knew all of the Black people on campus." She explained,

> Yes, I was a Black woman on a predominantly white campus, but it was not fair to assume that I would know every black person on campus. This incident made me question what it was about me that made people feel comfortable saying these things while I was at work.

Alyssa's story seems to connect to a common notion that a single individual with a specific identity can speak for a collective. While Alyssa was not offering an opinion as a Black woman in this instance, it was expected that she would know all other Black people since she identified in this way.

Finally, also while working the equipment desk, Alyssa was approached by a man "speaking another language" who "thought I was Ethiopian." She did her best to explain

she did not understand what he was saying and shared how she interpreted the experience

in a positive way to now be more compassionate to others.

> I realized that my "look", brown woman with curly hair and a pointed nose gave different impressions to different people. This experience made me realize that because of my physical features, I gave an air of comfort and familiarity to someone who may have felt out of place. I have become more compassionate to people who mistake me for a different race due to experiences like these.

Alyssa shared these multiple stories of feeling discriminated against, and how she

processed through them on her own, but never mentioned support from her work

environment assisting her with this process. This is different from multiple other

students' stories about the importance of intentional training opportunities, discussed in a

later theme. As a bi-racial woman who has likely needed to be conscious of her identities

throughout life, she may not have found new information or perspectives in development

opportunities at work as significant as her coworkers who had dominant identities.

Jensen spoke about working as part of the programming board and denying a

request by the Black Student Association to bring a performer to campus because they

"didn't meet our values" and had said "some things that we felt were potentially

homophobic." Shortly thereafter, the programming board decided to show a film the

Black Student Association claimed was "portraying some of those same things," to which

Jensen felt they were justified in challenging. She explained "that situation just really

challenged me an, um, my privilege and how I show up in those intersecting identities."

She elaborated,

> I think that there was both my white privilege being challenged and me kind of leaning on my queer identity. Um, I'm saying, well, we didn't bring in this performer because he's really offensive to like people like me. Um, instead of thinking about like, why am I privileged mattered in that situation

Reflecting, Jensen is able to recognize she viewed this experience from a single lens and did not take time to fully understand the situation of others involved, likely attributed to the saliency of a White dominant identity.

In addition to negative experiences with patrons and clients, former students spoke to the ways in which interactions with co-workers shaped experiences that made them aware and increased their understanding of identities. Molly spoke about at time after the 2016 presidential election in which a co-worker started chanting "Trump, Trump, Trump," and the ways his attempts to discuss issues on immigration made her reflect on her identity as a member of a family who immigrated to the United States from Colombia. Meanwhile, Jamie shared she became aware of identities she had never considered after "spending time with people who identified differently" than she does and watching them "encounter adversity because of how they identified." She continued to share an experience that "truly made me understand how our individual perceptions, judgements, and insensitivities as people impact those who identify differently than we do ourselves." Jamie's story and others are shared next and demonstrate the processing and understanding of identities that result from interactions with co-workers.

Jamie explained she was working with a friend who "identified as gay" and expressed herself with "masculine" clothing and short hair. The two were responding to radio call at the pool, which could only be accessed through either the women's, men's, or gender inclusive locker rooms. As the women's locker room was closest to their location, Jamie automatically began to take this route when her co-worker asked to go through the gender inclusive locker room instead, explaining last time she entered the women's locker room people "didn't respond well to her presence." Jamie recalled

feeling confused, as to her the building was a "safe space" and "a place where I knew people, they knew me, and I was completely comfortable." Her co-worker explained extreme discomfort based on previous experiences of having been mistaken for a male in the women's locker room and causing a panic. Jamie explained her initial response as anger as she then began to process the experience further.

> Her experience and her story really made me reconsider identities, judgements, and open-mindedness. It forced me out of the bubble I had created for myself. We all have identities. We all face struggle. But do those identities we carry define how we should be treated? Her story made me understand that each individual's identities determine how they interact, respond, and experience life. How they judge others who are different than them. I came to understand that our identities create our reality, but they don't define how we treat those who identify differently.

While Jamie was not being discriminated against directly, the relationship she formed with her co-worker gave her the ability to empathize. In this instance, Jamie was not only learning about identity from a co-worker who identified differently than her, but she was also coming to understand struggles faced because of minoritized identities.

Finally, Jensen spoke to a negative interaction with a co-worker when, as an orientation leader, one of her colleagues informed groups while referencing the LGBTQ resource center, "if you're not normal you go here." She explained this specific co-worker was "pretty religious" and added that along with herself, multiple other co-workers were out and in relationships. For Jensen, this experience created an awareness of the conflict between her identities and the view point of others based on their identities.

**Intentional Training and Development**
**and Departmental Commitment to**
**Diversity Helped Students**
**Understand Identity**
**Better**

Many former students spoke to the way intentional training and development, as well as their departments' commitment to diversity and inclusion helped them understand and appreciate different identities. Nina shared through her work experience she was "frequently involved in training about diversity and inclusivity," which "shed light on so many ways in which people are minoritized or don't feel welcomed and safe." Speaking to diversity and inclusivity focused training opportunities, Nina reflected on why they were so important for her.

> Having these types of training allowed me to explore my other identities and realize how privileged I am in many ways and how I will have obstacles to overcome, like simply being a Hispanic queer female. Without developmental conversations about identities, I doubt I would be in the same place today, I have become confident with my identities and look for ways to empower others.

Developmental opportunities at work start Nina on a path to understanding her own identities, and also helped her identify previously unrecognized privilege in her life.

Many former student participants viewed intentional training and development opportunities as a key component to understanding their identities to this day, as demonstrated by their statements. Molly wrote about how "incredible interactions" and being a part of training initiatives helped her "understand the meaning of intersectionality and how it applies to me." She explained how, as a woman of color, trainings at work helped her understand both minoritized and privileged identities better and "how my identities come together." Jessie added that she "had some amazing opportunities for employee development during employee training days to attend workshops and seminars

to further expand my knowledge on gender identity and how it influences experiences."
She wrote specifically about a "training that was put on to better understand all of the
terminology used such as cis, bi, trans, etc. that helped increase my awareness for these
types of identities as I had no idea those words even existed." Similarly, Olivia shared her
belief that "training, in-services, all-staff meetings, and day-to-day conversations really
shed light on so many ways in which people are minoritized or don't feel welcomed and
safe." Finally, Brit wrote she "did a leadership training through the Mountain State
University Recreation department that was very eye opening and helped me learn a lot
more about myself as a person."

There are two takeaways from these comments. First, students appear to truly
appreciate and support diversity and inclusion trainings offered by their places of
employment, and they credit these intentional development opportunities to helping them
better understand their identities. Second, diversity training initiatives are obviously not
consistent across institutions, despite department placements within a division of student
affairs. While multiple former students who were campus recreation employees at
Mountain State University spoke to the plethora of training opportunities they
experienced, there was a lack of similar training opportunities at Southeastern State
University campus recreation, according to current student responses.

While diversity specific training provided by employers was important for many
participants, it was not the only type of opportunity participants viewed as intentional
development. Jessie felt "fortunate" to work at Mountain State University, an institution
"making great attempts to make people feel welcome" and felt inclusive policies,
facilities, and outward messages of acceptance played an important role in broadening

her awareness and understanding of identity.  Similarly, Carrie spoke to the inclusive

environment of Campus Recreation as "eye opening" and thought her role in marketing

and the need to recognize identities different from her own to "make sure everyone was

being represented" helped her better understand how she viewed her identity.  In

addition, Renee spoke to a work experience after the 2016 presidential election, when

space was used for a debriefing session and made available for students to reflect.  She

explained the debriefing opportunity as a "critical moment when I began reflecting on my

own identities and how they intersect with one another and impact how I show up in

spaces."  She elaborated how the space allowed her to "navigate and rethink my own

privilege of being White passing but also Latina on a predominately White campus."  She

concluded;

> I realized the privilege I carried while simultaneously fighting racial battle fatigue
> (along with other students of color).  Having conversations with students during
> this time allowed me to reflect and become critically self-aware of my own
> identities as they intersect while mentoring and supporting a diverse group of
> students.

For Renee, work provided the space and encouragement to intentionally process her

reactions to politics in the macrosystem, but she was not the only one to focus on the

importance of an inclusive environment and the necessity of needing a safe space to

process identities.

Nina specifically spoke to the overarching effect of feeling a space supports

inclusivity by explaining "My story isn't about one singular instance, rather about how

providing an inclusive environment allowed me the opportunity to grow as a person and

explore my identities and how I can affect others moving forward." She continued by

stating the "overall inclusive environment" she experienced as a student employee

"allowed me to feel safe and supported, which prompted me to come out to my work friends as queer." She further elaborated on her feelings of safety and support at work and stated it "allowed me the safe place to explore my identities and grow into them confidently."

In addition to training, and work culture and environment, one student identified conversations with their supervisor as an important intentional development opportunity. Jensen spoke of the importance of having intentional conversations about identity during weekly meetings with her supervisor, who she credits as "really, really important in my identity journey." They both identify as White women, and Jensen said her supervisor "was really influential and helping me understand kind of what that means." She could not recall having conversations about identity prior to talking with her supervisor and explained during these interactions she was "figuring out my identities and who I am and why that's important to me." She explained the conversations "challenged me a lot in my whiteness" and "started me on my journey of unpacking internalized dominance," and she ultimately started "showing up in a different way" in other environments on campus, stating she "found purpose in helping underrepresented student groups on campus."

Bringing things full circle to the beginning of this theme, Jensen stated that during training sessions there "was always an identity aspect and we always talked about privilege and oppression and systems of power in some way," and these trainings informed one-on-one discussions with her supervisor. Specific to the trainings, she states they were the "beginning of me learning about my identity and it kind of projected me into all the other identity and justice-oriented work, and jobs that I did during my undergraduate employment."

Jensen believes that to this day, the way she came to understand her own identities through her student employment experiences "shows up in everything I do." She explained how she came to understand her Whiteness through work experiences and conversations with her supervisor and elaborated on the ways this early understanding of this particular identity plays a role in her life today.

> I'm really interested in and passionate about kind of whiteness studies and unpacking a lot of my own whiteness all the time. I'm actually in my first year of my master's and it's what I'm hoping to do my thesis about. I 'm hoping to write about how white women college students navigate having both the dominant and the subordinated identity and what those navigations really mean. So, I think it's influenced me a lot in kind of the trajectory I want to take my career in my academics. Um, I think it shows up a lot in how I interact with my partner. My partner is a black woman and so I've had experiences where I've really messed up. Um, and you know, we have a relationship where she called me out on it. And, um, I think how I handle those situations, it has been really important and has really changed.

Jensen's current standing as a first-year master's student in a College Student Services Administration program likely has provided additional guidance and support as she reflects back on her undergraduate employment experience. However, it is also apparent the intentional development opportunities she was exposed to as a student employee, particularly the intentional processing guided by conversations with her supervisor, played a significant role in the way she understands her intersecting identities to this day.

**Intentionality is Needed to Help**
**Students Process the**
**Complexity of their**
**Intersecting Identities**

Similar to a theme with current students, several responses by former students also indicated the need for student employers to better created environments to support the processing of identities. After Brit's initial email response, I sent a follow up question asking how her work experiences, which she explained as significant and

meaningful, specifically informed her understanding of identity. Brit responded, "Honestly, I didn't really do much reflection on my identities. They were simply experiences that I had." Molly similarly responded to the same question, "In all honestly I didn't really take time to reflect on my identities."

Other former students also shared stories that indicated an opportunity for intentional processing may have been missed. Alyssa shared a negative experience that caused her to "think about myself as a woman, and a black woman at that." She was "denied two promotions for reasons that were not really explained," despite the fact of being told she delivered the "best interview out of everyone who applied." As she reflected, Alyssa explained this made her question her "perception to others as a strong black woman." She concluded, as a Black woman with a strong work ethic she may be "intimidating" to others who do not understand her. Despite sharing this and other meaningful experiences, Alyssa never connected her processing to development opportunities at work.

Further, two students identified that perhaps more could be done to help students understand the ways their experiences inform their identities. Michael explained that "most of the EDI work that I have engaged in was after grad school as a professional." Also, for students who "may be a little further along in their identity development" or in their "social justice journey," Jensen felt supervisors need to be able to recognize this and play a role helping students identify opportunities that can help them take the next step, stating she was "seeking that for a while." This recognition by supervisors could likely have a positive effect on all students as they strive to create opportunities through which student employees can appropriately explore their identities.

A statement by Jessie indicates that while she understood what her identities were, she did not necessarily understand what they mean or how they affected the way she shows up. She explained,

> I identify as a white, female, heterosexual individual. But I did however second guess my identity as in, do I really know and how can I be sure that I identify the way that I do? Although I am sure and I am comfortable with how I identify it makes you think twice about it and makes you think what out of my life experiences made me identify the way that I do. I understood my identity is what made me who I am and I was unique, but so were all of the other individuals who had varying identities, were to the same extent unique and should be valued to the same extent although they face countless varieties of oppression due to their identities and are not really allowed to be who they are in a judgmental world.

Jessie second guesses her own identity and ponders the uniqueness of all individuals. Specific opportunities to help her process some of these thoughts could have been beneficial.

The last story for this theme was shared by Anthony, who reflected on his lack of negative experiences as he "engaged in officiating and worked through multiple sports." He felt that as a "6'3'', White, male" he experienced privilege that he "wasn't aware of at the time," and directly affected the "lack of negativity" experienced. He shared a specific experience in which his mistakes as an official incorrectly ended a soccer match and explained how he has since reflected on this experience.

> This experience has impacted me in several ways, first it made me recognize my "white-ness" where I was put in a situation with all international, non-white students, where it was assumed that I could do the job because of my privilege. In this case, I was not able to appropriately do the job, and instead of my privilege helping me gain respect and avoid being yelled at, I was yelled at for being a white, uneducated (in soccer), individual. I had not experienced this negativity prior to this experience, mainly due to my lack of diverse background, in addition to the situations that I had chosen to put myself into. My white identity provides me privilege, however this experience was the first time it was truly put into perspective to me. Secondly, this experience has stayed with me as I realized the cultural naivety that I had at the time. I had not fully comprehended that I did not understand other cultures or had not be exposed to other cultures in meaningful

> ways until this experience. Soccer is a cultural game, where each culture plays the game differently, with different styles and levels of physicality, which I did not understand at the time due to my ignorance of the game.

Anthony elaborated on this experience further and explained it was so impactful he still thinks about it to this day and through reflection has come to "realize that this experience was my first real multi-cultural exposure and first real understanding of the privilege that I have as a White male." However, it appears Anthony did not truly reflect on and make meaning of this experience and his identities until years later. Once again, more could have been done to help Anthony reflect and process in the moment, instead of not making meaning of his experience until later in life.

## Summary

Through data collected from semi-structured interviews, a focus group, participant journals, and document analysis, understanding, aided by my journal, led to the emergence of five overarching themes and three sub-themes, as previously summarized in Table 5, for current student participants. In addition, emailed statements by former students and a phone interview with one other assisted with understanding four themes for former student participants, as summarized in Table 6. These themes helped to inform understanding the research question: How do student affairs student employees make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment experience? A discussion of findings and implications and recommendations for practice and research are detailed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Intersecting identities create dynamics that can be difficult to understand because of the way identities' influences on one another informs how individuals experience the world (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill et al., 2011; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; McCall, 2005; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Stewart, 2008; Stewart & McDermott, 2004; Torres et al., 2009). Further, research made clear the importance of better understanding the ways students make meaning of their intersecting identities in specific contexts and environments during their higher education experience (Patton et al., 2016; Russell, 2012; Torres et al., 2009; Ung, 2013). While the higher education environment, as a whole or any specific context or microsystem, is appropriate for an exploration of the ways students understand their intersecting identities, my personal connection and positive experiences with my development as a student employee played a major role in choosing the context of student employment, specifically in a division of student affairs where I was also employed. In addition to my personal connection, a majority of college students now work (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; Sallie Mae, 2016), adding to the importance of understanding specifically how employment affects students, with identity development but a single piece of the puzzle. A constructivist paradigm (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Guido et al., 2010; Patton et al., 2016), served as a guide for research design and decisions throughout, as narrative inquiry methodology was used as I explored the question: How do student affairs student employees make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of their student affairs employment experience?

As I met with students for interviews during the fall semester, faculty, staff, students, and the community were recovering from the devastation of a direct hit by a major hurricane. Although schedules were full, and time became more valuable than ever, after nearly a month-long closure of the university, I came to know the students participating in this research as we spent long afternoons and late nights talking about our backgrounds, families, current struggles, and sharing stories about the way work affected our understanding of how we show up in the world. While I did not have the same pleasure of meeting in person and bonding with former student participants, the willingness of their supervisors to recommend them and their recognition of my former employment at the institution where they worked, built a trust and made them comfortable sharing personal and powerful stories as they expressed excitement to participate in research on a topic they felt strongly about.

Through the data collection and analysis process I was able to gain new perspective on my identities and experiences, and particularly with current students, I was able to discuss this and their understanding as it emerged throughout our interviews and focus group. My researcher journal served as an important component to recording thoughts and reflection as the research progressed, also providing thoughts and conclusions I could confirm with participants during subsequent interviews. As we continued to talk and share with one another, what emerged from the data was an understanding of how work experiences affected an understanding of identity and the ways worldviews were informed by these experiences.

As meaning emerged from this interview process, it became apparent students could easily identify specific experiences at work that were extremely meaningful to

them and directly related to a perception of their intersecting identities. Through stories about relationships, support, intentional development opportunities, and an overall sense of confidence and freedom to express themselves, students recalled experiences that brought them great joy, made them angrier than they had ever been, and made them cry tears of joy, anger, and sadness. Some students credited work for keeping them in school, giving them a home on campus, and spoke to work as a place that made them realize it was okay to be their true selves. While students connected many of these stories to helping them understand their identities, there were many other stories students identified as important, but they were unable to verbalize why they thought this way. In the end, we found meaning in past experiences and the research process.

Early in this research I identified a problem. Institutions are veering away from educating toward critical consciousness and instead positioning diversity efforts as a way to check boxes, resulting in a loss of meaning in and flattening of differences (Collins & Bilge, 2016). While the role specific campus environments play in student development needs to be better understood, it is postulated increased understanding can be obtained by exploring student development within real-life college settings, while paying close attention to identities and their interactions with one another, the environment, and systems of oppression with which they interact (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Patton et al., 2016; Russell, 2012). As the impacts of various environments on student identity development are better understood, it becomes possible to be intentional about the way development opportunities are structured in student spaces, returning the focus toward educating toward critical consciousness, and thus preparing the whole student for life after college. As students develop a more complex understanding of themselves and

others, they are more prepared to affect social change (Freire, 1970). Thus, my purpose became the exploration of the construction of college student's multiple identities in the context of their student employment experience. A discussion of my findings follows.

## Discussion

The following discussion covers topic areas of: 1) Work, identity development and environment; 2) Feelings of support and exploration of identity; 3) Work, multiple identities and intersectionality; 4) Privilege and oppression at work; and 5) Training and development. For each topic, I link discussion to themes that emerged from data analysis and to the literature, theories, and models discussed throughout Chapter II. Finally, as appropriate I offer thoughts, conclusions, and perspective from my own positionality.

### Work, Identity Development and Environment

All participants involved with this research shared stories about their student employment experiences they deemed as significant in understanding their social identities. Students made direct connections between their stories, the work environment and the way they understand their own and other identities. This aligns with previous findings that environment plays a significant role in student development and meaning making capabilities and influences dimensions of identity development (Abes et al., 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Russell, 2012). Specifically, environments interconnect at micro and macro levels and include social interactions, policy, political factors and other interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993).

Multiple students spoke to exosystem level US politics and perceived macro level values and norms affiliated with those who supported either side of a recent presidential race. In turn, these events at the exosystem and macro levels informed interactions

among peers in specific microsystems and across mesosystems, specifically impacting

the student employment context.  For example, Monica was required to work an event

where the candidate and attending participants contradicted many of her views and

beliefs, forcing her to reflect on her identities in the current political climate, but also

allowing her to find support in supervisors and co-workers, while questioning how she

would and should show up at work for the specific event.  In addition, Renee was able to

find a comfortable environment at work in which she was able to process her feelings

about election results through a lens of her identities, and vice versa.  These experiences

demonstrated the influence interactions at the microsystem level can have on

development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Renn, 2000), and the way these interactions may

appear in a specific context, such as the student employment environment.

In addition, Renn (2000) had previously suggested events in the exosystem, such

as politics and parental income, and macrosystem, such as cultural beliefs and societal

norms, played a lesser role in identity development than did experiences in the

microsystem.  I disagree, and believe context provided from interactions in the exosystem

and macrosystem directly inform ways students will experience events within a given

microsystem. For example, in addition to Monica and Renee's experiences, K spoke

about the ways her parents' income level, a component of her exosystem, had a direct

effect on her interactions with co-workers, her understanding of social class, and the way

she was perceived by others.  K experienced classism (Langhout et al., 2007) in a

microsystem due to factors in the exosystem. Further, nearly all participants shared

stories of the way cultural beliefs and societal norms, which are macrolevel interactions,

impacted their own experiences and perceptions on a daily basis, indicating all levels of a students' environment may be similarly important in understanding their identities.

For environments to be supportive of students' process of making meaning of their identity, they need to be deemed safe (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Evans & Broido, 1999; Paul & Frieden, 2008). Multiple students mentioned their environment as a safe place for them, though in additional to the traditional definition of the word safe, they also conveyed messages of the environments as comfortable and welcoming. Essentially, work was a place students went to escape pressure and expectations they experienced in their other environments and microsystems. As both research sites were Predominately White Institutions, this seemed especially important for students of color. For example, Monica spoke several times about feeling safe and comfortable enough at work to truly express herself and let her identities show up in an authentic way. Additionally, Nina shared she felt safe and supported at work to the extent she felt comfortable enough coming out to her friends at work as queer, and work as a whole provided a safe space for her to explore her identities.

Further, students shared stories of the specific ways understanding their identities and gaining confidence through work experiences allowed them to explore their identities and be their more authentic selves in other contexts and environments. For example, the confidence gained at work about identity allowed some students to be more open with and truer to their identities to families and other peer groups. This supports theory stating development and experiences in one environment will carry over and affect experiences in other environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). As students explored and understood

their identities better at work, it allowed them to show up more authentically in other environments.

**Feelings of Support and
Exploration of Identity**

Previous research ( Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Evans & Broido, 1999; Paul & Frieden, 2008) indicated students need a safe, supportive environment to explore and make meaning of their identities. Student employment has been confirmed as such an environment as students shared multiple stories about the ways work provided a place where they could be themselves and further explore their identities. Through stories about supportive environments, peers, and supervisors, students spoke about safety and work as an important aspect of their support network at college, which they recognized as important for expressing their true selves. Students were able to turn to co-workers and supervisors for support in difficult times and have conversations about identity. I was able to share stories with current participants about my own valuable relationships with past supervisors, and how some of them provide support and guidance to this day. Students also viewed work as a place they could build relationships with individuals who shared similar identities, spoke to finding genuine care and compassion at work, and talked about supportive work relationships as they distanced themselves from previously understood norms and expectations.

A major benefit of student employment is the development of social support networks and peer connections (Butler, 2007; Cheng & Alcántara, 2007), which may be even more important for students with minoritized identities (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Flowers, 2004; Klum & Cramer, 2006). Students with various racial and ethnic identities across former and current student participants provided responses which support these

earlier findings.  Students primarily gained a sense of being supported in three ways.

One, from discussions and relationships with co-workers, two, from discussions and

relationships with supervisors, and three, recognition of beliefs and values within the

employment environment, such as inclusivity, that aligned with their own.

Through messages of a sense of belonging, recognizing their worth, and an ability

to be themselves in an inclusive setting, students demonstrated the ways they broke away

from the perceptions and expectations of others, and instead acted with confidence as

they came to understand themselves in the work environment.  Students spoke of

standing up for themselves, educating others, having meaningful conversations about

identity, and coming to view their world from new perspectives based on unique

identities.  These stories combined to support previous findings that working within a

division of student affairs leads to higher levels of self-awareness (Athas et al., 2013).  As

mentioned in my researcher positionality, I too experienced a better understanding of self

because of my work experiences.  However, I attribute much of this to my student

employment as a graduate student, and less so to experiences as an undergraduate.  While

I can reflect now on experiences that were important during my time as an undergraduate

student employee, I did not process these experiences until much later.

Student employment appeared to be an important context through which

individuals processed and made sense of individual identities, supporting many aspects of

individual identity development shared in Chapter II.  For example, the coming out

process relied on the presence of supportive people and having role models who shared a

similar identity (Evans & Broido, 1999).  Further, a sense of community and visible signs

of support also encouraged the process (Evans & Broido, 2002).  Both former and current

participants identified work in helping them better understand and be more comfortable with their sexuality, and both having supervisors who identified similarly to them and gaining an overall sense of support and inclusion in the work environment were major factors in helping student employees feel more confident in their sexual identity.

As a second example, due to a downward change in social class, K experienced stress, anxiety, and instances of classism (Langhout et al., 2007; Matusov & Smith, 2012; Walpole, 2003). However, co-workers and supervisors helped her process and better understand her experiences, indicating work may provide opportunities that make up for lost interactions with faculty, typically experienced by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Walpole, 2003). Combining these and multiple other examples evident in the presentation of data in Chapter IV, I conclude student employment provides a multitude of experiences necessary for students to develop through a plethora of individual identities, generally aligning with accompanying models and theories for each individual identity and provides the necessary support structures for students to process these experiences appropriately, coming to better understand and clarify their identities.

Speaking to a single identity is a common way for students to conceptualize and manage multiple identities, as a dominant or more salient identity plays a significant role in perceptions of reality (Brooks et al., 2008; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Further, students may focus on a dominant identity to hide less-privileged identities (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Jones, 2009). Examples of this were evident in students' stories and may mean they need opportunities that help them explore their multiple identities better and more intentionally, discussed further in the recommendations section of this chapter.

**Work, Multiple Identities and Intersectionality**

Some stories demonstrated ways students made sense of their multiple identities at work. The model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes et al., 2007) uses the concept of a core identity circled by multiple social identities that become more or less salient dependent on context and individual meaning making capacity.  Students spoke about core values they carried with them throughout multiple environments and contexts, including being a leader, valuing family, and being loud and boisterous.  Monica spoke specifically about how once her loud and boisterous personality was accepted at work, her social identities became more salient in that setting.  She realized people would accept her for who she was, making her more willing to share other identities, such as her queerness.

Similarly, Rachael often spoke of being less confident than others, a part of her core identity which was also connected to being a woman.  In the challenge course setting, she was able to rely on being able-bodied to prove she belonged, increasing her confidence in what it meant to be a woman.  Individuals often assign themselves labels based on expected norms of an identity (Reynolds & Pope, 1991).  Because of societal messaging and past experiences, Rachael assumed she would be discriminated against as a woman in a physically demanding job.  However, once she proved her ability it helped her process her identity as a strong woman and increased her confidence, ultimately leading to being comfortable at work with the way her asexual identity intersected with the others.

Students are better able to make meaning of multiple identities as they develop higher levels of meaning-making capacity (Abes et al., 2007). A sense of belonging,

personal relationships, and sharing common experiences with others often supports

growth toward self-authorship. Feeling a sense of belonging was a theme which

developed from current student responses, and several former student statements also

indicated they too felt a sense of belonging while at work. Students also indicated a

desire to understand the experiences of others, though their comments did not always

indicate a development of empathy for the conditions and experiences of individuals with

identities different than their own. This leads me to conclude, based on meaning making

theory (Kegan, 1994), work is providing an environment with many of the support

structures needed to move students toward self-authorship, but many of them have not yet

reached order 4 of consciousness.

Monica was the one student who demonstrated self-authorship in her responses,

and also movement toward establishing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Some of

Jensen's answers also indicated movement toward self-authorship, and while her student

employment experiences likely supported this, I believe the transition in consciousness

largely happened after she finished her time as a student employee. Monica understood

her views and beliefs and how they fit in the world. She made comments about the

importance of being visible at work for others who identified similarly to her. Her

responses indicated an understanding of purpose and the perspectives of others, and she

often directly connected her meaning making process to specific work experiences. I

believe this finding is significant, as it indicates students have experiences at work that

directly help them move toward self-authorship. However, Monica is one of 16

participants, so it is not necessarily appropriate to draw conclusions based on her

responses alone. In addition, it is difficult to discern the extent to which her already

heightened awareness of her identities, as a queer woman of color, played in to the development of her meaning making capacity, and the amount that can be contributed to her work experiences.  It is understood meaningful experiences move students toward self-authorship sooner (Barber et al., 2013) and Monica as well as many other participants shared stories about many meaningful experiences as student employees.  However, additional research may be needed to explore this relationship further.

Individuals who have faced substantial challenge and conflict are more likely to have an increased understanding of multiple, intersecting identities, leading to a better understanding of self (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Strayhorn et al., 2008; Ung, 2013).  All students shared stories of conflict and challenge in the workplace that they connected to development and understanding of one or more or their identities, explaining the ways identities showed up and affected their roles as student employees.  Student responses indicated work experiences were a likely source of this necessary challenge and conflict.

From a lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) I was able to be conscious of the way students with multiple minoritized identities explained experiences.  For example, Monica spoke to identifying as a queer woman of color, and how this at times silenced her. She was unwilling to speak up in certain situations, feeling she could ruin her positive reputation within the division by speaking out against someone who identified as White, as if it was not her place to do so.  Alyssa shared a story about questioning the role her identities as a Black woman played in her inability to receive a promotion.  She strongly believed her identities were a significant reason why she was passed over for the promotion.  Each of these stories represent students' connection of an

experience to a system of power, and the way they experienced being silenced and discriminated against because of their identities and recognition of systematic oppression.

I again return to the thought that students who face significant challenge and conflict (i.e. students with multiple, minoritized identities) have a better understanding of self (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Strayhorn et al., 2008; Ung, 2013), a notion supported by the stories of students in this study. This leads to the conclusion that many students, particularly those who have experienced life through the lens of privilege, namely White or male, may not be fully prepared or able to discuss intersecting identities. Similar to my lack of awareness to my privileged identities until much later in life, students with dominant identities are not prepared to discuss intersecting identities, or simply never needed to. Accordingly, the design of this study was not based around simply asking students how their employment experience informed an understanding of intersecting social identities, as even individuals who have graduated college long ago and perhaps are even familiar with intersectionality literature may struggle with words to answer such questions.

**Privilege and Oppression at Work**

Multiple times throughout the research process, students shared stories about the way their identities informed interactions and experiences in the workplace but then provided follow-up comments such as "I didn't really process it" or general comments about thinking their identities did not specifically play a role in the experience they just shared. Further, as mentioned, students often discussed one identity while ignoring the way other identities informed a specific experience. This often seemed to be prevalent with students who identified strongly with a dominant identity, supporting DiAngelo's

(2011) discussion on White fragility. White students simply do not have to think about race and view it as an issue for people who identify differently than them. If race is an issue for another group, White people relieve themselves of the burden of thinking about it, as demonstrated in students' answers about a lack of processing. In addition, five students identified as Black, bi-racial, Hispanic, or Latina, none of whom made a comment about not processing a work experience as it related to their identity. From a lens of intersectionality and power, it is obvious White identifying individuals often have the privilege of not thinking about race in the context of student employment, perhaps limiting their overall understanding of their own identities.

Further, students made comments about work opportunities being based on merit alone and viewing all individuals, regardless of identity, as the same, indicating a failure to recognize the benefits of privilege (McIntosh, 2012; Mullaly, 2010). In one story shared by Alex, he explained how a supervisor instructed student staff to treat everyone the same and discussed with them what to do if a participant attempted to "pull the race card". These instances indicated some students are existing in meritocratic work environments and failing to empathize with the situations and realities of others. Returning to White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011), Alex's story represents an attempt to view everyone as the same, once again removing the burden of processing race and resulting differences in experiences. According to White identity theory (Rowe et al., 1994), demonstrated in these examples are avoidant attitudes, where White people are unaware of issues affecting minorities, and dependent attitudes, where a White identity may be recognized, but it is not understood what it means to identify in this way. However, as demonstrated by the stories shared, the types of situations that could help White students

process race are happening, but better guidance is needed to help students understand their identities, specifically through a lens of Whiteness and privilege.

I can identify with Alex and other White students in this study, as shared in my researcher positionality, I did not understand what it meant to be White. I was, and still at times am, unable to empathize with the situations of others. However, my personal experiences and the stories shared above indicate opportunities at work exist through which White identifying students can process through their own identity and eventually gain a better understanding of differences. My conclusion from this is work environments and the support structures within them are not always designed in a way to facilitate intentional processing of identities, despite the existence of real-life learning opportunities.

Previous literature on student development stated experiences of subordination and oppression influence how identities are understood (Jones, 2009; Patton et al., 2016). This is important as students shared several stories about the ways they experience oppression in the work place. Individuals felt dehumanized (Freire, 1970) during interactions with patrons, co-workers, and administrators, experienced oppression as a result of events in their exosystem and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1995), witnessed and were directly affected by systematic, dominant power structures (Case et al., 2012; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), and were silenced because of their identities (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). I believe these stories confirm the systematic oppression that exists within the higher education system (LeSavoy, 2010), and in this case, within student employment settings. While those with dominant identities were often unaware of how work experiences were impacting them, those with minoritized identities were

always aware of the injustices they were experiencing, supporting previous research (Mullaly, 2010)

Erikson (1963, 1980) postulated multiple crises and challenges are necessary for the development of a sense of self and appreciation of others.  However, there is a significance difference between experiences that challenge students and contribute to their overall development, helping them make meaning of their identities, and discriminatory behavior and actions that cause oppression and hardship.  It is important those responsible for creating student employment environments supporting student identity development are able to discern the difference.

**Training and Development**

Student responses indicated when employers provided intentional training opportunities, they felt more prepared in their attempts to understand their own and other identities.  Students gained new perspective and began to contemplate situations in ways they had not before.  Overall, it was apparent intentional training opportunities were supported and appreciated by student staff, and even students who already received significant training offered recommendations for additional efforts that could be made.  As students experience discrimination and oppression in the work place on a regular basis, they need to be properly prepared to confront it, manage their experiences on a personal level, and affect change within their environments.

Responses for current students highlighted a discrepancy in training and development opportunities received.  Responses from Monica indicated an intentionality in training toward cultural awareness and development. However, responses by Alex, Rachael, and K demonstrated this focus may be department specific, and supported

previous literature indicating student employee training often focuses on improving efficiency and service so students can perform their jobs better, rather than on learning and student development (Diesner, 2015; Guerrero & Corey, 2004; Manley & Holley, 2014; See & Teetor, 2014).

While current student responses may indicate an issue within training of campus recreation student staffs specifically, former student responses clearly demonstrated training and development opportunities that were intentionally created and implemented to facilitate student development while focusing on helping them understand concepts of identity.  Responses from Renee, (transition programs) and Jensen, (campus activities) also suggest their training and development opportunities as student employees supported their development and exploration of identity.  This leads me to propose three most likely scenarios, none of which can be stated as definitive without additional research.

For the purpose of these scenarios I will refer to training and development opportunities that focus on student development and cultural awareness as advanced development opportunities.  One, individual departments are responsible for developing their training initiatives and independently determine the necessity of advanced development opportunities.  Scenario one would explain the discrepancy in training and development opportunities across departments represented in this study.  Two, student staff training initiatives, goals, and outcomes are set by divisions of student affairs but there is a lack of follow-up, helping to explain the discrepancy in advanced development opportunities for current students in different departments at the same institution. Three, institution and division culture dictate the inclusion of advanced development opportunities for students. This would explain why all departments at the institution

represented by former students appeared to include advanced development opportunities.

However, it would need to be assumed other factors led to the inclusion of advanced

training opportunities at one of two departments at the other institution, perhaps

individual agendas of the professional staff.  No matter the overall reasoning for inclusion

or exclusion of advanced development opportunities, both the implementation and

effectiveness of such initiatives are likely significantly affected by and dependent on the

views, values, and ability of the professional staff members implementing them.

## Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Understanding students' perceptions of their intersecting social identities is a

complex process.  While this research provided conclusions on the way employment

informs students' understanding of their intersecting identities, it has shed light on

additional steps to support this understanding.  Relying on findings from this study, I

suggest several implications and recommendations for practice.

### Intentional Development and Intentional Processing Opportunities must be a Priority

All four current student participants agreed student employers need to offer

additional development opportunities.  Alex recommended "some kind of diversity and

inclusion training," to which everyone else agreed, and K added a need for more

intentional inclusion trainings linked directly to customer service.  Monica recommended

trainings on interpersonal violence and relationship abuse, as well as emphasizing the

importance of Safe Zone and QPR suicide prevention training as part of her personal

experience, and specifically recommends training addressing overlaps such as how queer

people suffer from mental illness, which leads to high rates of suicide, and how being a

queer person of color at a predominately White institution is even more difficult. Both
Rachael and Monica recommended trainings be facilitated by representatives from
appropriate resource centers to move beyond the basic information a supervisor is likely
able to provide, resulting in a more robust developmental experience.

Current literature indicates a majority of intentional training and development by
student employers focuses on productivity, service, and efficiency (e.g. Gibbs et al.,
2001; Guerrero & Corey, 2004; Jetton, 2009; J.M. Kathman & Kathman, 2000). While
some student employees receive training on suicide prevention, emotional awareness, and
multicultural awareness (Koch, 2012; Swanbrow-Becker & Drum, 2015), this is not
always common practice and is likely dependent on employment and position type.
Many of the students in this study spoke to few training and development opportunities
based on equity, diversity, inclusion, and identity development, topics they thought
would better prepare them for exploring their intersecting identities. For students who
believed they received such training, there was still an indication more could be done,
and additional trainings would be helpful and productive. Further, student responses
indicated an interest in receiving such training and development opportunities from the
appropriate offices, people, and resource centers, and that supervisors may not be the
most appropriate people to deliver training in areas where they are not experts.

Specifically, cultural awareness and cultural competency training should become
a component of student development in the work place. These trainings should be
mandatory, as optional trainings many students may opt out of. Next, employers should
provide space for processing experiences. This may mean providing one-on-one meeting
time between supervisors and students for individual processing, or a facilitated

discussion following a macro level event, such as a controversial presidential election.

Finally, students may learn best from experiences that are close to them.  Responses

indicate students build strong relationships with other co-workers.  Having student

employees share their experiences with discrimination and oppression with their co-

workers may form a connection and help students understand the impact on people close

to them.

**Intentional Shift to Understanding**
**Multiple Identities and**
**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality has gained in popularity since the 1980s (Crenshaw, 1989;

Dhamoon, 2011), and has become a popular basis for exploring identity in higher

education (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes et al., 2007; Abes & Kasch, 2007; Jones &

McEwen, 2000).  However, individuals not familiar with intersectionality literature may

focus on singular identities.  As indicated by student responses, it is common to think

about a single identity in a given situation, and to lack understanding of the way a single

identity is informed by others, as well as the context in which it is occurs.  There needs to

be a shift away from a focus on identity and identity development alone to also include

intentionally highlighting concepts and theory of intersectionality in supervision,

discussions, and research.

It has become common practice in higher education for professional nametags and

email signatures to include preferred pronouns.  While this practice is beneficial, it places

an emphasis on a single identity.  Due to space limitations, it may be impossible to

include all identities on a nametag.  However, during student staff meetings and trainings

professional staff could include a brief overview of their identities in their introduction,

instead of giving the typical summary of name and job responsibilities. Additionally, staff who share a single identity, perhaps gender, but differ on others, could share how a seemingly similar experience was interpreted differently because of their identity. Finally, an optional and anonymous survey could be administered to collect information on student and staff identities, with results being shared to demonstrate the multiple intersections of identities across the department. While this may work well in a setting such as Campus Recreation where there are often hundreds of employees, making it difficult to identify others based on survey responses, it may not work well in smaller offices.

**Supervisors Must be Prepared to**
**Provide Proper Support**

Relationships are a vital component as students make meaning of their intersecting identities (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Stewart, 2009), and students are often more optimistic about their work experience overall when they develop positive relationships with their supervisors (Johnson et al., 2012). Student responses indicated they often depend on conversations with supervisors for needed support, to process difficult times, and even to intentionally discuss their identities. Supervisors must be prepared to guide students through such conversations and difficult times. This includes first coming to understand their identities and working toward the emotional and intellectually competency and confidence to fulfill this role.

Supervisors should also be required to complete cultural awareness and cultural competencies type trainings that help them understand their own identities and the identities of others better. This is likely more important in Campus Recreation, which is a White male dominated field. Accordingly, it is appropriate to also include training that

helps individuals explore privileged identities. Finally, one-on-one meetings should not be only about work performance and task follow-up. Jensen shared her supervisor intentionally asked her about identity and how she showed up in specific situations. Once prepared to do so, supervisors should focus on these types of conversations with their student employees.

**Intentionally Create Situations for
Student Employees to Interact
at Work**

Several studies suggested relationships as vital when exploring identity (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Dillon et al., 2011; Paul & Frieden, 2008). Close relationships are a vital source of support that create a sense of belonging (Kegan, 1994) and may be crucial for the development of those with minoritized identities (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Klum & Cramer, 2006). Student responses in this research clearly indicated a reliance on close co-worker relationships both for support and to process identities. Further, students reported the confidence, safety, and freedom to express themselves authentically when they formed relationships with supervisors, co-workers, and other campus professionals who shared similar identities. Supervisors should intentionally create opportunities for students to network, especially students who may work in different areas of a department. This will ensure students have an opportunity to meet as many peers as possible. Further, it may be a different supervisor or professional on campus who students connect with and share identities. Finding ways for students to be involved with department and campus wide meetings, events, and networking opportunities could facilitate relationship building crucial to development.

Often, students experience large amounts of interaction with their co-workers and supervisors throughout the normal duration of their job responsibility, however, more can be done to facilitate additional interaction and the building of relationships. Employers can offer study and group project space only available to their student employees, and perhaps even offer pizza as an incentive to attend. End of semester and end of year student appreciation events offer students a chance to socialize in the workplace, free of job responsibilities and pressures. Finally, it is essential that staff are present and active in such extracurricular events, and available to have meaningful conversations and connect with students on a personal level.

**Understand Employment as a
Means for Development**

Student development refers to the ways in which students grow and evolve throughout college and pertains to a student as a whole and not merely intellectual capacity (ACPA, 1996a, 1996b; Evans et al., 1998). While student employees are often viewed as a workforce to help campus departments provide vital services, Carr (2005) explored learning and development in student employees and concluded "student employment is about more than the paycheck" (p. 169). Student responses clearly indicate their recognition, appreciation, and dependence on this idea. For them, student employment is a component of the college experience that provides development opportunities and prepares them for the future. Student employment as an intentional development opportunity needs to be a philosophy all on-campus employers adhere to as well.

Employers should offer both mandatory and optional development opportunities to their students and provide incentive for participating in optional trainings. Supervisors

should find ways to involve students in opportunities they otherwise would not get to experience, such is sitting in on a professional staff meeting or joining their supervisor for a meeting with the dean. During one-on-one meetings and trainings, supervisors should talk with student employees about the way their work experiences transfer to other areas of their lives.

**Audit Organizational Culture and**
**Current Practices**

Space and culture significantly affect and play a vital role in identity development (Renn, 2000; Russell, 2012; Torres, 2003). Students appreciated many aspects of their work environment, including inclusive practices, facility design, and support and safety. However, they also reported witnessing and experiencing oppression, being silenced, and made aware of minoritized identities due to negative interactions. Student employers should take the time to audit their organizational culture and current practices to determine the type of culture and environment they provide employees.

Employers can partner with representatives from campus cultural centers and members of their student staff who identify in various ways to review and critique their current culture and practices. These individuals should explore policy, risk management plans, website, general feel of walking through the front door, etc. If students are involved in an audit, it is important to ensure they are able to provide open and honest assessment and feedback without fear of retaliation.

### Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Considering all data, themes, and conclusions from this research leads to the conclusion that students make meaning of their intersecting identities in the context of a student employment experience through intentional and unintentional development

opportunities. Intentional trainings and conversations with supervisors often served as the first-time students were exposed to topics of identity, and for students who were already aware of their identities, development opportunities aided developing additional understanding of this complex topic. More so, students came to understand their identities through interactions and experiences that were a result of simply existing and serving as a student employee in a work environment. The experiences gained from positive and negative interactions with co-workers, patrons, supervisors, and other administrators, relationships that blossomed at work, or simply observing systematic power structures in a place of employment provided a context for understanding that cannot be replicated or created in a training room.

The conclusions and recommendations of this study are based on the stories students shared about these intentional and unintentional development opportunities. I have come to understand students' experiences were crucial to help them better understand their intersecting identities. Their stories clearly articulated what made these experiences instrumental to their development. The findings from this study are simply the beginning of moving toward a more complete understanding of the ways in which students find meaning about their intersecting social identities in the context of student employment and is simply a starting point for additional research.

This study was based on recommendations from other higher education researchers and experts and gaps identified in existing research. There was a call for student development to be "examined through a lens of privilege, power, and oppression independent of dominant cultural models, [and with consideration for] the impact of the environment on development" (Patton, et al., 2016, pp. 401-403). It was generally

acknowledged, environment and context were important to student development and must be intentionally created (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993; Strange & Banning, 2001; Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993), and that college is a crucial time for students to explore and make meaning of their identities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Renn, 2000; Stewart, 2008; Tinto, 1993; Ung, 2013).  However, it was also generally acknowledged that the specific roles environments and contexts play in development need to be better understood (Russell, 2012; Torres et al., 2009; Ung, 2013).  This study has added an understanding of the role student employment plays in students' understanding of their intersecting identities, and how this understanding develops through work experiences.  However, additional research is needed to provide a more complete picture and advance an understanding of intersectionality, student identity development, and specific contexts and environments.  The following recommendations are offered for future research.

1. This study focused on the context of student employment in a division of student affairs.  Similar studies should explore other contexts on campus, including other student employment and non-employment environments.

2. While the focus of this study was on-campus student employment, researchers may choose to explore off-campus student employment.

3. Former students involved in this study provided meaningful stories and reflected on the ways the understanding of their identities they gained as student employees continued as they navigated post-graduation life.  However, these students did not participate via interviews or a focus group, which may serve to provide more rich data.  A study should be conducted with former students, using data collection

methods similar to what were used to collect data from current students in this study.

4. Researchers should conduct a study to determine the types of intentional training opportunities that would best support students' understanding of their multiple and intersecting identities.

5. Some students spoke to relationships with supervisors as vital to their understanding of identity. A study should be completed focusing on the aspects of supervisor-supervisee relationships that best support student understanding of their multiple and intersecting identities.

6. All participants in this study attended a 4-year public institution and were traditional-aged college students at their time of employment. Similar studies should be completed focusing on various institution types and student demographics.

### Summary

Data were collected from 16 current and former students in an effort to better understand the way working in a division of student affairs as a student employee informed understanding of their multiple and intersecting identities. Students provided data via in-person interviews, a focus group, a phone interview, journals, and written email statements. As data emerged, so did a recognition of the way student employment experiences affected identity development and understanding through both intentional and unintentional opportunities. Student employment serves as a context through which students come to better understand their identities even if they are not always able to process and verbalize the true meaning of these experiences. While students feel safe and

supported at work, they also witness and experience systematic oppression. However, through intentional changes to practice and additional research, understanding on this topic can improve. An increased understanding will inform practice as attempts are made to provide the best support and environments possible for students to come to understand their multiple and intersecting identities and leave college with a better understanding of how they show up and make meaning in the world. Ultimately, as specific contexts of the student experience are understood better, institutions can focus best on educating the whole student by implementing meaningful equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and supervision that supports students understanding of identity and helps move them toward critical consciousness.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**Institutional Review Board Approval**

UNIVERSITY OF
**NORTHERN COLORADO**

*Institutional Review Board*

DATE:               May 24, 2018

TO:                 Jason Foster
FROM:               University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE:      [1242034-2] Division of Student Affairs Student Employees Make Meaning of
                    Their Intersection Identities and Work
SUBMISSION TYPE:    Amendment/Modification

ACTION:             APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:      May 23, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE:    May 23, 2019
REVIEW TYPE:        Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of
Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in
accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

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

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

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED
adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

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

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please
use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received
with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of May 23, 2019.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion
of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please
include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Jason -

Dr. Clukey, the first reviewer of your IRB application has provided approval based on your amendments/modifications submitted in this second package. I've reviewed your original and revised materials and am also recommending approval. Please be sure to use these amended protocols and documents in your participant recruitment and data collection.

Although it is not required by the University of Northern Colorado, you may want to determine if IRB approval is required by University of North Carolina-Wilmington where you note that data will be collected. If so, given the expedited category review, an Institutional Authorization Agreement can be conducted so that duplication of review efforts isn't undertaken. Let Sherry May and/or me know if this is necessary.

Best wishes with this interesting and engaged research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**
Office of Research Services
601 S. College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403-5976
910.962.7774
Web site: http://uncw.edu/ors/human.html
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #00001025

**To:** Jason Foster
Sch Health & Applied Human Sciences
BY EMAIL

**From:** Dr. Kristin Bolton, Institutional Review Board Co-Chair
**Date:**
**RE:** Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)
**Study #:** 19-0004

**Study Title:** Division of Student Affairs Student Employees Make Meaning of Their Intersecting Identities and Work
**Submission Type:** Modification
**Expedited Category:** (7) Research on Group Characteristics or Behavior, or Surveys, Interviews, etc.
**Approval Date:** 7/27/2018
**Expiration Date of Approval:** 7/24/2019

Thank you for submitting a modification request to the IRB for approval. The request has been approved. You may now incorporate the changes into the study and continue the study for the period indicated above. It has been determined that the risk involved in this modification is no more than minimal.

**Investigator's Responsibilities:**

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date. Researchers may submit renewal requests through IRBIS.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any additional changes to this study before they can be implemented except to eliminate apparent immediate hazards. Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB. Researchers may submit modification requests and adverse event reports through IRBIS.

Please direct questions or concerns to IRB@uncw.edu.

APPENDIX B

**Informed Consent**

**CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEACH**

**Project Title:** Division of Student Affairs Student Employees Make Meaning of Their

Intersecting Identities and Work

**Lead Investigator:** Jason Foster, 724-968-8875, foster@uncw.edu
Ph.D. Student – University of Northern Colorado
Faculty, Lecturer – University of North Carolina Wilmington

**Research Advisor**: Dr. Tamara Yakaboski, 970-351-1156, tamara.yakaboski@unco.edu
Professor – Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, University of
Northern Colorado

**Purpose and Description:** The purpose of this study is to understand how college students, who work within a division of student affairs, make meaning of their intersecting identities. That is, the study seeks to explore the ways the work experiences informs understanding of social identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social status, and others.

**Participant Expectations:** Participants will participate in three 60 to 90 minute one-on-one interviews with the lead investigator as well as one 60 to 90 minute focus group which will include the lead investigator and approximately six research participants. Questions for both the interviews and focus group are designed with the goal of having students share experiences about their social identities, and connect their understanding of identity to their work experience.

Sample Survey Questions
- Share stories about pieces of who you are that you feel make your life more difficult or challenging.

- What do the terms identity, privilege, and oppression mean to you?  Tell me stories about each in your life.

- How do you interact with others and how does your sense of who you are, or any of your identities, play a role in your interactions with others?

- Tell me stories about the role student employment plays in your life?

- During the first interview I asked you to define yourself. Tell me how your role as a student employee is represented in who you are.

Sample Focus Group Questions

- How do you experience identity, privilege, and oppression in your life?

- Everyone is here because they have a job within the Division of Student Affairs. Think back to experiences you have had during work, and tell stories about how these experiences have increased your understanding of yourself.

- How do you feel work has played a role in helping you to understand life?

In addition to the interviews and focus group, the researcher will conduct behavioral observations at the student's place of employment, and participants will be asked to maintain a journal. The researcher will provide composition notebooks in which participants will write about their experiences, process thoughts, react to the research process, and if they choose, include documents, paste photos, draw pictures, and create a collage, or any creative endeavor they choose. Students will also be given the option of journaling electronically in a Microsoft Word document, and then emailing their files via an encrypted email message. It is requested all email communication is sent via encrypted message. If you are unsure how to send an encrypted email message, the research will review procedures with you.

Participants will also be asked to share work related documents, which may include training materials, policy documents, staff manuals, staff photos, email communication (via encrypted message), and any other type of documentation that may help to provide understanding and support participant stories. In total, it is estimated each participant will need to devote approximately 10 hours to this research study, with the specific number of hours directly determined by actual interview length and time spent journaling and providing other requested information, as outlined above.

At the conclusion of their involvement, participants who have fully participated in all aspects of the research, as outlined in the *participant expectations* section above, will receive a $50 gift card to a local restaurant or store of their choice.

**Confidentiality and Risks:** Potential risks in this research are minimal. Because of the nature of the study design multiple pieces of data will be collected. The researcher will not knowingly disclose the individual participation of any one person to another. The one potential risk to privacy comes from the focus group. While the researcher will ensure the privacy of the participants answers it cannot be assumed, despite the researcher's best efforts, that students will ensure the privacy of other students. Additionally, the researcher will not  inform campus officials or employers of student responses unless a student shares with the research team that they believe they themselves are in danger or believe they are a danger to themselves or others.

The researcher will discuss confidentiality with participant individually at the conclusion of the second interview, and again with the participants as a group at the beginning of the focus group session. The purpose of these discussions, as well as this written statement, is to ensure participants are fully aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, despite precautionary efforts, such as using pseudonyms.

There is potential that the sharing of personal stories about social identity could elicit emotions and feeling which may require students to seek support. Below is a list of UNCW resources which may be beneficial for students in such situations.

Counseling Center – DePaolo hall Room 2079 – 910-962-3746
Counseling Center – After hours crisis consultation – 910-962-3746, select Option 3
University Police – 910-962-2222 or 911
Dean of Students Office – 910-962-3119
Self-help resources: https://uncw.edu/counseling/resource.html

The researcher is completing this research as a component of a Ph. D. in Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, CO. Successful completion of this research is necessary for fulfillment of degree requirements. The researcher will not receive any other personal or financial benefit.

While the researcher has already obtained permission of your supervisor, participation is voluntary, and is not an expectation or requirement of your job. Refusing to participate will have no bearing on your relationship with UNCW. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

This research has been approved by both the University of Northern Colorado and the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selction or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910, or the Office of Sponsored Programs & Research Compliance, 628 Hamilton Drive, Hoggard Hall Suite 172, Wilmington, NC 28403; 910-962-3167

_____
(Participant – Printed Name)


_____  _____
(Participant – Signature)          (Date)


_____  _____
(Researcher – Signature)          (Date)

APPENDIX C

**Direct Supervisor Acknowledgement**

**Direct Supervisor Acknowledgement**

**Project Title:** Division of Student Affairs Student Employees Make Meaning of Their

Intersecting Identities and Work

> **Lead Investigator:** Jason Foster, 724-968-8875, foster@uncw.edu
> Ph.D. Student – University of Northern Colorado
> Faculty, Lecturer – University of North Carolina Wilmington

> **Research Advisor**: Dr. Tamara Yakaboski, 970-351-1156, tamara.yakaboski@unco.edu
> Professor – Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership
> College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, University of
> Northern Colorado

**Purpose and Description:** The purpose of this study is to understand how college students, who work within a division of student affairs, make meaning of their intersecting identities. That is, the study seeks to explore the ways the work experiences informs understanding of social identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social status, and others.

Data will be collected via interviews, a focus group, observation of the work setting, participant journals, and a researcher journal. In addition, participants will be asked to share work related documents, which may include training materials, policy documents, staff manuals, staff photos, email communication (via encrypted message), and any other type of documentation that may help to provide understanding and support participant stories. The researcher will discuss concerns in regards to sharing confidential information, as it is understood that not all work documents and information are appropriate to be shared publicly. If a student shares information with the researcher that seems confidential in nature, the researcher will do one of two things. First, if the information adds to the student's story in a significant way, and the context of the information can be used in a manner without identifying any other individuals or the department/work place, the story/context will be included as part of the data but will not include specific details or any identifying information. If the data cannot be used in a way in which all confidential information remains confidential, despite the potential significance to the study, the information will not be used as part of the research. This determination will be made at the discretion of the primary researcher. If deemed necessary by the researcher, the research will initiate a discussion with the direct supervisor of the student who presented the information, and jointly determine if and how the information may be included in the study.

By printing and signing your name below, you are acknowledging that a student employee who reports directly to you is participating in this study, as outlined above. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference.

_____
(Supervisor – Printed Name)


_____ _____
(Supervisor– Signature)        (Date)


_____ _____
(Researcher – Signature)        (Date)

APPENDIX D

**Recruitment Email — Current Students**

Recruitment Email

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in study on social identities and student

employment

Hello,

My name is Jason Foster. I am a faculty member here at UNCW and a student

finishing my dissertation at the University of Northern Colorado. My dissertation will

explore the ways in which the student employment experience informs students

understanding of their intersecting social identities, and you have been recommended to

me as someone who may be able to speak well to this topic.

**What will I be doing if I choose to participate?**

You will be asked to participate in three, 60 to 90 minute interviews in a one-on-

one setting with me, as well as one 60 to 90 minute focus group with the other

participants. It is expected there will be a total of six participants in this study. In

addition, you will be asked to keep a journal throughout the process and provide

examples of work materials that you feel have added to your understanding of your social

identities. Finally, the research will conduct behavioral observations in your workplace.

**When and where will this happen?**

The goal is to complete the study during the fall 2018 semester. All interview and

focus group sessions will take place on the UNCW campus and will occur at specific

days and times that we agree upon.

**Will people know I am participating?**

I will work with your supervisor to receive their agreement with the study ahead

of time. For the study itself, you will choose a pseudonym that will be used throughout

the study and when results are written, meaning your real name will never be used. There is a chance the other students in the study may know you when we get together for the focus group, but all participants will be informed of the need and importance of confidentiality.

**Will I receive anything for participating?**

At the conclusion of the study you will receive a $50 gift card to a local location of your choice!

**Do you have questions or are you interested in participating?**

Please reply to this email if you have additional questions or if are interested in participating and we can discuss the next steps.

Participation is voluntary, and is not a requirement of or associated with your work responsibilities and obligations. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have any concerns at this time, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910

This research study has been approved by the UNCW Institutional Review Board #19-0004.

Thank you for your interest,

[UNCW Email signature]

APPENDIX E

**Recruitment Email — Former Students**

Recruitment Email

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in study on social identities and student employment

Hello,

Thank you for considering participating in this research at the request of your former supervisor! This next part is a bit of a formality. My name is Jason Foster and I am a doctoral student finishing my dissertation at the University of Northern Colorado in Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership.  My dissertation explores the ways in which the student employment experience, within a division of student affairs, informs students understanding of their intersecting social identities. You have been recommended to me, by a former supervisor, as someone who may be able to speak well to this topic. There are typically standard questions participants tend to have, and I have done my best to try to identify and answer these next.

**What will I be doing if I choose to participate?**

You will be asked to share stories about your student employment experience within a division of student affairs, which you feel informed your understanding of your intersecting social identities. These stories may relate to formal aspects of your work experience, such as training and development opportunities you took part in, or informal experiences, such as conversations with co-workers, supervisors, and guests, or even things you simply overheard or witnessed.

**How do I share my stories?**

You have the option of responding via email with a written statement or participating in a phone interview with me, which will be digitally recorded. Please note, if you do respond by email, know that email is not a secure form of communication and it is possible, though unlikely, that someone could hack and read the information you are sending. I understand that you will be sharing personal stories, and perhaps even experiences you have not talked about with other people, and ones that may elicit an emotional and personal response. Because of this, know that you do have the option to send an encrypted email if you would like this extra layer of security;

https://support.office.com/en-us/article/encrypt-email-messages-373339cb-bf1a-4509-b296-802a39d801dc

**Will people know I am participating?**

You were recommended by a former supervisor, but they will have no way of knowing whether or not you choose to participate. For the study itself, you will choose a pseudonym that will be used throughout the study and when results are written, meaning your real name will never be used. If you respond via email, let me know what pseudonym you would like me to use. If you choose to participate via a phone interview, we will talk about this during our conversation. Please know, your last name will never be connected to the written results, so if you choose, you can also use your first name in lieu of a pseudonym. The choice is completely up to you, and I am happy to discuss this with your further!

**Can you provide a bit more background information on the study?**

Multiple, intersecting social identities create new dynamics that need better understanding (Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005; Stewart & McDermott, 2004; Torres et

al., 2009).  Further, increased understanding may inform support structures for college students with minoritized identities who work on campus, both generally, and throughout their own learning and development process (Jolly, 2001; Torres et al., 2009), perhaps even exposing the existence of privilege and oppression within systems of power.  Exploring employment on campus with an awareness of intersectionality may add to the understanding of the ways students' experiences are informed by their social identities and how they experience systems of power (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Intersectionality itself refers to the way multiple social identities interconnect to inform experiences and shape a whole greater than the sum of the individual identities alone (Collins, 2015).

Overall, I am looking for specific stories and memories you have from your work experience that have helped you understand your intersecting identities. Our identities exist all at once. Often, one or two of our identities will become more salient and dominate a specific interaction or experience. However, the other ones are still there, informing how we make sense of the world around us. In a broader sense, this is sometimes talked about as "who you are" or "how you show up in the world", as related to your identities. Your identities may include things like race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socio economic status, social class, age, ability, nation of origin, level of education and others.

Depending on our multiple and intersecting identities, we experience privilege and oppression in unique ways. Often, we'll have experiences that force us to contemplate and reflect on "who we are" and what our identities mean. These are the stories I am looking for from you work experience. So instead of statements along the lines of "being

a student employee helped me understand the existence of white privilege in the workplace", I am looking for "This one time when I was at the front desk…", and "We had this training about (blank) and …", or "This one time my co-workers and I…". Tell me the stories that were truly meaningful and impactful in helping you understand you.

**Do you have questions or are you interested in participating?**

Please reply to this email if you have additional questions or are interested in participating and we can discuss the next steps.

If you are interested in participating, and you would like to do so as a written statement via an email response, and you have no other questions, you can simply reply to this email with your statement. You can include your statement in a Word document as an attachment, or simply type in the body of an email. I want to make sure you participate in a way that is most convenient for you.

One final note, either at the beginning or end of your response, if your stories do not already make it obvious or it is not mentioned, and if you feel comfortable doing so, please tell me a bit about your intersecting identities and how you identify.

Participation is voluntary, and is not a requirement.  You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time.  Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.  If you have any concerns at this time, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910

Thank you for your interest,

APPENDIX F

**Interview Questions**

**Interview One**

- Talk with me about yourself and who you are.

- Share with me stories of your journey, and any specific special moments, that led you to where you are in life now.

- Share stories with me that you feel explain and define you.

- Tell me about aspects of yourself and who you are that you feel give you an advantage in life, and feel free to share any specific stories you feel truly paint a picture of these advantages.

- Tell me about aspects of yourself and who you are that make your life more difficult, and feel free to share any specific stories you feel truly paint a picture of these advantages.

- What do the terms identity, privilege, and oppression mean to you? Tell me about specific experience you have had that pertain to each in your life.

- How do you interact with others and how does your sense of who you are, or any of your identities, play a role in your interactions with others?

- Share with me your sense of self and how you see yourself in this world, and if possible, share stories that help to demonstrate this sense of self?

- Reflect back on your sense of self throughout your life… and talk with me about how your sense of self has changed since coming to college.

- Think about how your sense of self has changed specifically because you work. Tell me about experiences you have had at work that have made you reflect on who you are as a person and your place in this world.

- Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself and your social identities?

**Interview Two**

- Talk with me a bit about anything we talked about during our first interview that you have since given additional thought to.

- Tell me a bit about why you decided to seek employment on campus and what the experience was like finding a job.

- Tell me stories about the role student employment plays in your life?

- During the first interview I asked you to define yourself. Tell me how your role as a student employee is represented in who you are.

- We previously talked about how you would define yourself and how this has changed over time. Tell me stories about your work experiences.

- Talk with me about any experiences you have had at work that have made you more knowledgeable about and/or aware of social identities.

- Share stories with me about work experiences that have caused you to reflect, or perhaps even view aspects of your life and your interactions with others differently.

- Last time I asked you to define identity and then reflect on and talk about some of your own identities. Tell me stories about how your identities show up in and are informed by your work experiences.

- Tell me stories about how your work experiences affect other aspects of your college experience.

- Is there is anything else you would like to share about yourself, your work experiences, and your social identities?

**Interview Three**

- What thoughts or reflections on the conversation from the focus group have you had?

- Multiple Identities Model –

o Explain

o Participants Map Identities

o In what ways do your multiple identities intersect?

▪ How do certain identities complement one another?

▪ In what ways is there tension between multiple identities?

- Talk with me about specific contexts in your life that shape or influence your identities and your understanding of them.

- What dimensions of your identity are most salient?

- Do you have specific identities that are more salient in specific settings?

- How do your more salient identities help you make meaning of your other identities?

- At work, do you feel your identities give you a voice or do they silence you? Talk with me about this.

- How do you think your multiple identities come together to shape who you are as a person?

- Do your identities show up the same at work as they do in other settings? Explain this.

- In what ways do you witness/experience privilege in the workplace?

- In what ways do you witness/experience discrimination and/or oppression in the workplace?

- How have these experiences (witnessing privilege and discrimination/oppression) helped you to better understand systems of power and oppression in society?

- What recommendations do you have for your place of work that could help student employees better understand their intersecting identities?

- What have you learned about yourself from this research experience?

- Is it okay if I email you to follow-up and confirm conclusions/findings/assumptions as I analyze data?

- What final thoughts/comments/stories do you have?

- Reminder about journal

APPENDIX G

**Adapted Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity**

National Politics

Social Norms  Work Status

Income Level

Stereo Types

Family  Peers
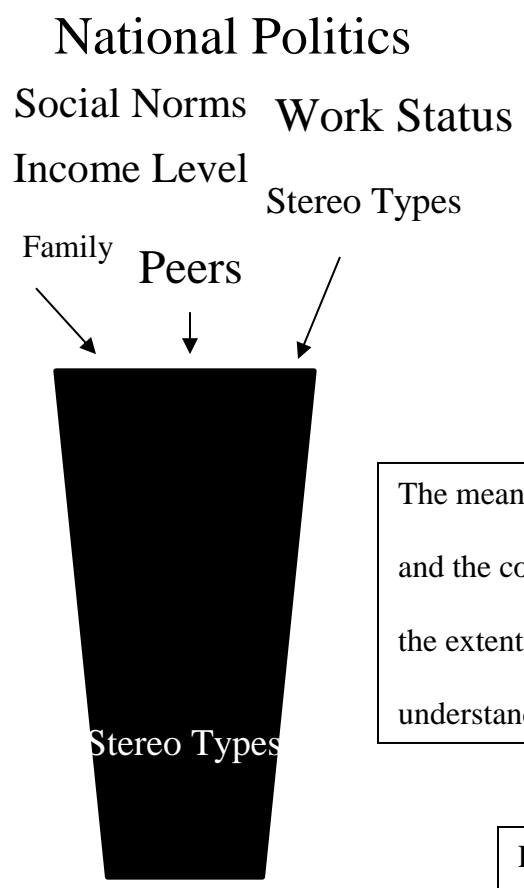
Various contexts (e.g. social norms, peer relationships, income level, etc.) inform individuals' understanding of their multiple identities and affect overall identity development.

Stereo Types

The meaning making capacity of an individual, and the complexity of specific contexts, affect the extent to which a given context informs understanding of multiple identities.

Peers

Family
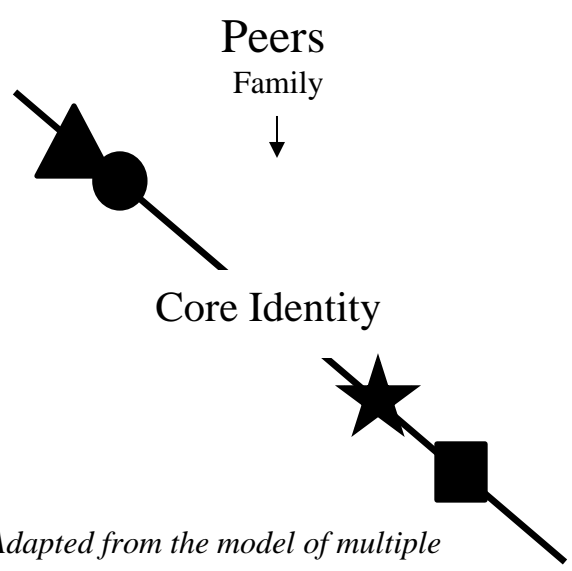
Core Identity

Fluid individual identities such as

▲ Sexuality  ● Gender

★ Race  ■ Social Class

surround a core identity, and informed by context, become more and less salient throughout development. Identities may be closer to the core and more salient, or further away and less salient, but never stop informing one another, and never exist independently.

*Adapted from the model of multiple dimensions of identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007)*

APPENDIX H

**Focus Group Questions**

- Introductions: first name or pseudonym and brief description of student employment position and responsibilities

- Throughout this research process, we have talked about identity, privilege, and oppression. Generally speaking, which groups of people have privilege and power? How so?

- Generally speaking, which groups of people are minoritized and discriminated against? How so?

- Tell me about aspects of your work experience that have helped you understand these privileges that people experience.

- Talk with me about aspects of your work experience that have helped you understand the way individuals may be minoritized or discriminated against.

- Talk with me about your specific identities that overlap and intersect and make you more vulnerable to discrimination.

- Share with me specific stories from your work experience that have helped you to understand these identities and discrimination better?

- Talk with me about your specific identities that overlap and intersect and make it more likely for you to experience privilege.

- Share with me specific stories from your work experience that have helped you to understand these identities and privilege better?

- Talk with me about how your identities have influenced your experiences at work? Do you think you have had specific experiences at work because of your identities? Explain this.

- Think back to experiences you have had at work that you consider irreplaceable, and share stories about these experiences.

- Think back about your overall college experience. How has worked played a role in and affected your overall experience?

- Describe specific work experiences that have changed the way you view others.

- If there is anything else anyone would like to share or talk about, we have time to do so.

APPENDIX I

**Data Analysis**

**Data Analysis**

Perspectives and Emerging Themes

| Perspective | Emerging Themes and Ideas |
| --- | --- |
| Personal Student Employment Experience | |
| | Job enjoyment |
| | Friends at work are large part of social network |
| | Sense of pride and connection to work |
| | Meaningful supervisor relationships |
| | Work is my home on campus |
| | |
| Development of the Whole Student | |
| | Understanding myself and others |
| | Intentional training helps students process |
| | More development opportunities needed |
| | Increased confidence |
| | Life/career skill development |
| | |
| Work and Environment | Relationships do not carry over outside of work |
| | My work friends are my main friend group |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Political environment (macro system) affects my work experiences |
| | I show up differently at work than I do in other settings |
| | Work structures and leadership impact my work experience |
| ████████████████████████ | |
| Students' Individual Identities | |
| | I can be my true self at work |
| | I can be more comfortable with my identities at work because people identify similarly to me |
| | Co-workers confide in me |
| | Alignment with a single salient identity |
| | My actions were informed by societal expectations |
| | A specific identity does not play a role at work |
| | I understand other identities better because of my work experiences |
| | Work experiences make me aware of my identity as X |

| | |
|---|---|
| | I experience or witness discrimination at work |
| | |
| Multiple Identities | |
| | A privileged identity allows me to not be conscious of other identities at work |
| | One identity does not affect another |
| | Family context shaped me |
| | Peer relationships are important |
| | I do not always reflect on what my identities mean |
| | I'm often conscious of a single identity |
| | |
| Intersectionality | |
| | Multiple oppressed identities make life more difficult |
| | I experience discrimination at work in relation to more than one marginalized identity |
| | I was sometimes silenced or made to feel as though I did not exist |
| | Systems of power play a role in work experiences |

| | Work made me comfortable with the way my identities come together |
| --- | --- |
| | I do not always know how to make sense of my identities |
| | I feel supported at work because of who I am as a person overall |
| | |
| Privilege | I did not process my identities/that experience |
| | I view everyone the same |
| | Everyone identifies the way I do |
| | Hard work and qualifications matter more than identity (for work opportunities/hiring/promotion) |

**Overarching topics within themes**

- Work experiences are important to understanding identity because of
    - Interaction with clients and patrons
    - Interactions with co-workers
    - Interaction with supervisors, faculty, and administrators
    - Intentional development opportunities
- Work supports authentic self by increasing
    - Confidence
    - Feelings of safety
- Work provides vital support necessary for identity development via relationships with
    - Co-workers
    - Supervisors

- Identities at work
  - Work makes students aware of their marginalized identities
  - Work makes students aware of their privileged identities
  - Students fail to recognize how their identities play a role in certain situations
- Intentional development opportunities at work
  - Students appreciate, buy into and take advantage of development opportunities at work
  - Students feel more development opportunities are needed

**Final Themes**

Current Students

- Experiences at Work Helped Students Develop Confidence, a Sense of Self, and an Understanding of Identities Different from their Own
- Work Helps Students Discover a Sense of Belonging Often Connected to Supervisor and Co-Worker Support
  - Developing a Sense of Belonging at Work
  - Support from Co-Workers
  - Support from Supervisors
- Students Experienced and Witnessed Marginalization of Non-Dominant Identities at Work
- Intentional Training Opportunities Helped Facilitate Processing
- Privileged Identities Allowed Students to Forego Fully Processing Identity and Experiences

Former Students

- Work Experiences and Interactions Helped Students Gain New Perspective on their Identities
- Students Experience and Witnessed Marginalization of Non-Dominant Identities at Work
- Intentional Training and Development and Departmental Commitment to Diversity Helped Students Understand Identity Better
- Intentionality is Needed to Help Students Process the Complexity of their Intersecting Identities