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HOW MARGINALIZED STUDENTS FIND THEMSELVES INCLUDED IN SYLLABI: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents the first known Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) investigation of how marginalized students are included in syllabi. This study fills a gap in the literature due to the changing demographic of college students, the absence of faculty who share these marginalized identities, the syllabus being the first point of contact with students, and syllabi studies not including student voices. There were two research questions: how do marginalized students understand themselves as included in syllabi? and, how do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersecting identities?

This study used IPA to analyze each participant's syllabus experience. A purposeful homogenous sampling yielded seven marginalized third- and fourth-year undergraduate students from four Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern universities. Individual semi-structured recorded interviews that lasted between 51–128 minutes collected the data. After data analysis, member-checking confirmed the researcher's interpretations. Five themes emerged through the analysis: Expressing feelings from syllabi policies; Centering identities in course materials; The link between syllabus, faculty, and course; Creating equitable partnerships; and Providing solutions for identities.

The participants understood themselves as not included in syllabi policies and course materials. They found policies had a punitive nature, lack of flexibility, and did not include their identities. There were negative and positive effects on their well-being, and they provided a link between the syllabus and "syllabus day." Through their experiences, they offered ideas and solutions to help them feel inclusion not only for themselves but for other marginalized identities.

This study contributes to the field by providing insight into the experiences of marginalized students and syllabi. Based on this study, there is work that must be done by faculty, administration, faculty developers, accessibility and disability services offices to implement inclusive pedagogy and universal design for learning (UDL) in all courses. Further studies can add to this study, examine the change with the incorporation of inclusive pedagogy and UDL, syllabus day, faculty resistance to change, and syllabi policy reform.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Mary Louis Kovel Kennedy. My mother always said I should have been a doctor. Well mom, I did it. I am now the doctor you said I should be. Thank you for instilling in me a love for learning. You always said that no one can take your education from you as it is something that you carry with you your whole life. I just wish you could be here to celebrate this accomplishment with me. Thank you for providing me with the foundation for being able to do this work.

To my grandchildren, Layten and Blaine, because of your marginalized identities I do this work to make not only your learning and education better but for a better society where you will not fear for your life being stopped by police, be targeted in the pipeline to prison system, and come away alive by stopping at a wrong house. I hope that my work will inspire you to make the world better. Your education is something that can never be taken from you so learn as much as you can all throughout your life. Love Gigi.

To my newest granddaughter, Willow, may you champion for the rights of others based on your White privilege. Learn all you can about the ways others are oppressed through education, policies, and politics. Together with your cousins make the world a better place for your children and grandchildren. Love Gigi.

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To faculty and administration, we got work to do!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A syllabus is a document that outlines the course, study topics, assignments, assessments, classroom policies, and university policies. Syllabi have traditionally been used in higher education to convey the outline and intended outcomes of the course. The syllabus has long been described as a contract between the professor and student; however, legally, the courts have not found it a contract but ruled it can be used for student grievances (Eberly et al., 2001; Rumore, 2016). A common belief is that many students do not review the syllabus or understand the information provided and then ask questions of their faculty. In reply, the faculty states, "It's in the syllabus" (Eberly et al., 2001; Rumore, 2016). There are several humorous uses of syllabi, including a comic series about "it's in the syllabus" on PHDcomics.com. A Google search of the term provides numerous sites that offer for purchase paraphernalia with the quote. "It's in the syllabus" makes light of the syllabus and nullifies the syllabus as a welcome to the course. With the changing demographics of students and as the first point of contact with a student, the syllabus should address the needs of a diverse population.

While the United States population has grown more ethnically and racially diverse along with the students enrolled in postsecondary institutions, the faculty makeup in higher education is not keeping pace with the changing population (Espinosa et al., 2019). In the fall of 2020, 39% of faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions were White males, and 35% were White females compared with 4% Black females, 3% each Black males, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). In contrast, in 2020, 42.0% of undergraduates were from marginalized groups of students (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The lack of representation of faculty of color becomes problematic in a few ways. When marginalized students do not see themselves represented in faculty and the

curriculum, their experience is devalued by the higher education system. When these students lack the representation and shared experiences that their non-marginalized counterparts traditionally have, they feel a lack of belonging and inclusion because they do not share their identities with most students and faculty in their classes. The lack of shared student identities when most of the class is White is a reality, with many marginalized students reporting the experience of the classroom as unwelcoming and even hostile (Espinosa et al., 2019; Haynes, 2017; Taylor et al., 2019; Tuitt et al., 2018). Historically, marginalized groups have been treated as insignificant or are denied equal access to resources based on their race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, and disabilities. For many historically marginalized students, the classroom becomes a non-safe space for learning and sharing ideas. The reality is that these negative class experiences lead historically marginalized students to leave higher education.

Another problem associated with the lack of faculty from marginalized groups is the added stress due to the invisible labor placed on the historically marginalized faculty member (Zambrana et al., 2020). The pressure comes from being unable to address the needs and mentor all students who lean on the representative faculty. Performing diversity work at primarily White institutions (PWI), according to faculty of color, is a form of cultural or identity taxation (Rideau, 2019). This work is also seen as a necessary and personal task to pay it forward (Gordon et al., 2022). With these problems in mind, all faculty can help reduce students' feelings of being unwelcome and not belonging. The syllabus, often the first point of contact with students, is a starting point for faculty to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study is the absence of the voice of marginalized students' experiences with syllabi. The syllabus is usually handed down from one instructor to the next (Eberly et al., 2001; Gannon, 2020). A common problem is that syllabi use impersonal, generic language, creating a barrier between the instructor and the student (Gannon, 2020). Many scholars have researched syllabi, including students' perceptions of their instructors (Ludy et al., 2016; Saville et al., 2010; Valentin & Grauerholz, 2019), student-centered syllabi (Eberly et al., 2001; Harnish & Bridges, 2011; Richmond et al., 2016, 2019; Richmond, 2022), and what students attend to first in a syllabus (Becker & Calhoon, 2008; Calhoon & Becker, 1999). These studies demonstrate what students perceive through the syllabus about a professor's approachability, caring, encouragement, creativity, welcome, and potential for being a higher-level instructor; however, they lack the students' perception of their inclusion in the syllabi.

There is an increase in marginalized students in higher education, although they enter and graduate from higher education institutions at lower rates than their non-marginalized counterparts (Thiem & Dasgupta, 2022). These students face social, economic, educational, and cultural inequity barriers. Consequently, the barriers make students feel like they do not belong, which adds to not completing their education. At the same time, the increase in the marginalized population of faculty has not kept pace. When marginalized students do not share identities with their faculty, this adds to their feeling of not belonging (Espinosa et al., 2019; Haynes, 2017; Taylor et al., 2019; Tuitt et al., 2018).

Students who do not feel included are more likely to leave the institution (Espinosa et al., 2019; McFarland et al., 2020; Tuitt et al., 2018). Marginalized students who do not persist to graduation have higher rates of student loan defaults (Houle, 2014), cannot qualify for higher-

paying positions (Chmielewski, 2019; Thompson, 2016), and continue the cycle of lower socioeconomic status (Chmielewski, 2019). Higher education institutions suffer by losing students who bring a different experience and diversify the campus environment. With the decrease in the number of traditional students who enroll right after completing high school, institutions need to keep the students they have and provide for their needs.

Faculty should strive to make all students feel included; one place to do so is in the syllabus. There are no known studies on how marginalized students find themselves included in syllabi. Many studies on syllabi do not address the student experience related to their identities, indicating a gap in the literature. Further examination of marginalized students and how they experience syllabi and practices of the classroom is an area that needs to be explored. This gap in the literature is a problem because increased awareness and understanding of how marginalized students find themselves included in a syllabus is essential in understanding their needs. This study's findings will help create inclusive syllabi guidance and classrooms informed by the student's experience while aiding in retention and persistence to graduation for marginalized students.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis was to give voice to marginalized students' lived experiences by investigating how marginalized students experience themselves as included in syllabi and the meaning-making of their experiences. This study provides insight into their needs and the needed elements in syllabi to create inclusive syllabi and classrooms. This interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) aimed to understand how marginalized students experience themselves as included in syllabi by exploring the following research questions.

1. How do marginalized students understand themselves as included in syllabi?

2. How do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this IPA study includes interpretivism, critical race theory (CRT), and intersectionality. The theories work together in my approach to the research. Interpretivism, as a construct, provides the lens to make meaning of and interpret an individual's experience. Tenets of CRT provide another lens to value the lived experience as a counternarrative and identify the systems in place that continue marginalizing students. Intersectionality contributes to understanding that individuals are not one identity, and their identities intersect in their experiences. Because of their intersectionality, they may suffer further marginalization. Figure 1.1 visualizes the conceptual framework as a lens to view and interpret marginalized students' experiences.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism as a paradigm derives from hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). It is the belief that each individual constructs reality via their experiences. The relativist notion of more than one reality contrasts with the positivist belief that there is only one reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The individual mind produces its realities and examining them as a whole is essential. The realities as lived experiences are understood using methodological approaches such as IPA.

Critical Race Theory

CRT has its roots in legal studies with legal scholars Bell, Freeman, and Delgado creating a framework for legal analysis because civil rights advances have been reversed or stopped

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). It grew out of critical legal studies and critical feminist theory, with scholars Crenshaw, Harris, Lawrence, Matsuda, Williams, and others as key players in the movement. CRT addresses the role of race and racism in society. From CRT's origin, questioning all the systems in place that are biased against Black people has grown to include non-binary and all people of color and gender (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hiraldo, 2010). From the legal aspect of CRT, other scholars started to apply the constructs to view and interpret issues in education.

CRT is rooted in five tenets:

Racism is endemic to the American culture or ordinary.

Racism is rooted in White dominant status and non-White subordinates as a social construct.

Interest convergence allows racial justice to be accommodated within the White power structure.

Voices and lived experiences of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and LBGTQAI+ are legitimate and used to create a counternarrative through the rejection of the dominant White narrative.

The goal is to eliminate all forms of oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hiraldo, 2010; Tuitt et al., 2018).

This theory provides a lens to examine, understand, and interpret marginalized students' experiences with inclusion in syllabi.

Using CRT during the research process allows the voice and lived experience of the marginalized student with the syllabus to be valued, heard, and interpreted as a counternarrative (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hiraldo, 2010; Tuitt et al., 2018). The student can interpret their

experience with the syllabus regarding racism, how they perceive it as a non-dominant member of society, and how they have experienced oppression. The lens of CRT addresses the participant's experience and gives value to the voice to be heard and expressed, allowing the student's needs to come forward.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a valuable framework for this study because it focuses on the axes of power and oppression that impact persons with multiple marginalized identities (Crenshaw, 2017). Intersectionality has its roots in Black feminist theory and CRT (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 2014). Crenshaw (1988) introduced the term intersectionality to describe issues within laws that affected Black women as social discrimination. The work done by Crenshaw (1988), Collins (1998), and hooks (2014) moved the idea that intersectionality could apply to more than Black women. The thought that one might suffer oppression because of race, gender, or class is compounded when looking at one's intersectionality. A non-marginalized LGBTQIA+ first-gen student will have a different lived experience with oppression and discrimination than a student who is not marginalized. Intersectionality moves the lens from a binary view of an individual's identity to multiple viewpoints. Individuals can face numerous overlapping forms of discrimination depending on their race, gender, socioeconomic status, physical ability, and other characteristics that place them in a marginalized group (Acker, 2006; Carbado et al., 2013; hooks, 2014). One's intersectionality is amplified by the oppression one experiences through their identities.

Using intersectionality as a heuristic and analytical tool allows for the exploration of students' lived experiences with the syllabus (Carbado et al., 2013). Because of the systems, practices, processes, and classrooms in higher education, students are further oppressed due to

their intersectionality (Acker, 2006). In a syllabus, a first-generation, Black, LGBTQIA+, low socioeconomic status student might experience unfamiliar language, suffer microaggressions, or encounter stereotypes or racism that make them feel they do not belong (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018). This research used intersectionality as a lens to examine student experiences.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study focused on how marginalized students find themselves included in syllabi and the meaning they make of their experience. Given the changing student demographics in higher education, studying marginalized student experiences with syllabi offers an understanding of the student experience and the changes needed to make syllabi more inclusive. The goal was six to ten participants for the study. A small sample size fits the idiopathic nature of IPA and allows for an in-depth analysis of each case (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022).

There are delimitations for this study. One is the inclusion criteria for participants. I aimed to recruit marginalized, third- or fourth-year higher education students. Geographically, the participants were recruited from primarily White institutions (PWI) in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern regions of the United States with purposive sampling that provided representative participants that included diversity in race, low socioeconomic status (SES), LGBTQIA+, and disabilities.

Assumptions and Limitations

There were a few assumptions acknowledged in this section. One is that marginalized students would be willing to participate in this study, and those who participate can share the meaning-making of their marginalized experience. Because I am a White, cis-gender, older female, I was aware of my power position, and this helped to increase the participants response

in an open and full manner and reduced the pressure to answer. The researcher believes that everyone needs the space to be their authentic self and provided that space for participants.

There are known limitations in this study. IPA studies are idiographic and may be considered a limitation due to the limited number of participants; the idiographic nature provides for in-depth experiences of the participants (Miller et al., 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). However, this is also a strength of the method because it provides deep understanding. There is no generalizability of the findings to a population due to the nature of this qualitative method; however, the findings are transferable and inform practices related to syllabi. Potential participants were excluded due to non-response or not having prior syllabi. Other potential participants may not have signed up due to the time commitment and the amount of compensation offered. A participant may not have revealed the truth about their experience due to my physical appearance as a White female. I was the sole researcher, and the data I collected and analyzed is through my lens; and even though I worked to bracket my biases, there is the possibility that they may come through in my study.

Significance and Potential Impact

With changing student demographics, the findings of this study demonstrated the significance of the reality and truths of marginalized students' experiences of inclusion in syllabi. Although there have been several studies about syllabi (Buskist et al., 2002; Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014; Harrington & Gabert-Quillen, 2015; Lund Dean & Fornaciari, 2014; Lowther et al., 1989; Ludy et al., 2016; Richmond et al., 2019; Saville et al., 2010), no previous studies have examined how marginalized students experience themselves as included in syllabi, therefore, recognizing a gap in the literature. Learning about students' experiences with documents that may or may not express inclusion informs the field as to their experiences. The findings of this

study lead to further studies and improvement in creating syllabi that engage all students participating in the course and give faculty information on the struggles faced by participants in this study. Through this study, the experiences of students with marginalized identities inform the practices that lead to inclusion in syllabi and further studies about the marginalized student experience.

The five themes that emerged in this study include the following: Expressing feelings from syllabi policies; Centering identities and course materials; Illustrating the link between syllabus, faculty, and course; Creating equitable partnerships; and Suggesting solutions for identities. The way the participants understood themselves as included syllabi as well as how they make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality emerged in the themes. These results will impact how one thinks about disabilities in the syllabus and the classroom as well as gender. Also, the effect of the cost of course materials on low SES students. While this study is not generalizable, it is transferable.

Conclusion

This IPA study sought to understand the meaning-making of marginalized students' experiences with syllabi. Previous studies on syllabi covered student perceptions of faculty and the course. While other studies demonstrate the syllabus as a contract or learning tool, and studies where students were asked about what they attended to most in a syllabus. The changing demographics of the student population highlighted the need to ask marginalized students about their experience with syllabi to inform needed change. This study contributes ideas about student experiences and gives insight into ways to improve syllabi for marginalized students.

Four more chapters follow this introduction. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the literature from the conceptual framework through the methodology. Chapter 3 presents a

thorough explanation of the methodology and methods. Next, Chapter 4 presents the study's findings, followed by Chapter 5 with a discussion about the findings, implications, and further research. These five chapters combined are my completed dissertation.

Definition of Terms

This study focused on marginalized students and their experience of inclusion in syllabi. The following terms provide transparency and clarity and assist the reader in understanding this study.

Critical Race Theory: Yosso's (2005) framing is appropriate for this study. Yosso describes CRT as a method for theorizing, investigating, and challenging how race and racism affect social structures, practices, and discourses, both implicitly and explicitly.

Constructivism: In simplest terms, it is how one constructs knowledge as they experience the world and reflect on those experiences. The experience and reflection build upon prior experiences and preexisting knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 2016).

Interpretivism: A lens to view and interpret the experience of one whose reality is subjective and socially constructed (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenology: The philosophy of experience and the study of phenomena. It is descriptive by nature and describes the way the experience appears.

Hermeneutics: The theory and practice of interpretation and, in qualitative human research, the interpretation of the individual's experience.

Intersectionality: The idea that one identity does not define an individual, as their multiple identities intersect, and they experience systems of oppression and marginalization through those identities (Crenshaw, 2017).

Exploratory notes: The researcher creates these notes during the early phase of the data analysis. These notes include initial reactions, such as what is interesting or important in the transcript. The notes can be descriptive, linguistic, or conceptual (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Experiential statements: Statements *c*reated from the exploratory notes as a distinct and concise summary of the emerging ideas from the exploratory notes (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Inclusive Pedagogy: A practice incorporating inclusive language and practices in the classroom and on syllabi to create environments that include all students, especially those marginalized.

LGBTQIA+: In this study, LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and other identities that words do not currently describe. Over the years, the acronym of LGBT and, more recently, LGBTQ+ have been used to describe an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity (Defining LGBTQIA+, n.d.).

Marginalized: For this study, a marginalized student may be one or more of the following: non-White, low socioeconomic status, LGBTQIA+, and a student with a disability.

Oppression. Oppression relates to the marginalized and how one suffers or is held down based on the dominant group imposing their marginalization.

Member-checking: Also known as a participant or respondent validation, it is used to help improve the accuracy and credibility of the study. A summary of the researcher's interpretation of the interview is shared with the participant to check for accuracy (Birt et al., 2016).

Paradigm: A paradigm is a framework incorporating the fundamental assumptions, modes of thought, and methods researchers accept for a study.

PWI: Primarily White Institutions of higher education.

Social Justice: This is the concept of fairness. That fairness must address racial inequities, gender inequalities, and LGBTQAI+ rights.

Figure 1.1

Conceptual Framework Model
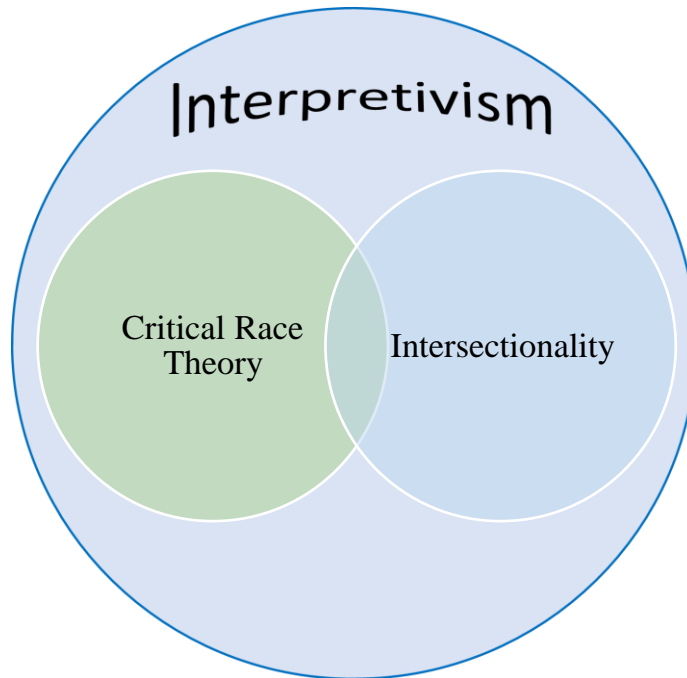
Note. The model shows the conceptual framework for this study. Interpretivism takes place through the experience of the participant within CRT and Intersectionality. The experience or phenomena is more than any one piece of the model.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The first part of this chapter offers an examination of critical race theory (CRT), intersectionality, and marginalized students. Second, a thorough investigation of research on syllabi, highlighting what is known, the gaps in understanding how syllabi affect marginalized students, and redesign of the syllabus. The third part includes studies on inclusive pedagogy, faculty resistance to change, and successful practices of inclusive pedagogy. Lastly, a review of research about interpretative phenomenological analysis studies. These subjects situate marginalized students' issues and difficulties in higher education and allow for investigating the research questions.

Critical Race Theory

CRT emerged in the 1970s to address racism when the civil rights movement felt stalled. Scholarly researchers (Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlé Crenshaw) developed CRT's ideas and framework based on critical legal studies and radical feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). During the 1980s and 90s, it grew with revisions to the central tenets, refining CRT's foundations. The following five tenets summarize these foundations:

1. Racism is endemic to the American culture, or ordinary.

2. Racism is rooted in White dominant status and non-White subordinates as a social construct.

3. Interest convergence allows the accommodation of racial justice when it benefits White interests.

4. Voices and lived experiences of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQAI+ are legitimate and used to create a counternarrative of the dominant White narrative.

5. The goal is to eliminate all forms of oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018).

The pioneering efforts of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), and Solorzano (1998), who introduced CRT research to K-12 and higher education, is the foundation for critical scholars in their study of educational systems that keep power structures in place. Educational systems and policies have been well discussed and approached in education (Delgado & Villalpando, 2002; Hiraldo, 2010; Parker & Villalpando, 2007; Patton et al., 2007). CRT in postsecondary education is also studied by Solorzano, Ceja, Yosso, Smith, and Tuitt.

Educational inequity is described through CRT and proposed that it is a product of place and people of color in poverty (Kantor & Lowe, 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Orfield, 2013). The school curriculum is, as Ladson-Billings (1998) calls it, "a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist script" (p. 18). Minoritized voices are left silent and unable to challenge the dominant culture. The idea that students of color are deficient and need more remediation absolves the instructor and the institution from using culturally inclusive practices and providing an environment where students can develop. However, Ladson-Billings (1998) cautions that using CRT in education requires careful thinking as it exposes racism in education. The work is hard and emotional, with the possibility that those in power positions may challenge this work.

CRT is a political target for state legislatures to outlaw its teaching in K-12 and higher education. Eighteen states have passed legislation making CRT's teaching illegal; some states include Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Idaho, Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina (Schwartz, 2023). The theory has become political and misinterpreted by these legislatures. Idaho and other states have focused on banning CRT and teaching about the

United States being racist and discussing conscious and unconscious bias, privilege, discrimination, oppression, and gender with students. CRT is under attack by those who do not understand the tenets. Opponents of CRT in the political spectrum demonstrate White interests while working to maintain Whiteness, as their efforts expose their racism.

Lived Experience

CRT espouses that the voices and lived experiences of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ should be told and heard to provide another point of view than the dominant culture. Marginalized students' experience differs from the dominant culture and offers another perspective. Recent qualitative studies have examined the lived experience of marginalized students in college settings. One phenomenological qualitative study by Rodriguez and Blaney (2021), conducted at a predominantly White public research university, explored the lived experiences of 17 Latina undergraduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and their sense of belonging. Imposter syndrome was something the participants felt through their marginalized and intersecting identities of females and Latina in STEM. The students doubted themselves, believing they belonged. In this study listening to the students' experiences confirm the issues in STEM as a male-dominated field and maintains the marginalization of the non-dominant culture. Rather than focusing on what the marginalized group should do, the research establishes that concentrating on STEM settings and dominant group behaviors and attitudes is needed.

Furthermore, a phenomenological qualitative study investigating the lived experiences of marginalized racial minority college commuter students revealed that the participants felt a sense of being in-between their home and college life (Burke & Park-Taylor, 2021). The in-between is described as not yet an adult and still treated as a minor. Their lived experiences offer a guide for their success in college while establishing the information for colleges to put programs in place.

The value in the lived experience is rich in its offer to the administration, faculty, and staff ways to create a more inclusive campus environment. These two recent qualitative studies examine marginalized groups' lived experiences in higher education settings. The value of the marginalized lived experience offers insight, ideas, and solutions to these group's issues.

<div align="center">**Intersectionality**</div>

Examining how marginalized students experience inclusion through their intersectionality is essential in this study. Each participant may have more than one marginalization category that may add to understanding their experience with syllabi and the classroom. The following review of the literature on intersectionality offers the reasoning behind using intersectionality as a piece of the researcher's conceptual framework.

Intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (2017), demonstrates that more than one identity defines an individual. An individual's experience is unique due to the junction of identity. Individuals may better understand the link between their social groups and daily societal experiences by connecting their personal identity narrative to larger systems of dominance while understanding the ideas of privileged and marginalized positions (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Collins (2019) argued that there is a need to investigate the lived experiences of marginalized groups within social structures. Likewise, Zambrana & MacDonald (2009), and Collins (2000) posit that educational achievement patterns can only be understood via an intersectional framework, which draws on historical power dynamics to illustrate current inequities. The interrelated factors of marginalized identities are fundamental and mutually reinforcing dimensions that have a significant impact on an individual's opportunities, life chances, and experiences within the context of higher education (Zambrana & MacDonald, 2009). Within an

institution, the power dynamics as a hegemonic authority and the inequity faced by marginalized students is experienced through their intersecting identities.

The experience of oppression and keeping marginalized students at bay involves their identities. Race, gender, low SES, and disabilities as an intersection allows those in power to oppress. The compounding of oppression through one's intersectionality provides further marginalization and keeps the power structure in place (Zambrana & MacDonald, 2009). Rather than thinking about one form of oppression through one identity, thinking about oppression in the form of intersectionality provides further explanations and insight into the power structures and gives a deeper analysis. Cho et al. (2013) offers "what makes an analysis intersectional…adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power" (p. 795). The problems examined are structural versus the problem being with the individual. In the adoption of intersectionality, heuristic thinking is required to solve problems, allowing for reframing existing knowledge (Collins, 2019). As Collins (2019) describes, it is the search for truth and meaning and requires a paradigm for the understanding produced and the process to create that knowledge.

Marginalized Students

For my study, I examined marginalized students who identify as racially marginalized, low socioeconomic status (SES), LGBTQIA+, and/or having a disability. In social structures, those in power work to exclude marginalized identities or those who are different (Crenshaw, 1991). Historically marginalized populations have been underrepresented in higher education even as the U.S. population grows more diverse (Thiem & Dasgupta, 2022). This population enters postsecondary institutions and graduates at lower rates and is more likely to be first-generation college students. Marginalized students are more likely to come from underfunded

school systems and are less prepared for the culture of higher education (Thiem & Dasgupta, 2022). They face many barriers in higher education, including social, economic, educational, and unfamiliar cultures. Therefore, the barriers are systems in place, which are interconnected and make students feel that they do not belong, increase their stress and anxiety, and keep them from persisting to graduation.

Researchers have evaluated how marginalized students are impacted in higher education settings (Duran, 2018, 2021; Hong, 2015; Jury et al., 2017; Linley et al., 2016; Lyman et al., 2016; Tuitt et al., 2018). Understanding marginalized students' issues in an educational environment informs administration, faculty, and staff of policies and practices that could alleviate the systemic structures and barriers that work against marginalized students. Although a student who has only one identity of the marginalization defined above qualifies as marginalized for this study, the reality is that there is an intersection of these identities which overlap.

Marginalized students' experiences in higher education have been researched from the student's deficit perspective rather than their strengths (Garriot, 2020; Yosso, 2005). In Yosso's (2005) work, she identifies cultural capital as the strength marginalized students have and bring into environments. Through the lens of CRT, she centers this capital on Communities of Color. The narrative is that Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital that builds the community wealth. Garriot (2020) posits that higher education institutions should be asking why they fail marginalized students and uses a critical cultural wealth model (CCWM) to examine the strengths of first-generation economically marginalized students. This study uses four dimensions, structural and institutional conditions, social-emotional crossroads, career self-authorship, and cultural wealth, to examine how the systems affect marginalized students.

Garriot (2020) demonstrates that the institutions' failure to recognize these students' cultural capital makes their experiences more difficult. These students bring diverse experiences into the classroom. Their experiences enrich the learning of all learners and the campus environment. Therefore, these experiences within a social structure such as higher education add to the understanding of marginalized students' oppression within the system.

In the following four sections, each of the marginalized categories is examined. While intersectionality of one's marginalization is possible, I need to explore each category to understand the research that has been done and the findings. As a middle-class, first-generation college student who is White, female, and a professional, my understanding of marginalized students and how I need to approach the participants in my study is important to me and the study.

Race in Higher Education

This section analyzes the literature on the race of students in educational settings. Historically, students from non-White populations have had an inferior education based on their race (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Orfield, 2013; Rothstein, 2013; Tuitt et al., 2018). The demographics of undergraduate students of color attending college nationally in 2016 was 45.6%, an increase of 16% over the previous 20 years (Morgan et al., 2020). Colleges, universities, and faculty should note the changing student population and the internal and external barriers for this population. During the last several years in the United States, racial inequity and division have been prominent in the media, public arenas, and education. According to Horowitz et al. (2019), some Americans feel expressing racial or racist insensitive views is more acceptable. Nationally, college campuses are not exempt from racist and racialized incidents. In 2020, Campus Racial Incidents (n.d.) reported that there were 22 reported incidents

of racism across college and university campuses. The incidents ranged from racial slurs written

on dormitory walls and sidewalks, students' racial tirades in classrooms, students being asked to

line up based on their skin tone and hairstyle, to a university president apologizing for racially

insensitive remarks. Many racial incidents go unreported because students of color feel their

experience is not taken seriously. Student victims of racial incidents may feel isolated and fall

out of college, widening the opportunity gap (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

      A link exists between the opportunity gap in K-12 education and higher education.

Current K-12 education policies favor White, middle-class students (Orfield, 2013; Rothstein,

2013). The most apparent policy is the funding of public schools. More than 35% of school

funding comes from property taxes, with disadvantaged neighborhoods or communities paying

the price for their students' inferior education (Chatterji, 2020). Even though the states provide

some funding to school districts, it is not enough to keep pace with schools with a wealthier tax

base. Over the years, state funding of K-12 and higher education has been reduced. Another

contribution to education inequity is federal housing laws that contributed to redlining and kept

minoritized populations in urban areas with poorly funded schools (Orfield, 2013).

      The long-term effect of education policies has created an education debt, or the failure to

produce equitable conditions for students of color or students with low socioeconomic status

(SES) (Ladson-Billings, 2017). Students of color who are products of the K-12 system face

challenges when moving to higher education. Schmid et al. (2016) recognized that student

achievement in college was affected by barriers such as campus climate, faculty diversity,

instructional approaches, and support systems. Others argue that the college campus has

psychological barriers for low SES students, including students of color (Jury et al., 2017). The

psychological barriers include emotional distress, classism, negative stereotypes, and fear of

failure. Many students of color and low SES are first-generation college students and do not have the support systems that non-first-generation students have. Other barriers exist in the classroom, including language and terminology on the syllabus. These barriers that exist for students of color in college classrooms can be understood through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and faculty's pedagogical practices. Colleges and universities are working to help faculty to create more inclusive classrooms (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016). With these increasing efforts, students still face being racialized in classrooms with faculty who have not embraced or are uncertain about implementing pedagogy that works to address the inclusion of all students. Educational institutions hold power positions and continue racism and race differences in education.

There is an intersection of race and low socioeconomic status. Racially marginalized students historically come from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds (Covarrubias et al., 2016; Destin et al., 2021). Their intersectionality of race and low SES contributes to their marginalization and experiences in education settings. In educational settings there is a practice of assimilation where the students are expected to leave behind their status, race, and cultural capital and in doing so they are further marginalized (Destin et al., 2021). Color-blindness also adds to this loss of identity and intersectionality as sameness rather than the uniqueness of each individual.

Low Socioeconomic Status

This section, an analysis of the literature on low SES students in educational settings, provides me with an understanding of the background and issues that low SES students face in educational settings. This understanding aided in my development of interview questions and awareness of a low SES student during the interview.

The further marginalization of low SES students in education is evident in the studies presented. A brief analysis of educational opportunities is given to place the marginalization in the context of the educational systems. Students from low SES backgrounds show inequities in their K-12 and college education. The average high school dropout rate in 2019 was 4.7%, with low SES high school students 10 times more likely to drop out versus higher SES students (McFarland et al., 2020). Low SES student dropouts had a higher unemployment rate, a disproportionate incarceration rate, cost the economy $272,000 over their lifetime, and heavily relied on Medicaid and Medicare. Low-SES students' achievement gap impedes their upward social mobility and increases post-secondary enrollment's demographic decline (Jackson, 2013). Even though higher education offers the hope of upward social mobility, the cost of college for low SES students comes with other challenges.

With the increasing cost of college, low SES students need to take out federal loans as working while attending college does not pay enough to cover the expenses. Goldrick-Rob (2016; 2018) notes all of the issues that low SES students are faced with. The promise of working hard enough and you will get the golden ticket does not apply. The confusion of the mix of the federal, state, institutional, and private financial aid ends up creating further issues; low SES students who drop out and default on loans. In addition, low SES college students qualify for Pell Grants, but one-third of low SES students drop out from four-year institutions (Thompson, 2016). Dropping out leads to lower-paying jobs, loan delinquencies, and defaults, furthering the poverty cycle for low SES. Universities are an avenue to upward social mobility, but it is contingent on access to and affordability of higher education (Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2019; Marginson, 2018). Higher education should address these barriers as the uncertainty of rising inflation and the changing demographics aids in losing low SES students.

According to several studies (Austin et al., 2019; Destin et al., 2021; Jury et al., 2017; Stephens et al., 2012), low SES students are more likely to be first-generation college students, to be of a race other than White, and may have a disability. In university settings, classism and racism overlap for low SES students. In addition to having a lower socioeconomic status, they are often Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian American, demonstrating an aspect of their intersectionality. They are more likely to experience institutional and interpersonal racism. These experiences may happen in the classroom. Austin et al. (2019) argue that professors evaluate student work based on their biases and favor students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, faculty members have engaged in microaggressions and made insulting remarks at students with lower SES and minorities. Faculty who use assimilationist ideology, such as color-blindness, deter conversations around race, low SES, and other marginalized topics (Destin et al., 2021).

Institutional culture and systems create barriers for low SES students. Destin et al. (2021) study examines the influence of institutional culture and systems. They observe that cultural and institutional systems influence the well-being and success of low-income pupils. Higher SES students prioritize independence as a cultural standard, but lower SES students value connection and interdependence. Students from low SES backgrounds and minorities benefit from institutional policies and classroom practices that acknowledge and support interrelated ways of being and knowing (Covarrubias et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2012). The institutions, faculty, and staff need to understand the cultural backgrounds of all students to affirm those backgrounds to create an environment where low SES students may achieve (Covarrubias et al., 2016). Destin et al. (2021) note that it is not through "assimilationist and deficit-based approaches...but through targeted resources, faculty development, and community connection..." that disadvantaged

students' achievements may be improved (p. 59). The deficit-based and assimilation approach has not worked; it is time for changes in the institution's culture and systems, faculty pedagogy, and syllabi.

LGBTQIA+ in Higher Education

This section analyzes the literature on the marginalized group of LGBTQIA+ students in educational settings. The marginalization of LGBTQIA+ students is presented in studies ranging from school experiences (Duran, 2019; Miller, 2015; Miller et al., 2018) to faculty as sources of support (Linley et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2021). While these studies reveal the barriers and competing power structures that LGBTQIA+ students face in the educational environment, they also explore the intersectionality of LGBTQIA+ students. There is no one identity that LGBTQIA+ students exhibit, and when LGBTQIA+ students have faculty who identify as they do, it adds value to their intersectionality and it enriches their experience (Duran, 2021). Furthermore, the voice of experience provides insight through this research.

Moreover, research shows the intersectionality of LGBTQIA+ students through the students' voices of experience. When their voice is presented front and center, they reveal the intersecting forms of oppression that contribute to their marginalization (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Duran, 2019, 2021; Miller, 2018). LGBTQIA+ students' voices establish their oppression in the instructional, social, and institutional culture and systems. In instructional settings, faculty misgendered LGBTQIA+ students and did not address stereotyping nor derogatory comments (Yang et al., 2021). LGBTQIA+ students' resilience enables them to successfully face oppression and identify the need for the attribute based on the context. Instead of being a testament to each person's ability to overcome challenges, these experiences criticize how higher education institutions fail to create environments where these students can succeed. Furthermore,

a lack of resources, funding, and representation for LGBTQIA+ students compound their marginalization (Duran, 2019). Therefore, the systematic oppression of LGBTQIA+ students continues, thereby allowing those in power (heterosexual and cisgendered) to maintain their privilege (Duran, 2019; White Hughto et al., 2015; Wolf et al., 2017).

In contrast to these experiences of oppression, LGBTQIA+ students also voice their experience of institutional and faculty practices that create an environment where they can thrive. LGBTQIA+ students report that faculty, aware of their issues, are more likely to provide support (Duran & Jones, 2020; Linley et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2021). That support comes by addressing homophobic language and challenging cultural norms in the classroom and curriculum (Linley et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2021). Additionally, faculty show their support by attending on-campus events, advising, mentoring, and making LGBTQIA+ students feel cared for (Linley et al., 2016; Duran & Jones, 2020). Faculty also show support through allyship and safe space training (Mitchell et al., 2018; Sonnenberg et al., 2021). The training develops faculty to examine their own biases and understand the marginalization of students in systems of oppression so that faculty can create safe spaces and allyship for marginalized students. Financial support for programs and spaces makes LGBTQIA+ students feel valued on campus (Duran & Jones, 2020). While these studies provide the student voice regarding intersectionality, oppression, and positive experiences, they do not include their experiences with syllabi.

Students with Disabilities

This section analyzes the literature on the marginalized group of students with disabilities. Unlike the research on LGBTQIA+ which explores individuals' intersectionality, the research on students with disabilities and intersectionality is under-researched (Miller, 2015). Miller also notes that most research on marginalized populations has historically been one-

dimensional; however, limited studies examine LGBTQIA+ and their disabilities. What follows is the historical one-dimensional studies followed by studies that use intersectionality, and then universal design for learning (UDL).

One-Dimensional Studies.

An essential point about students with disabilities is a common misconception that people with disabilities have only visible disabilities. Higher education students may have visible or invisible disabilities, and some may have both. An invisible disability is a physical, mental, or neurological illness that is not apparent from the outside (Invisible Disabilities® Association, n.d.). It is essential to recognize that students with disabilities may have invisible disabilities. Visible disabilities include someone who uses a guide dog, cane, wheelchair, sign language, an assistive device, or has a physical disability feature. Therefore, a lack of awareness of people with disabilities keeps the systems and barriers in place, making a student's life more difficult.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a federal law that guarantees special services for students with disabilities. While in the K-12 education system, students with disabilities have an individual education plan (IEP). The IEP provides the needed accommodations based on the student's disability. In particular, the student's parent or caregiver can advocate for them to ensure they receive all the services the law provides. By contrast, when students with disabilities enter college, their IEP does not follow them, and now the student must advocate for themself. Moving from others advocating for you to supporting yourself adds to the pressures and barriers students with disabilities face. The barriers come from the policies of the federal government and higher education.

Focusing on barriers rather than the individual's disability is based on the social model of disability (Oliver, 2013). The model emphasizes sociocultural limits and challenges to

participation. Previous research has also revealed the use of barriers with disability concerns in higher education. Subsequently, barriers students face when advocating for themselves are evident throughout the process of obtaining accommodations. Studies reveal that students lack knowledge of the services available and how to get them (Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016). The Lyman et al. (2016) study highlights a lack of understanding of disability services and accommodations. Hong (2015) revealed that students did not know what to advocate for or how to self-advocate. While these two studies demonstrate the barriers students face, the higher education system has created the barrier.

Additionally, these studies have uncovered that students with disabilities do not wish to self-identify or use accommodations. The students reported that to be self-accommodating, they needed to be self-sufficient first (Lyman et al., 2016). Instead, these students would engage with their professor about their disability rather than the accommodations office. However, they felt that knowing accommodations were available, if needed, helps with their anxiety. Others reported that students wanted to avoid adverse social reactions (Lyman et al., 2016; Marshak et al., 2010). Students with disabilities sought to avoid drawing attention to themselves, giving the impression that they were receiving preferential treatment and becoming a burden. Likewise, some students felt their work had more value if they did not use accommodations (Toutain, 2019). Therefore, the barrier for students with disabilities seeking accommodations is the systems in place.

In addition, the faculty can create barriers for students with disabilities. Those barriers come from faculty's negative reactions to accommodations or how faculty handle those accommodations (Hong, 2015; Houck et al., 1992; Lyman et al., 2016). The negative response may be the faculty's attitude, the refusal to provide an accommodation, or the failure to follow

through with an accommodation (Houck et al., 1992; Lyman et al., 2016). In the same way, students disclosed that faculty violated the confidentiality of their accommodations by not being discreet or identifying the student's needs during class (Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016; Marshak, 2010). Furthermore, students said they did not want to be recognized as less able by their faculty, or for faculty to treat them differently than the "normal" students. Likewise, faculty tried to talk students out of accommodations or told them they should find another major (Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016). In contrast, some students reveal they also have positive experiences with faculty (Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016). These findings demonstrate the value of listening to the student's voice of experience.

Studies Using Intersecting Identities.

Miller's (2015) qualitative study of 25 students examined how LGBTQ students with disabilities describe their experiences in university classrooms. The students in the study identified as LGBTQ and had one or more disabilities. They also revealed their race and are included in some of the findings. Students revealed their identities when they were comfortable and depending on the faculty, peers, and the class. They described managing perceptions of faculty and other students and dealt with microaggression and discrimination in the classroom.

Universal Design.

One path to creating positive experiences in the classroom is using universal design for learning or UDL. UDL aims to eliminate the barriers for all students (Burgstahler, 2020; Hill et al., 2022). Burgstaghler's Universal Design of Instruction (UDI): Definition, principles, guidelines, and examples offer faculty a road map to creating UDL environments that help to eliminate specifically the need for accommodations. The Hill et al. (2022) study found there were misconceptions about UDL. Those misconceptions include that UDL removes the rigor, the

time and workload to implement, and the lack of resources. They also noted that successful UDL

implementation requires an institutional setting in which UDL is embedded into the culture. The

Li (2020) study reviewed the literature to reveal a proactive and reactive way to accommodate

students. The reactive position is the requirement of accommodations, whereas the proactive

position is the incorporation of UDL. The incorporation of UDL relieves the need for the student

to disclose their disability because the classroom in UDL is already accommodating. Faculty

who incorporate UDL have innovative teaching methods.

Barriers Marginalized Students Face

Marginalized students entering higher education may face barriers that can negatively

affect their potential. Institutional or cultural practices create some barriers these students face,

which can perpetuate psychological difficulties (Jury et al., 2017). The psychological barriers

that marginalized students feel include emotional distress, negative stereotypes, fear of failure,

performance-avoiding goals, and imposter syndrome, which is the persistent inability to believe

that one's success is deserved or has been legitimately achieved because of one's own efforts or

skills (Jury et al., 2017; Thiem & Dasgupta, 2022). Higher education perpetuates these barriers

through cultural norms in line with higher-SES students. The barriers include language and

terminology in syllabi, which are presented to students on or before the first day of class and

faculty practices (Richmond et al., 2019). Policy statements in syllabi often include terminology

such as "you cannot" which can be interpreted by students that they are unwelcome in the class.

Terminology such as "office hours" may intimidate marginalized students (Gannon, 2020; Jury

et al., 2017). As a result, language and vocabulary can create psychological barriers and lead to

students dropping out of school.

Additionally, students of color experience microaggressions in the classroom (Linder

et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2011; Thomas & Plaut, 2008). Linder et al. (2015) found that 29 students of color experienced microaggressions, including everyday slights, snubs, and insults. Even though the intent of faculty and other students was not to harm, the impact on students of color caused exhaustion and adverse effects on their mental and physical health (Linder et al., 2015). Students reported that faculty failed to discuss race or address microaggressions and demonstrated discomfort in the discussion of diversity. Students of color felt they had to do the heavy lifting of conversations around race while being made to represent ideas about race. An added example in the study is that students of color wanted to develop relationships with their faculty but found that the faculty members were "too busy," making them feel tokenized or treated differently. This example created a barrier to developing a student-teacher relationship and demonstrates that listening to students' voices provides critical insight into faculty awareness and the changes needed in the classroom (Linder et al., 2015).

The Smith et al. (2011) study posits that microaggressions cause emotional, psychological, and bodily suffering (racial battle fatigue), and that Black males experience this more than any other group. The structure and culture of primarily White institutions (PWI)s are filled with gendered prejudice, restricted chances, and daily, overwhelming stress. Smith et al. (2011) also note the irony that Black males' academic achievement is exposure to further stress in PWIs, and the higher the level of achievement, the more stress was experienced. Furthermore, racial battle fatigue is a burden placed on racially marginalized groups, and depending on the current climate in both educational and public settings, the heavier the burden.

During the Trump presidency, there was an increase in racial unrest across the country and a resurgence in White power ideology, and an increased burden on racially marginalized

groups (New Hate and Old: The Changing Face of American White Supremacy, n.d.). With this resurgence, more incidents of racism were perpetrated on college campuses (COE - Hate Crime Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions, 2021). Tuitt et al. (2018) argue that the "Crisis in Black Education" is real at traditionally white institutions (TWI). Examples of the crisis include discrimination, students of color isolated in their majors, no experience with Black professors, and White-centered classrooms (Haynes, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018). Haynes (2017) contends that the classroom is a racialized structure and nurtures White supremacy through traditions and processes. In contrast, White faculty with elevated levels of racial consciousness have an expansive view of equality. This view leads these faculty to provide a better experience for students of color, and these faculty are more likely to incorporate social justice using critical and inclusive pedagogy (Haynes, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018) .

Syllabus

To date, the research on syllabi has focused on identifying and evaluating the syllabus from faculty and student perspectives. Syllabi research has progressed from the syllabus as a means of communication through student perceptions of faculty (Jenkins et al., 2014; Saville et al., 2010) and student-centered syllabi (Eberly et al., 2001; Fuentes et al., 2021; Gannon, 2020; Harnish & Bridges, 2011; Richmond et al., 2016, 2019; Richmond, 2022; Valentin & Grauerholz, 2019). The syllabus is often described as one of the first points of interaction between the student and the instructor. The syllabus can create a welcoming environment by telling students that they and their opinions are valued and that a classroom is a safe place. The syllabus as an introduction to the student about the instructor may reflect the faculty's commitment to an inclusive classroom and use the language of inclusivity (Fuentes et al., 2021;

Tuitt et al., 2018) as it shapes the students' perceptions of the faculty and the course (Valentin & Grauerholz, 2019).

History

The word syllabus is traced back to Cicero. There are numerous ideas about the meaning of a syllabus and whether it is of Greek or Latin origin (OED, 2022; Parkes & Harris, 2002). In the 1800s, the syllabus was considered a series of lectures or a course plan. The term syllabus did not have the same significance in Cicero's time as it has today. Over time, the syllabus evolved from a list or one-page course description into a multipage document containing course information and institutional policies. With these changes, the purpose of the syllabus has changed.

Purpose

The extant literature on the syllabus examines the syllabus's purpose or the associated content. Several studies revealed the purposes of the syllabus as a contract, learning tool, and archival record (Fink, 2012; Parkes & Harris, 2002; Slattery & Carlson, 2005; Thompson, 2007). Additionally, the idea of the syllabus's purpose as a documentation of one's scholarship of teaching is revealed in other studies (Albers, 2003; Fink, 2012). Fink (2012) found that the purposes valued by faculty are based on their objectives, such as a communication tool or a plan for teaching and students; however, it lacks the value of students' perspectives. A small amount of literature has been published on the students' voice of experience with syllabi. At the same time, it reflects the idea that students do not read or follow the syllabus and leads to the question of how students use a syllabus.

Contract

The syllabus has been considered a legal contract between the learner and the instructor. While a syllabus may include an implicit agreement, courts have concluded that it is not a contract (Eberly et al., 2001; Rumore, 2016). Nevertheless, students seeking fulfillment of the "contract" have brought a small number of cases to court. In these cases, students sought remedies for educational malpractice, breach of duty, or inability to pass a certification exam. As a result, the court rulings reflect their reluctance to intervene in academic quality. Despite this information, the syllabus as a contract is in the literature.

The concept of the syllabus as a contract has been recognized in the literature for decades. Brosman (1998) links the contractual element of the syllabus back to the 1970s when students began to question expectations that were not expressed in course syllabi and where policies created in a syllabus may aid in avoiding litigation. Similarly, as Matejka and Kurke (1994) explain, the role of a syllabus is to form a contract between the instructor and students. Parkes and Harris (2003) note that the focus of the syllabus as a contract is helpful when utilized in student or faculty appeal hearings. According to McKeachie (1999), the syllabus suggests a contract. Eberly et al. (2001) characterize the syllabus as a contract creating student and instructor participation conditions since it must be straightforward and intelligible to all parties. In contrast, Gannon (2020) posits that designing a syllabus as a contract is designing an ineffective syllabus. Together, these studies demonstrate a dominant belief that a syllabus is a contract.

Learning Tool

The syllabus's purpose as a learning tool was studied by Doolittle and Lusk (2007). Students, they discovered, use the syllabus as a specialized tool. Eighty-eight percent said a

reference tool, 80% a time management tool, 53% a study tool, and 32% a document tool. In contrast, Eberly et al. (2001) state that teachers' efforts on the syllabus are likely to be strongly tied to the importance students place on the syllabus as a learning tool, depending on the faculty's use and pedagogical practices.

Communication Tool

A syllabus communicates information about a course of study. Syllabi vary in their content and what they communicate. The literature provides examples of how the syllabus speaks to students. The syllabus as a communication tool may have language and rules that provide unintended consequences. Singham (2005) offers that faculty have added more rules while making the syllabus a document that pushes students away and degrades them. "You must attend class" becomes a passive-aggressive call out to the students (p. 5). Kohn (1993) offers that the rules become a hidden message of distrust.

The syllabus as communication depends upon the delivery, content, effective communication, and language. Providing the syllabus before the class started made students feel cared for by the faculty (Hawk & Lyons, 2008). The faculty communicated care by providing the students with information about the course and themself ahead of the first class (Richmond et al., 2019; Saville et al., 2010). The details in a course syllabus can communicate about the instructor and the course.

Furthermore, communication strategies are found in the literature with a guide from Lowther et al. (1989). The guide, Preparing Course Syllabi for Improved Communication, provides the elements of effectively communicating with students, according to their research. The authors note that syllabi should communicate to students the rationale and purpose of the course to help students learn more effectively.

Archival Record

The syllabus is an archival record. Syllabi include information that is used by the institution. Institutions use the information for several purposes: transfer and articulation agreements, accreditation documentation, and promotion and tenure (Doolittle & Lusk, 2007; Fink, 2012; Slattery & Carlson, 2005). For transfer purposes, components in the syllabus need to include the course title, the number of credit hours, any prerequisites, the name of the required textbook and other material, the course objectives, a description of the course content, and a description of the assessment procedures. This information helps establish if courses are equivalent and eligible for transfer. Accrediting bodies use the information in syllabi to verify the quality and teaching of a course (Doolittle & Lusk, 2007; Slattery & Carlson, 2005). In promotion and tenure reviews, the committee may use the syllabus to verify the faculty members' teaching effectiveness (Fink, 2010; Parkes & Harris, 2002).

Student Use of Syllabi

A widespread notion in syllabi studies is that students do not keep or use the syllabus. In these mixed methods and qualitative research studies, students were asked to rate the areas they paid the most attention to or utilized. Students report that they utilize and preserve their syllabi (Becker & Calhoon, 1999; Calhoon & Becker, 2008). More than 70% of students use the syllabus throughout the semester. The average time a student spent reviewing the syllabus was 12 times per semester, with the most frequent sections reviewed weekly being the course calendar/schedule (Ludy et al., 2016). Monthly, students reported viewing the grading system and instructor information just two times per semester. The portions students concentrate on provide the necessary knowledge and the additional regions of focus in a syllabus (Becker & Calhoon, 1999; Calhoon & Becker, 2008; Ludy et al., 2016). Although these studies provide

students a voice in terms of what they find valuable, they do not give them a voice in explaining their needs or inclusion in a syllabus.

Student Perceptions Based on Syllabi

This section presents syllabus studies that have investigated students' perceptions of the instructor and the course. The empirical studies examined students' perceptions based on the syllabus length, language, and how they may impact students' perceptions of an instructor. The quote by Will Rodgers, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression," is expressed in studies on student perceptions of faculty .

Syllabus Length.

Several studies examined the length of a syllabus and how students perceived the faculty based on length (Jenkins et al, 2014; Saville et al., 2010). Saville et al. (2010) quantitative study used two similar syllabi, one being a longer version of the other. It used two second and third-year student groups, each using only one syllabus version. The participants completed a survey after reading the syllabus. There was a significant difference between the two groups, with the longer syllabi group rating the instructor as an expert teacher and would recommend the course to other students (Saville et al., 2010). This study used the perspective and perception of the student to identify differences in length and how students perceived the instructor. While this study reveals differences in student perceptions based on the syllabus length, it does not address the student's needs.

Syllabus Language.

In the syllabus, the selection of language matters, or so studies have demonstrated. The language used about how an instructor cares about their students in the syllabus can establish some qualities of an effective teacher (Buskist et al., 2013). Language helped the students

perceive the quality of the instructor. Unlike some studies (Harrington & Gabert-Guillen, 2015; Saville et al., 2010), the Jenkins et al. (2014) study exposed the idea that students perceive restrictive language with a more competent instructor. The language included late work not being accepted, strict attendance, academic integrity, and respect for the learning environment. In other words, the restricted language versus content overload changed students' perceptions .

Syllabus Design

The earlier sections discuss the literature on the purpose of the syllabus, how students use the syllabus, and student perceptions of the faculty and the course. This section examines the design of the syllabus. While it has been reported that most syllabi are passed down to or between faculty (Eberly et al., 2001; Gannon, 2020), some faculty work to create student-centered syllabi .

Student-Centered

A student-centered syllabus has several components that differ from traditional syllabi. (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014; Lund Dean & Fornaciari, 2014). The framework developed by Lund Dean and Fornaciari (2014) recommends seven design topics:

- Moving toward inclusive syllabus language and procedures that demonstrate mutual respect;
- Syllabi should be simplified to reflect today's students' reading habits;
- The most significant part of the syllabus for students is the course schedule;
- Design and arrange the syllabus for accessibility and engagement;
- Consider the pupils' digital worldview;
- Create the syllabus as a resource and reference guide;

- Course structure should be balanced with student input (Lund Dean &

 Fornaciari, 2014).

Their work, based on andragogical pedagogy and habits of Gen Y students, gives guidance into

what is needed to become a student-centered syllabus. The Richmond et al. (2019) exploratory

quantitative study of Project Syllabus syllabi reports that the syllabi have become more student-

centered over the 19 years of the project. Their study used the rubric from and based on the

Cullen and Harris (2009) study. While the Cullen and Harris study had a small sample of 25

syllabi, the Richmond et al. study examined 109 syllabi from psychology courses. The syllabi

were reviewed with the rubric categories of community, power and control, and evaluation and

assessment. Richmond et al. are cautious about generalizing their study due to the nature of the

Project Syllabus syllabi being exemplars in the field of psychology. While these studies

demonstrate what is needed in a student-centered syllabus, they miss the student's voice.

Redesigning Syllabi

 Prior research has shown changes in syllabi from a list to student-centered. More recent

studies have expressed the redesign of syllabi for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and

social justice. Incorporating these two ideas leads to a more inclusive syllabus (Fuentes et al.,

2021). There is the idea that syllabi are a colonial representation and practice that continue the

pedagogical ideology of the higher education system (Fuentes et al., 2021; Zanotti, 2020). In a

social justice context, the dominant culture and ideology must be challenged in its continuance of

inequity in the classroom and the curriculum. The transformation of people and systems is

required for social justice (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015), and one way to accomplish this is in the

syllabus.

Studies on syllabi examining social justice and diversity content have revealed an increase in pedagogical practices and topics included in syllabi (Sen et al., 2017; Teasley & Archuleta, 2015). The Teasley and Archuleta (2015) quantitative study of 173 social work education syllabi analyzed the course descriptions and objectives. Their findings revealed underrepresented social justice themes, human rights, advocacy, vulnerable, empowerment, and inequality. There was the incorporation of oppression into diversity content, and most of the diversity course syllabi incorporated race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and oppression. In the Sen et al. (2017) grounded theory study, a content analysis of syllabi was performed to provide pedagogical activities and substantive topics. One hundred syllabi were examined with the emergence of themes from the coding of syllabi. Among the pedagogical activities related to diversity and social justice, the syllabi demonstrated plans for exposing theories, historical examples, and current issues related to DEI and social justice. In contrast, other syllabi included readings and topical modules. These studies have focused on the pedagogical content and activities, while another study by Fuentes et al. (2021) focuses on syllabi and considerations for DEI.

Promoting an inclusive classroom through the infusion of DEI in the syllabus is postulated by Fuentes et al. (2021). They note that the syllabus sets the tone for the class environment and is often a reflection of the systems of oppression. In consideration of this thought, the DEI syllabus requires a mindset development by the faculty member, and faculty should not be complacent in their DEI practices as it is a continuous development. Also, they recommend eight considerations for promoting DEI in the syllabus:

Engage in Reflexivity

Adopt a Diversity-Centered Approach

Highlight Diversity in the Course Description and Acknowledge Intersectionality

Develop Diversity-Centered Learning Objectives

Include a Diversity Statement

Decolonize the Syllabus

Foster a Family-Friendly Syllabus

Establish Ground Rules for Communication

The eight considerations guide to creating a syllabus that demonstrates a more inclusive classroom. These studies revealed changes needed in syllabi in terms of content for DEI and social justice and the syllabus for promoting DEI. The studies also show a shift in pedagogy.

Another shift in syllabi are statements that faculty add to help students who may have basic need support or suffer mental health issues. Goldrick-Rab and colleagues' work on housing and food insecurities led her to write a basic needs statement on her syllabus (2018). Basic needs encompass food and shelter and may differ for graduate and undergraduate students. A more recent study by Leung et al. (2021) found that students who experience one or more basic needs have health and academic issues over their colleagues who are not experiencing basic needs. They go on to suggest that there is a need for institutional interventions to create a leaning environment where all students can achieve.

With the increase in mental health issues among students in higher education (Glueckert et al., 2021), mental health statements on syllabi are now added and studied. The Associated Students of the University of Montana, a governing body of the students, created a resolution, SB47-21/22, that encourages all faculty to include a mental health statement and resources available on campus (Glueckert et al., 2021). The resolution also encourages faculty to include statements on basic needs, food pantry, wellness center, health center, and a student advocacy

resource center. Grung and Galardi (2022) found that the tone of mental health statements and the syllabus positively affected students reaching out to faculty members. Also, having a short syllabus with the mental health statement was more effective .

The movement and need to redesign the syllabus are evident in the literature. As one of the first points of contact with a student, the syllabus can set the tone, approachability of the instructor, and the feeling of inclusion for the student. The studies have demonstrated ways to achieve an inclusive syllabus from the perspective of faculty and theory; however, the student's lived experience is missing from these studies. The opportunity to research the lived experience of students' inclusion syllabus is evident and is addressed in my research.

Pedagogy

In this section, the term pedagogy is used as most readers use pedagogy in place of andragogy. While andragogy is the correct term to keep familiarity for the reader, pedagogy is used in this document. Faculty's pedagogical practices must shift in response to the changing student demographics at postsecondary institutions. With a more diverse student population and faculty lacking in pedagogical practices, faculty need to change their practices (Haynes, 2017; Linder et al., 2015; Tuitt et al., 2018). Faculty who incorporate pedagogical practices to ensure diverse student success help to reduce these issues. There are many pedagogical approaches that faculty may take in their design and implementation of a course. One approach is inclusive pedagogy, and for this study, the one reviewed. Engaging in inclusive practices recognizes all students, and as Linder et al. (2015) state, "Faculty have a responsibility to engage in pedagogical practices that create inclusive, meaningful opportunities for all students" (p. 186). These changes may help improve diverse student success in the classroom and lead to retention

and persistence to a degree. However, some faculty may not feel it is their responsibility to engage in inclusive practices.

Inclusive Pedagogy

For one to feel included, the experience must provide inclusion. Inclusion's core purpose is to link the cultural capital that all students contribute to the classroom (Fuentes et al., 2021; Oleson, 2021; Tuitt et al., 2018). Faculty who believes in and practice inclusive pedagogy ensure that all students are recognized and that all sociocultural views are reflected in the course. Recent research on inclusive pedagogy and inclusive classrooms establishes a need to provide both in faculty practice. For faculty to participate in inclusive practice, they must be aware and intentional, and faculty must understand their own identities and biases before practicing inclusivity (Oleson, 2021). Faculty should reflect on how their identities and biases appear in the classroom and in interactions with others. In other words, faculty must believe in inclusive practice and make it a priority in their classes for the concept to be present in syllabi.

Faculty may establish equitable learning spaces for students and teachers by incorporating inclusive pedagogy as a centering of students and teachers (Gannon, 2020; Linder et al., 2015). Instructors who utilize inclusive language in the syllabus as their initial point of contact with students might give them a sense of belonging. Without inclusive language and pedagogy, power hierarchies in the classroom stay unchanged (Haynes, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018). Fuentes et al. (2021) created a guide that includes eight practices to create a syllabus that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Faculty taking this guided approach may provide inclusion if they participate and practice a belief in DEI. These ideas are from a faculty perspective of what students need for inclusion; studying how students experience themselves in the syllabus confirms the practice or offers other insight.

Faculty Resistance to Change

Faculty resistance to change can be framed in the same ways as barriers through a singular theory or a combination to explain resistance. Using a CRT lens provides insight into the institutional, the group, and the individual barriers. Institutions maintain their White interest through the systems of norms, academic freedom, and student evaluations of teaching; this messaging creates a barrier to change (Haynes, 2017). The message is loud and clear as the barrier does not change, maintains White interest, and keeps the status quo. One status quo is the course syllabus. The course syllabi voice, dominated by White men, gives the impression that White centeredness matters as the universal ideal (Anderson & Erlenbusch, 2019). That ideal then is enacted across the campus in other syllabi continuing the White supremacy and resisting change (Anderson & Erlenbusch, 2019; Gannon, 2020; Haynes, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018).

Equally important in understanding resistance through the CRT lens is when faculty change to a critical and inclusive pedagogy (CIP) model and incorporate the principles, which require emotional labor (Tuitt et al., 2018). This work could be costly to a faculty member if met with resistance from the administration, department, or other faculty. The resistance from others is another barrier—Whiteness.

Another critical point is that some faculty lack awareness of the demographic changes of students and what is required from their position, or faculty use deficit thinking about students who do not fit the traditional profile (St. Amour, 2020). Attitudes toward individuals who are LGBTQIA+ can lead to barriers to using gender-inclusive language (Patev et al., 2019). This lack of awareness about the changing student populations maintains current practices.

The word inclusive gives an idea of the praxis, but what exactly is critical and inclusive pedagogy? CIP has its roots in power as oppression. Paulo Freire (2000) developed the pedagogy

of the oppressed and believed that there is an oppressor and an oppressed; through mutual liberation, faculty and students are free. By adding CIP to the centering of students and teachers, faculty can create equitable spaces for learning, nurturing the atmosphere of inclusion (Gannon, 2020; Tuitt et al., 2018). However, Tuitt et al. (2016) acknowledge that even the best at incorporating CIP cannot control everything in the classroom, and classrooms are imperfect environments filled with flawed humans.

Critical and inclusive pedagogy is student-centered. The student-centering comes from faculty resisting pedagogical complacency (Gannon, 2020; Linder et al., 2015). The implementation of this approach is adopting procedures that respect students holistically. Holistic valuing considers the intersectionality of each student and the richness that each student brings to the class. Tuitt et al. (2018) and Haynes (2017) contend that faculty must embrace critical and inclusive pedagogy principles to dismantle Whiteness in the classroom and value Black students. Still, the goal is to value all Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), LBGTQIA+, Low SES, and students with disabilities. Faculty may use the five tenets of CIP to value students through faculty-student interaction, sharing power, dialogical professor-student interaction, activation of students' voices, and the utilization of personal narratives to change their praxis (Tuitt, 2003). The first tenant, faculty-student interactions, faculty work to nurture relationships with students inside and outside the classroom to develop mutual respect and trust. When faculty incorporate this tenant, it helps remove the barriers experienced by students of color of faculty being "too busy". Other barriers are removable through reasonable professor-student interaction and student voice engagement. Students with low SES status who have faced psychological difficulties can feel appreciated by teachers as they validate the student's presence in the class. (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011; Tuitt et al., 2018).

Examples of Successful Pedagogical Practices

The University of Wisconsin at Madison Teaching and Learning Excellence Center created an inclusive teaching year-long program for faculty. The program incorporated the tenets of critical and inclusive pedagogy. It empowered faculty to examine their practices, how students are marginalized to failure, institutional and systemic barriers, and evidence-based action. The results have shown that faculty have increased their use of inclusive teaching practices and raised awareness about marginalized students' academic achievement (Schmid et al., 2016).

Furthermore, a Ph.D. graduate program was restructured to include critical and inclusive pedagogy, and CRT demonstrated that the improved courses incorporated diversity, access, and equity as the main curricular modifications (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). Changes happened because of purposeful content and pedagogical decisions. The removal of discriminatory practices and initiatives to introduce diversity into courses and the curriculum contributed to the program's success.

The political climate affects the pedagogy of practice by faculty. A study by Rodriguez & Huemmer (2019) included faculty who taught courses focused on gender/feminism, queer/LGBTQIA+, and race/ethnicity studies in the post-Trump election. The study examined the faculty's experiences and how the political climate influenced their practices. Faculty incorporated critical and inclusive pedagogical practices, included open dialogue with their students, and established safe spaces for all students. Some faculty reported a heightened sense of nerves and emotions and were concerned for their students in the political climate. The faculty were agents of change, incorporating critical and inclusive pedagogies.

Syllabi Research in Perspective

The methods used in the research on syllabi focus on quantitative, mixed methods, and, more recently, qualitative studies. The movement from strictly quantitative to qualitative has offered results that have progressed the examination of faculty and student perspectives to aid in redesigning the syllabus; however, the missing piece is what students experience with syllabi and their needs. The methodology to attend to this understanding is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The following section describes studies using IPA to provide the students' voices in educational settings.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Most studies on syllabi have been done through a quantitative or mixed methods approach. While there are a handful of qualitative studies on syllabi, the research method of IPA has not been demonstrated to date. The lack of research on syllabi from a student's experience makes available their inclusion experiences to be understood and heard through IPA studies. Some studies have used IPA to understand the student experience in higher education. These studies are described below.

IPA Studies

Southcott and Opie's (2016) IPA study the experience of a visually impaired student using a single case. They sought to examine a student with a vision impairment and how the student experienced schooling, equality, and equity in their education. The use of three semi-structured 60-minute interviews covered the context of the schooling experience, extended the experience, and reflected on the meanings of the experience that took place over three weeks. The interviews were transcribed, and the data analysis consisted of several stages. Each researcher did independent reading and rereading, followed by a line-by-line transcript analysis.

They identified emergent themes with further readings, coding notes, and then category development. From this point, they grouped the emergent themes to find overarching themes and illustrated them with direct quotes from the participant. The student experienced situations that needed orientation and mobility. Equity in the classroom lacked required readable documents, other students' willingness to work with the student, and extra time to complete tasks. On a positive note, the class notes were emailed to the students, allowing them to read along with the other students. The classroom technology could not aid the student, and the student did not want to use interventions that made them look different. When the school did provide assistive technology, it was bulky and required them to sit in the front of the class. The teachers did not engage with the technology, which made extra work for the student.

The methods can be duplicated in this IPA study, and the findings provide insight into the student's experience. Those experiences inform both the problems in the system and the classroom. They also advise on the students' strategies to succeed in the environment. The power in the lived experience comes through in this study.

In 2003, Bresciani used IPA to study students' perspectives on the diverse cultural and racial climate at a Midwestern health professional institution. The study used eight focus groups of four to eight students each. Each group participated in 60 to 150 minutes of study. Theoretical sampling was used to find students with these qualifications:

A student who is of another race or ethnicity other than Caucasian

or of Western European heritage,

a student who is Caucasian or of Western European heritage,

an international student,

a student who is an advocate for diversity, and

a student who is neutral or has concerns about diversity programming (p. 91). Other students were recruited using snowball sampling. The focus groups were recorded, and data analysis was performed by the principal researcher. Open, axial, and selective coding was completed. Member-checking was not done at the request of the Dean of Students. The findings of the students' perceptions demonstrate a variety of ideas. A few include affirmative action, awareness and knowledge of differences, and people from different ethnic backgrounds working and living together. Students' perception of the faculty attitudes toward diversity as supportive, no opinion, or dismay at the treatment by faculty. The students revealed microaggressions, stereotyping, and discrimination by faculty. Students' experiences with the curriculum revealed that they questioned why they only studied Western European medical history. Other topics were reported but are not included in my review.

While the author claims this to be an IPA study, it is missing some of the department and the double hermeneutics recommended by scholars in IPA, such as J. A. Smith, Osborn, Pietkiewicz, and Nizza. Although the IPA scholars believe that you can use focus groups, some concerns should be addressed, such as the willingness of students to speak up in a group setting and finding it an unsafe space, along with the possibility of having one individual dominate the conversation. Because this study occurred in 2003, I believe the researcher having more information on current IPA practices would provide a different method and process.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review provides a foundation for this study. The conceptual framework of CRT and intersectionality demonstrates the purpose of using these two theories in this IPA study. CRT places the institution, systems, and process as needing change and listening to the lived experiences of those not in power having value to make that change. Where intersectionality

moves from an individual having more than one identity to multiple identities that suffer oppression to the adoption of examining the structural problem through heuristic thinking and truth searching through a paradigm.

The marginalized student population has been studied in higher education through quantitative, mixed methods, and, more recently, qualitative studies. These students suffer more in the classroom and higher education environments than their nonmarginalized colleagues. The continuation of oppression comes from microaggressions, stereotypes, racial battle fatigue, issues with accommodations, systemic processes, and other everyday slights. In these studies, the missing element is the voice of the marginalized student. While a few ask students about how they use a syllabus and how they perceive their instructor and the course, there are no known studies on the lived experience of marginalized students' experience with syllabi. Changes in syllabi and pedagogy by faculty have been examined. While these studies demonstrate some success in providing an inclusive classroom through a syllabus and pedagogical changes, they do not listen to nor explore students' experiences.

The review of studies using IPA demonstrates the value of this methodology in getting to the student's lived experience. While most of the prior qualitative studies have used a phenomenological approach through interpretivism, IPA provides the lived experience, heuristic, and paradigm needed in using CRT and intersectionality as a part of my conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study, using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), explored how marginalized students experience themselves as included in course syllabi and the meaning they make from these experiences. IPA was selected due to its idiographic nature, alignment with the experiences of marginalized individuals, and critical race theory. The researcher's positionality is provided first to provide context for the methodological decisions. The chapter then discusses the study's constructivist paradigm and ontological and epistemological foundations. After this discussion, the methodology, research questions, research design, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations are presented.

Researcher Positionality

I am a 66-year-old, cisgender, White, female, middle-class, first-generation college graduate currently completing a Ph.D. in higher education administration while working in faculty development at a university. My upbringing and background have led to my development of seeing the structural inequalities in society. Through my studies, I have come to understand the ways the system works against marginalized groups. In my Ph.D. program, I have come to appreciate human experiences and how one interprets them. Those interpretations I view from a constructivist paradigm and through a critical race theory lens. I understand that my positionality is fundamental to the process of my research. I am a White privileged female aware of my Whiteness and the possibility that others may perceive my work as interest convergence (Bergerson, 2003; Davis & Linder, 2017). Using CRT in my research is not a one-and-done, but a commitment to help challenge and question Whiteness in educational structures and systems. I can never be an expert on the experiences of the intersecting identities of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, students with disabilities, or marginalized populations. Through my research and commitment to

CRT, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of racism and work to change and remove the dominant power structures and systems in place that work against marginalized people.

Also, I am aware of my outsider position to my research participants due to my age and professional experience. In my research, I attempted to put aside and reflect on my biases and assumptions through reflexivity and memoing. My aim was 'empathetic neutrality' (Ormston et al., 2014), in which I strived to seek a vicarious understanding of each participant, while still being neutral. The practice is to be fully present and mindful. While I made every effort to be conscious, obvious, and aware of my systematic biases, I know I can never be fully without them. My practice of awareness and reflexivity allowed me to be mindful of my privilege and provided transparency in the research process. My wanting to know, understand, and experience how marginalized students find themselves included in the syllabus provided for a constructivist approach to this study.

Constructivist Paradigm

A paradigm is a philosophical framework upon which research is based. It is the beliefs and understandings that shape the way a researcher approaches their study. The ontological and epistemological components encompass the research philosophy and create the paradigm together with the research methodology. Ontology is the reality of the study, while epistemology considers how we create knowledge, and the research methodology provides the process to explore the research questions to better understand the participants' experiences. A constructivist paradigm serves as both the philosophical framework and theoretical perspective of this study (Figure 2) (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Constructivism is grounded in the understanding that individuals construct their knowledge and understanding of the world through their experiences and reflecting on those experiences (Hein, 1991; Honebein, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 2016). In this

paradigm, the researcher looks to understand how individuals make meaning of or construct their reality. Constructivist research adds value by generating contextual understandings of a specific topic, problem, or experience.

Ontology as reality in this study is relativist: a belief that reality is a subjective experience of the individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 2013, 2016). Each individual's reality differs from others, is subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and is individually constructed (Crotty, 1998). As such, each individual may experience the same phenomenon while constructing different meanings. Thus, reality is the meaning that each individual makes of a similar experience.

The epistemology of transactional subjectivism rejects the concept of an empirical "truth" (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). In transactional subjectivism, reality is a transaction between the knower and the knowable (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Truth or meaning emerges from an individual's interaction with the world. The "real world" does not exist apart from human action or symbolic language. Transactional subjectivism contributes to the realization that knowledge is a constructive action. An individual's action is connected to social, historical, and cultural settings. The focus is on meaning and power as framed in the construction and social, linguistic, discursive, and symbolic practices (Lincoln & Guba, 2016).

The ontology and epistemology in this study form a relationship. Ontology being the construction of the reality of the participant. Epistemology as that one's prior experiences cannot be removed from new experiences and aid in constructing new meaning from new experiences. Together they work toward interpreting the experiences of an individual.

The discovery of the participant's meaning-making is the purpose of interpretive methodology. The use of hermeneutics is one way to have the researcher and participant get to

the meaning-making of the experience (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Interpretivist methods seek subjective views co-created by the researcher and the researched in which "knower and known are interactive, inseparable" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). The researcher needs to delve into the meaning of the participant's constructs. Working together in the study supports the participant and researcher to inquire and probe the experience. The result is the interpretive explanation of the experience by both participant and researcher informed by societal culture and historically situated.

Methodology

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method is a qualitative methodology built on the principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022) (see Figure 3.1). The nature of IPA is flexible while it encourages the development and understanding of the phenomena. IPA prioritizes relationships to life narratives, diversity attached to lived experiences, and the freedom to explore content (Chan & Farmer, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). The following sections describe the foundation of IPA.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy as a way of viewing human life. Edmund Husserl, a philosopher and mathematician, is known as the "father" of phenomenology, the study of human experience and consciousness. He posits that knowledge of essences is only attainable if all assumptions about the existence of an external world are "bracketed" (Husserl, 1983). He called the practice of bracketing epoché. Epoché is suspending or setting aside the day-to-day, and it consists of stripping back one's judgment to have the ability to focus on observation of the natural world. Husserl also held that in daily life one directs their intention on an object or

experience, thinks consciously about the object, and interprets their reality (Husserl, 1983; Smith et al., 2009). Husserl also felt that phenomenology has more value than scientific study when examining human experiences since it focuses on experience and perception. Phenomenology is the study of experience from the individual perspective. However, Husserl describes that it is not 100% possible to be without one's assumptions and that in phenomenology, the researcher must admit their assumptions and put them aside so that the substance of the subject of study comes through.

Other contributors to phenomenology include Martin Heidegger, who furthered the ideas of Husserl. Heidegger's ideas moved toward an existential phenomenology of lived experience versus Husserl's objects of consciousness (Dowling, 2007; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). He placed special emphasis on the use of hermeneutics as a research approach founded on the ontological assumption that lived experience entails an interpretive process (Racher & Robinson, 2003). Heidegger also believed that one could never be without their assumptions, unlike Husserl.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation and, in qualitative human research, the interpretation of the individual's experience. In IPA, hermeneutics is double, "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53). It is the researcher making meaning from the participants' meaning-making.

Meaning-Making

In IPA, personal meaning-making is essential as it reveals the subject's relationship with the experience and their view of the world (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022; Smith &

Osborn, 2008). Meaning-making is a process through which the individual interprets the experience (situations or discourses) based on prior experiences (Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012). Meaning-making is a constructivist phenomenon that develops and builds on a person's prior knowledge and experiences (Ignelzi, 2000). The meaning-making affects the individual and how they think about themselves, others, and the experience. The culture that one has experienced plays a role in meaning-making (Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012). In a classroom setting, each student experiences the same situation through their prior meaning-making experiences. As a result, each student experiences the same situation differently and makes meaning of it based on their knowledge and earlier experiences.

Idiographic

IPA is idiographic, which focuses on the specific (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). This means each subject in a study is a separate case, allowing for a more in-depth investigation of the phenomena. The researcher is entrusted with explaining the experience from the subject's point of view. Because of the nature of idiography, the sample size is small and purposively selected. In some studies, there may be only one subject or case. However, after each case is examined, a study may move to an inductive and deductive analysis across cases. The analysis does not produce generalizations but offers insight into a participant's meaning-making of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA encompasses phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. It is through the researcher's meaning-making of the participant's meaning-making of the experiences as its own case that the methodology comes alive. An in-depth analysis of the experience gives rich data to give meaning to the experience.

Research Questions

This research addresses the absence in the literature of the voice of marginalized students' experiences with syllabi. The increase in enrollment of marginalized students and the lack of faculty representation for these students add to the urgency of understanding and meeting their needs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how marginalized students experience themselves as included in syllabi and their meaning-making of their experience with syllabi through the following questions:

1. How do marginalized students perceive themselves as included in syllabi?

2. How do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality?

Research Design

The study answered the two research questions using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method. Qualitative methods try to understand human behavior from the participant's perspective as they interpret their own experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). As a method, data collection in qualitative research involves the researcher making sense of and interpreting the participants' words and experiences. The researcher tries to make sense of the phenomena and the meanings the participants bring to an experience.

As a specific phenomenological method, IPA studies the lived experiences of the research participants and examines how participants make sense of life experiences (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). The foundation of IPA is hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation and understanding. The researcher tries "to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to

them" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). The researcher has secondhand experience of the participant's recall of the experience; however, IPA is a detailed examination of each participant and, therefore, idiographic (Alase, 2017; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). Each participant is unique and requires an in-depth analysis. Smith et al. (2009) recommend that a smaller sample of participants, 2–25, gives value to IPA studies. A study with a smaller sample allowed for detailed convergence and divergence across the participants as an added check for the researcher (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Sampling

For this study, seven participants were recruited from the sample population of third- or fourth-year marginalized students enrolled at a 4-year public or private university in the Mid-Atlantic and southeastern regions of the United States. Two students came from a public university in the Mid-Atlantic region with a Carnegie Classification of Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity. Two students were from a public university in the Southeastern region with a Carnegie Classification of Master's College & University, Larger Programs. Two students were from a private university in the Southeastern region with a Carnegie Classification of Master's College & University, Larger Programs. And one student was from a private university in the Southern region with the Carnegie Classification of Master's College & University, Medium Programs (Table 3.1).

I selected third- or fourth-year students as they have more experience with syllabi in higher education compared to students in their first two years of college. This population of students has years of college course-taking experiences that allowed for a better recall of the students' experience of inclusion in syllabi. Second, marginalized students have had experiences of non-inclusion or underrepresentation in society. In principle, third- and fourth-year students

have more experience with their marginalization and may have had more opportunities for reflection. These characteristics gave the sample population valuable experiences that aided in the exploration of students' experience of inclusion in syllabi.

A purposive homogeneous sample offers a better understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that allows the researcher to select participants based on the researcher's judgment and the purpose of the study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Recruitment

Access to the purposive sample turned out to be more difficult than expected. Emails and phone calls were made to the gatekeeper at the initial study site which was a primarily White institution (PWI) in the southeast. The gatekeeper was the director of the school's intercultural and multicultural student services department who had access to the marginalized population needed for this study. With no responses from emails or phone calls, I reached out to my colleagues across my campus and via LinkedIn. Several colleagues sent emails to offices at other universities introducing me and my study. These emails and follow up phone calls yielded no participants.

Two of my committee members shared my study with two diverse groups. One group was a student affairs listserv and the other group was colleagues on their campus. The listserv yielded two participants and the email yielded two participants. On a recommendation from my first interviewed participant, Claire, I changed my demographic questionnaire to an online form. Claire noted that students were more likely to fill out my online form than directly contact me. I amended my IRB to address the changes and shared the revised flyer and form on LinkedIn and Facebook. I secured two more participants with a third who did not qualify via LinkedIn. At this

point I had five participants. A misunderstanding about recruiting on my own campus was cleared and I was able to recruit from my campus, securing two more participants The issues with recruitment cost me 40 days of time that could have been used to interview students and analyze the data.

In my recruitment, I used a flyer that I amended after my first interview (see Appendix A). The flyer provided general information with a QR code and link to my online form and contact information. I offered participants $15 per one hour interview and $10 for taking part in member checking as incentives. I spoke with each participant before they enrolled in the study to inform them about the details of the study and start a relationship to develop trust (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The seven screening phone calls and one Zoom meeting allowed me to get to know the participants and decide if they would be a fit for the study. I was able to review the informed consent documents (Appendix B) with them and answer any questions that they had before committing to the study. Four of the participants completed the demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) after I spoke with them and the other four completed the questionnaire before the phone calls. I believe because of these pre-interview meetings, the participants felt more comfortable with me and the study purpose. The initial meetings allowed me to prepare for the interviews as I had some familiarity with participants to understand their experiences better. With a developing relationship, I scheduled interviews with each participant based on their availability.

Participants

Seven participants were engaged in this study to completion. Each participant completed individual semi-structured interviews that varied in length from 51 minutes to 128 minutes, and each completed member-checking. I refer to the participants by their chosen pseudonyms to

protect their confidentiality: Claire, Julia, Xavier, Margaret, MsuBandit, Max, and Lindsey. The

participants responded to a demographic questionnaire that asked direct and open-ended

questions. The results from the questionnaire are found in Table 3.1 with the open-ended

responses provided as written by the participants. Figure 3.2 demonstrates the intersectionality of

the participants. The following paragraphs give some background on each participant. This

information was collected at the beginning of each interview. Some participants were more

willing to go into more detail about themselves than others, thus the disparity in their

descriptions.

Claire

My first participant, Claire, identifies as Asian American, female, middle class, with

disabilities. She shared that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, and

anxiety are her invisible disabilities. Currently enrolled in a four-plus-one master's program, she

is a fourth-year student in public policy with a minor in Asian Studies and Spanish. Her parents

and their families immigrated from Vietnam, one after the fall of Saigon and the other a few

years later. She does not consider herself low SES; however, she attended public, K-12 schools

with many of her friends whom she identifies as low SES. Her university was not her first choice

but the most affordable for her family. She wanted to attend private schools where she felt the

rigor would be at a higher standard. She is not disappointed in her choice and feels she is getting

a very good education.

Julie

At 22 years old, Julia is a music therapy major in her fourth year of study. She is adopted

and has two brothers and three older sisters. Her race is Asian, specifically Chinese, and she

identifies as bisexual, middle class, with visible and invisible disabilities. Her visible disabilities

include physical impairment, and she uses braces, a wheelchair, and crutches with her mobility issues. During her interview, she identified her invisible disabilities as attention deficit disorder (ADD), anxiety, and depression. When asked to describe herself, she did not mention her disabilities. Still, she stated she is a reliable and resourceful person, good with time management and different skills that help her live her life easier than what life has given her.

Xavier

Xavier identifies as a mixed-race male. His race includes Asian, specifically Filipino, and White. He is 20 years old and a third-year international relations and economics student. He grew up in a rural area in the Mid-Atlantic region that he describes as not diverse and mainly White. His desire to study international relations and his choice of the university came from his experience as a person of color in a White rural area. He wanted to move out of his comfort zone and pursue a university, although a PWI, where there would be large groups of people of color and proximity to a metro area. Regarding his SES, he did not identify as having low SES and stated that he was better off than most.

Margaret

The fourth participant is Margaret, who was born in the south and attended public school for her K-12 education. Margaret is 21 and identifies as non-binary and uses the pronouns they/them. They identify their disabilities as ADHD, chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), and fibromyalgia. A fourth-year student studying music therapy, they came to this private university because "it felt right" and received some scholarships, so it was affordable. Margaret's interview was succinct, and I believe they felt nervous and shy answering certain questions. Those responses had some chuckles and laughter embedded within.

MsuBandit

MsuBandit is a nontraditional student in his 60s. He was a stop-out and returned in 2022 using the state senior citizen's free tuition for two courses per semester. A third-year student studying history, and women and gender studies, he is a white male with several disabilities. He was not born with the disabilities; they were acquired from injuries received during his time in the Air Force and later in life. He suffers from neurological vision issues and mobility, uses a cane, and is undergoing treatment for cancer. He supplied extensive background information and was very happy to participate in this study. His goal was to discuss the needs of older students with disabilities.

Max

A fourth-year marine science major with two minors, Max, 21, identifies as transmasculine. Born and raised as a Catholic in the Midwest, Max comes from a middle-class family. His choice of attending a school in the southeastern region came from a recommendation of a romantic interest and his checking the university's website. Through that information, Max found the climate for LGBTQAI+ to be accepting and found resources. He visited the campus and fell in love. Max was the shortest interview but provided a rich experience.

Lindsey

My last participant is Lindsey, a fourth-year criminology major with a psychology minor. Lindsey identifies as non-binary and gender-fluid. When asked for her pronouns, Lindsey said to use she, as she was socialized as a female. Twenty-two years old, she identifies as having ADHD, autism, anxiety, PTSD, and depression, and comes from a low SES background. Her diagnosis of ADHD, autism, and anxiety occurred when she was 19, and then she was diagnosed with PTSD at 20. She was diagnosed with depression at 10 and lived in an abusive environment.

She noted that her father died when she was five. Lindsey was very excited about participating in this study. She feels that I selected the right population to participate in this study.

Data Collection

After recruitment and the initial contacts, the data collection began. I sent each participant a Zoom link and a copy of my proposed questions the day before their interview to help reduce any stress or anxiety they might have. Sending the questions in advance helped to increase transparency and gave the participants extra time to process the questions.

Interviews

The data collection included semi-structured individual interviews and follow-up questions for clarification. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix D) for each interview that consisted of 13 open-ended questions (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). Participant interviews took from 50 minutes for the shortest time to 128 minutes for the longest. In-person interviews are suggested by the originators of the method (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Nizza, 2022); however, Zoom was used in this study due to the participants' and the researcher's geographical location. Each interview was recorded in the Zoom cloud. The recorded interviews were downloaded and saved on my password-protected computer along with the Zoom-generated transcripts. I removed identifying information to protect each participant's confidentiality. A back-up of the files was saved on my password-protected, external hard-drive.

The interviews employed predetermined open-ended questions that assisted me in guiding my participants as they discussed their experiences of inclusion in syllabi (Smith & Nizza, 2022). I feel my influence of imposing my ideas on the participants was limited, and I strived to encourage my participants to share their experiences. I did find myself wanting to fix the problems that my first two interviewees shared. I reminded myself to push back my thoughts

and listen to the participants' experience (Figure 1). I approached with an open mind and listened to the meaning-making of the participant.

Memoing

Memoing is vital in qualitative research as it is a process for reflexivity (Birks et al., 2008; Miles et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2009). During each interview, I made observation notes in a dedicated research notebook. These observations were brief and often noted a key word or expression the participants used (Figure 2). In the interviews, I focused on the participant while I wrote very brief notes. After the interview, I memoed my initial thoughts on what the participant said, reacted to, and the feelings they displayed to capture their initial reactions while the interaction was fresh. I memoed after each step in the analysis process to assist me in the meaning-making of each participant and the group analysis. These memos included my meaning-making of the participant's experience with thoughts of their feelings and the way they responded. Memoing continued throughout the completion of the study and write-up.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

In their work on interpretative phenomenological analysis, Smith and Nizza (2022) outline the data analysis protocol I utilized. At the same time, the authors note that IPA is not a prescriptive methodology but offers guidelines that are flexible and adaptable by the researcher. Smith and Nizza's idea of flexibility contrasts with Giorgio (2010) who believed that flexibility was not the true philosophical phenomenology as Husserl theorized. In this study, the participant's experience was a personal endeavor and one that I tried to put myself into during the analysis. Throughout the data analysis process, I continued to memo (Birks et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). I had hoped to have one interview, edit the transcript, and perform my data analysis steps on that participant before recording the remaining interviews.

Because of the recruitment issues and participants' schedules, I analyzed each participant as an individual case but had to record interviews during my analysis phase of two of the participants. Each individual analysis (case) of the participant followed the same process, and I describe this process through the steps that follow, and only moved to the next case after I completed my in-depth analysis of the prior participants' transcript.

Step One: Transcript Edit

Step one of data analysis began with editing the transcript. The process started by listening to the audio recording while editing the Zoom-recorded transcript for accuracy. Edits reflected the spoken word of the participant and me. I listened to the recording while editing, which helped me become familiar with and immersed myself in the data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The editing process included listening to the audio recording twice while editing the transcript. The transcript was not completely edited over one day; rather, it took on average 2–3 days for the completion of the editing process. I also reflected in my memo journal (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4) after my time editing. These memos included things that stood out about the participant and their experience of their marginalized identities. After I completed the two cycles of editing, I printed out the transcript.

Step Two: Exploratory Notes

Next, I read the edited transcript while watching the video. Smith and Nizza (2022) posit that this procedure gives the researcher a greater understanding of the narrative's structure and how the various pieces fit together. The video allowed me to review the participant's facial expressions and body language, which I incorporated into the analysis. I did this more than once, and each reading was slow and deliberate while I kept an open mind reflecting on the content

while shutting out my expected ideas (Smith & Nizza, 2022). I made exploratory notes on the righthand side of the transcript (see Figure 3.5). I read each line of the transcript, adding comments, and color-coding the transcript text as descriptive (purple), linguistic (pink), and conceptual (green) (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The descriptive components featured information that was significant to the participant such as experiences, events, people, and feelings. Linguistic items dealt with language use, such as the words and expressions used in the participant's interview. Conceptual remarks included any questions, reflections, or feelings from myself, in addition to other conceptual parts of the participant's experience, such as cultural, historical, and social issues. As Smith and Nizza (2022) note, there is no requirement to do this as the researcher should adopt a style that is their personal preference.

My readings did not take place back-to-back because I allowed time to digest the first readthrough before moving on to the next. I read the transcript a second time without the video or audio recording and wrote more exploratory notes on the righthand side. On average, it took 15 hours over three days for each, albeit the first analysis of Claire took the longest (22 hours over 8 days) as hers was the first interview, and I wanted to make sure I was exact. Claire is a participant who identifies as neurodiverse ADHD and her responses were fragmented as she jumped from idea to idea and back, thus the longer time for me to make meaning of her experience. The notes I made were the ideas that I thought were interesting or important as to the meaning making of the participant. Through the notes, I tried to understand the participant's meaning.

Step Three: Personal Experiential Statements

Next, I slowly and deliberately read the transcript while I kept an open mind and reflected on the content while shutting out my expected ideas (Smith & Nizza, 2022). This analytic

process was to write experiential statements of what I learned about the meaning of the experience for the individual participant (see Figure 3.6). The experiential statements are "a concise summary of what emerges as important in the notes associated with the corresponding portion of the transcript" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 39). These experiential statements contain verbs, adjectives, and nouns. I captured what I learned from the meaning-making of the participant and applied a condensing effort to enable the critical components of the participants' experience and my knowledge of that experience to surface in my experiential statements. Experiential statements are more than descriptive explanation as they give an interpretative analysis. My readings of each transcript were not back-to-back because I allowed time to digest the first analysis before moving on to the next. My readings occurred on two separate days. During this process, I noted experiential statements on the lefthand side of the transcript. My observations and reflections included what was important in the exploratory notes and used verbs, adjectives, and nouns to explain the participant's experience and psychological context (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Step Four: Clustering Experiential Statements

Next, the data analysis involved making connections and clustering the personal experiential statements. As Smith and Nizza (2022) recommend, printing out the document, cutting up the statements, and then placing all the statements on one surface allowed me to cluster and move around statements as needed (Figure 3.7). During this clustering practice, I kept my two research questions at the forefront to focus on the analysis. The clustering process took several iterations of moving and grouping. When I was satisfied that the groups of clustered statements reflected an overarching theme, I created a Word document with the experiential theme statements. This process had an ebb and flow as I reflected on the experiential statements.

I realized that statements may fit in more than one theme. This condensing effort made clearer the ideas coming forth that supported the overarching theme for the different clusters of statements. This process resulted in themes of personal experiential statements. After the completion of the personal experiential statements, I was ready to move to the creation of the personal experiential themes table.

Step Five: Personal Experiential Themes Table

Step four consisted of compiling a table of personal experiential themes (PETS) for each participant; however, only during the analysis of the individual case. Each personal experiential theme is a cluster of the corresponding experiential statements. I created a table that lists each theme with its related experiential statements, page and line numbers, and quotes from the transcript (see Table 3.2). This table documents the evidence and helps in my analysis of the group experiential statements (GETS) and the write-up of the findings. At the end of each analysis, I had three to five themes based on the participant, but the goal of the analysis was quality, not quantity (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The themes supplied enough evidence to form a narrative of the participant's experience.

Step Six: Member Checking

Step six was member checking. Member checking or participant validation helps show trustworthiness, dependability, and credibility (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lindheim, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). While member checking can improve a study, it is not without its concerns. The possibility exists that member checking may have the participant change their view from their original interview, or want changes made because they feel they come across in a bad light. To help ease the participants' worries, I gave each participant specific directions for member checking (see Appendix E) to help the participant see their contribution as vital part of

the study (Carlson, 2010). Those directions included strategies to address a participant who objects to or disagrees with the analysis (Birt et al., 2016; Carlson, 2010). Each participant was sent a link to their PETS document along with the directions. Presenting the preliminary analysis to the participants for their feedback on my interpretations helped confirm that their experiences were captured accurately. This practice offered transparency while allowing for corrections. All seven participants completed the member checking. The only changes requested were from Julia, and she requested a few deletions of repeated words and the addition of seven replacement words to add clarity.

Step Seven: Group Experiential Themes Analysis

After the completion of the member checking, the next step in the analysis was the group analysis. This step moved from the ideographic to the group analysis, comparing across cases. This process looked for common patterns and idiosyncratic differences (Smith & Nizza, 2022) and explored if one case reflects or informs another. The first step of this cross-case comparison was a "first-pass review of each table" (p. 52) to see if I needed to reorder the themes to aid the comparison process (see Figures 3.8 and 3.9). Changes were made to each PET to create a consistent order across the cases.

After completing this process, I printed out each table for review. The clustering of the group themes was next and took several iterations to create the final themes (see Figure 3.10). The cross-case comparison aimed to find connections, similarities, and differences between the participants' experiences. While this process took time and was not linear, the result was a new table called group experiential theme (GETS) (see Table 3.3). The convergence and divergence of the cases are evident in the table and were used to assist in writing the study findings. This

was an iterative process as I made minor changes to the themes and sub-themes for clarity and better reflection of the quotes. I printed out this table to assist me in writing up the findings.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers, such as Eisner, Lincoln, and Guba, believe the terms reliability and validity are problematic and reflect a positivist paradigm that is not reflective of qualitative research (Eisner, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1989). They propose four general components of trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Credibility refers to the study's accuracy, transferability to the extent to which the results can be applied to different populations and settings by the reader, dependability to the consistency of study results and the study's replicability, and confirmability to the extent to which other researchers could also confirm the results (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Hays et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). In any qualitative study, the researcher must strive to provide for trustworthiness through these four elements for their study to be valued in the field. While not every study encompasses all the methods, I strived to provide the four qualities of trustworthiness in my study. I have described my techniques to increase trustworthiness in this study's research design, data collection, and analysis sections in Chapters 4 and 5.

For credibility, I spent in-depth time with each participant's interview, transcripts, exploratory notes, experiential themes, the table of personal experiential themes, and the group experiential themes. I had my methods committee member review one table of personal experiential themes for their feedback which helped me clearly communicate the theme and the needed quotes. As a result of this review, I did go back to two of my participants' PETs and I reviewed the PETs and my journal memos to make sure I was accurate in bringing forward the

participants' experiences. Because IPA is an iterative process and the back and forth within an analysis is possible, it is also possible to review and make changes to completed PETs. In this case, I did not make any changes. Member-checking was done with each participant by providing their table of personal experiential themes and asking them if the themes and quotes represented the communication of their experience. All participants responded to the email, with one participant suggesting a few minor changes that did not change their response but provided clarity.

The extensive descriptions of my purposively sampled participant group illustrate transferability, as do my study methodologies. Chapter 3 describes each step, in detail, from recruitment to the analysis of group experience themes. The thick descriptions of the methodology and purposive sampling provide the ability for other researchers to apply the study's context to diverse demographics by comparing distinct individual experiences in their own research (Anney, 2014; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Elo et al., 2014).

For dependability in my study, I have documentation available for audit. Evidence in the methodology is dependable and follows one of the leading researchers in the field of IPA, Johnathan Smith. His method outlined in his book with Nizza (2022) is the process I followed in my study. I emailed Dr. Smith during my process asking him a question about the number of participants in a study. His response is provided in Appendix H. He gave suggestions, but in the end it comes down to the quality of the data.

Ethical Considerations

In my research, I was aware of the treatment of participants and procedures that are not considered ethical. In my population sample, some participants were from a protected,

vulnerable population, such as low SES. I did not have any cognitively impaired participants according to their responses to the disability question on the demographic questionnaire.

Economically disadvantaged participants are subject to coercion and undue inducements. My offer of compensation could be considered coercion or undue inducement; however, I offered and paid $15 per one-hour interview and $10 for participating in member-checking as an incentive to participants. While the incentive amount for the interview is more than the minimum hourly wage for employment, it is not an unreasonable amount and one that compensates the participant for their time. Each participant decided how to secure compensation, with every participant requesting Venmo. I paid a total of $190 via Venmo.

Data Storage

The demographic questionnaire data were downloaded and saved onto my personal computer. The online data was deleted after the download. The name, email, and phone columns were removed from the file and the remaining responses and the removed columns were added to a new spreadsheet and associated with a key to the responses. Likewise, the interviews were recorded in the Zoom cloud to enable transcriptions. The video, audio, and transcript files were downloaded to my computer and backed up on an external hard drive. The cloud files were then deleted, and the data was not stored in the same folders on my laptop. All Zoom files were deleted upon completion of the dissertation.

Potential Risks and Benefits

Marginalized populations have suffered harm, as noted throughout the literature; however, this research had no known risks. Through the sharing of a participant's experience, it could evoke emotions in the participant that might be uncomfortable. I re-emphasized the efforts and safeguards for this study to protect the participants' identities. Respect for the participants,

their experience, and confidentiality has been my utmost concern throughout the research

process.

A potential benefit of participating in the study is a place to voice experiences to an able

listener and be heard. The meaning-making by the participant offers ideas as to ways to improve

a syllabus based on the marginalized identity of the participant. While the participant may not

immediately benefit from their meaning-making, they may feel empowered by the knowledge

that their experiences may help others like them.

Limitations of the Study

This study's methods and methodology have potential limitations. The study aimed to

understand how marginalized students make meaning of how they see themselves included in

syllabi through IPA methodology. The sample size for this method is small, and because of the

nature of the participants' marginalization and how they make meaning of their experience, each

case is unique (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022; Smith &

Osborn, 2008). With a small sample size, there is no generalization as the purpose is to examine

in depth the experience, which is idiosyncratic. However, although this may be considered a

limitation by some, it is in fact the purpose of the method. Interviews posed another potential for

limitations. My role as a White, 66-year-old, cisgender female who works at a university has the

potential for power differences. An interviewer and interviewee situation has a hierarchical

structure (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). While this structure is limiting, the constructivist paradigm

addresses the power difference between the researcher and the participant. By the use of

reflexivity, rapport, and reciprocity, I ensured that the participants understood their role as the

expert of their experiences to remove or reduce the power imbalance. Researcher bias is a

potential limitation. I was intentional with my language choices and critical with my data review to counteract my bias.

Summary of Methods

This study addressed the problem of the absence of the voice of marginalized students' experiences with syllabi. With more marginalized students attending higher educational institutions, creating classrooms and documents that welcome and include this population is a pressing need. Prior studies on syllabi exclude the voice of the student's experience with syllabi. This study examined how marginalized students experience themselves included in syllabi and gives insight into their needs and the needed elements in syllabi to create the experience of inclusion for them in the document and classroom. The IPA methodology provided guidance and methods while using a homogeneous purposive sample, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth analysis of each participant using exploratory notes and experiential statements for each case. A comparison across the cases followed the individual analysis and then member-checking by the participants. Through this process, the study provides insight into the research questions.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Alias	Undergraduate Year	Race	Gender	Low SES	Disability	Carnegie Classification of University
Claire	Fourth-year	Asian	Female	No	ADHD, depression, and Anxiety	Mid-Atlantic, Public, Doctoral University: Very High Research
Julia	Fourth-year	Asian	Female	No	ADD, Physical impairment, braces, uses mobility devices wheelchair and crutches	South-Eastern, Private, Master's College & University: Larger Programs
Xavier	Third-year	Asian/ Biracial	Male	No	No	Mid-Atlantic, Public, Doctoral University: Very High Research
Margaret	Fourth-year		Non-binary	Yes	ADHD, Chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia	South-Eastern, Private, Master's College & University
MsuBandit	Third-year	White	Male	No	Vision impairment, mobility with complication, writing, neurological, chronic	South-Eastern, Public, Master's College & University
Max	Fourth-year	White	Transmasc	No		South-Eastern, Public, Master's College & University
Lindsey	Fourth-year	White	Fluid	Yes	Autism/ADHD /PTSD	South-Eastern, private, Master's College & University

Note. The table reflects the demographic responses provided by each participant prior to their interviews.

Table 3.2

Julia's Personal Experiential Themes Excerpt

	Line	Quote
Theme 2. *Discovering her identities in course materials*		
Finding herself included in the course readings	444-445	How do you see yourself in terms of your identities in those materials in those texts? Well, I mean, like a lot honestly. A lot of conversations that we have based on the readings that we have to do is how we can connect with our clients.
	459-460	But I saw myself in that a lot when it came to everything and my identity because it was very relevant.
Telling her story in course materials	462-465	I look at other sorts of material. It's a little less relevant well of it, because sometimes it's just like basic related and techniques, and then others It's very psychology related, and that's when it's more I see myself, especially when we're talking about like mental health stuff like those that have anxiety or depression. And I can very much look at that because I'm like, yeah, I experience that, too.
	470-474	Some of the questions like they come up as like. What would a person do who experiences anxiety? What would, what would be the best thing to do for this person? And a lot of times those questions are a little easy, because I can just put myself into that person's shoes, or use my own experiences, and be like Well, I felt this way.
Recognizes her identities are not included in her field	481-488	I'm, speaking to my disability identity. It's there isn't a lot talked about when it comes to adjustments. It only goes as far as what sort of accommodations we can do for our clients. But there's never really talk about, You know, music therapists that have disabilities, and how they navigate that.
	501-505	But I think you know, even with client's interactions with us like it goes both ways. If a client comes up to me and goes, and the client has it's like, why do you have leg braces, or what? What are those clutches? Why do you have those? Are you? Did you get injured (laughs)? And oftentimes I, you know how to figure out how to respond to that on my own. It's not really talked about in class.
	513-514	Anything that's like relevant to just how to be successful in the profession. That's just something that's opted out.
Demonstrates emotion with course materials	456-460	And what kind of what sort of scenarios would maybe come up, in a session, or with a caregiver. And honestly, that conversation was really hard for me, because it reminded me of some of my interactions with some people. But I saw myself in that a lot when it came to everything and my identity because it was very relevant.
Relating to other's experiences based on her own	462-474	I look at other sorts of material It's a little less relevant well of it, because sometimes it's just like basic related and techniques, and then others it's very psychology related, and that's when it's more. I see myself, especially when we're talking about like like mental health stuff like those that have anxiety or depression. And I can very much look at that because I'm like, yeah, I experience that, too.

Note. The information in this table is an excerpt from Julia's Personal Experiential Themes (PETS) and demonstrates the analysis of the participant's experience of meaning-making.

Table 3.3

Group Experiential Themes Table Theme One

Theme One: Manifested feelings from syllabi policies		Line
Sub-theme 1.1: Disappointment from lack of inclusion	M: I guess it's to me anything that I look at, and don't feel like it takes into account certain identities.	261
	M: in terms of absence, policies and stuff. It makes me feel kind of discluded. Because it's never in the same paragraph talks about people who have those accommodations.	313
	MsuBandit: Oh, I don't see nothing in syllabi about age and disability. Nothing at all.	733
	L: It's hard to ask for accommodations.	459
	L: I wish there were a resource where they would change their policies or be more accommodating like one professor, refuses to take any kind of late work for any reason that isn't very specific props to her for having very specific guidelines for late work that being said I don't it doesn't mention mental health at all if I wake up, and having a bad day, and I say a bad day and the same way my therapist means it where if I'm having a bad day I woke up that day and have to choose between living like literally being alive and going to class period because to me going to class some days feels like that	784
	J: honestly, It kind of makes me feel a little frustrated just because I can't control when I'm going to be gone	741
	J: only thing I see myself is when it says academic support services. That's about it.	361
	C: I've experienced like marginalization in the syllabus. Oh my gosh! I think it's particularly like I think it's like when late policies are like very very like, punitive, and very like inflexible	328
	Max: there's usually nothing related to trans entities LGBT I guess if I need to be gone for medical reasons that this is connected to being trans. I could tell them and that would be a university excuse. But that's the only way I could think of it being included in any shape or form.	1401
		414

| Theme One: Manifested feelings from syllabi policies		Line
	X: people of color tend to be you know, living like multigenerational households, you know, might be one of you know lower socioeconomic status,	
Sub-theme 1.2: Disclosing the negative effect on well being	X: One of my like worst experiences with like teachers policies, and this was during the COVID, like the height of the COVID pandemic.	383
	MsuBandit: not supposed to have a food or drink in class period sorry I got too; you know I take 25 different medications.	516
	MsuBandit: watch other students that have the issues and issues may be more severe than mine makes me mad. I hate anybody having to be put into that situational corner and afraid to ask. I've seen some of the worst disability cases, and they don't use any of their accommodations, especially if they're 18 to 19 years old.	583
	L: that I have to open that conversation. Understand the responsibility is on me but the fact that the responsibility to be accommodated is on me can be stressful.	741
	L: I was too scared to turn in the paper. I'm not quite sure why. Maybe it was internal like, if I turn this in, then I'm actually disabled, because I've never had accommodations.	405
	L: Do I feel marginalized? Yeah, their policies that just, you know, make you more marginalized.	1075
	J: OK, you can do this and I understand you have to do this. Because it's out of your control. However, I do question, do what I expect of you, and I won't be mad at you, so it's kind of like I can't do both at the same time like it's something has to give, you know	1068
	C: it just like adds a lot of pressure on me. It makes me feel like I can't go to the professor if I'm struggling.	434
	C: [punitiveness] it's just like adds a lot of pressure on me. It makes me feel like I can't go to the professor if I'm struggling.	343
	M: they're usually like, yeah, no, whatever is fine, because we trust you and we really don't worry about you in terms of	131

Theme One: Manifested feelings from syllabi policies	Line
	getting the things that you need to get done. Which is nice, but the same time kind of puts some pressure on me and it sometimes makes me feel a little like you should try not to use my accommodations	
	M: in terms of absence policies and stuff. It makes me feel kind of discluded. Because it's never in the same paragraph, talks about people who have those accommodations. So even though you know, if you scroll all the way down on the syllabi, it has a little blurb about accommodations, and how they're supposed to be honored, and all of that, and it kind of just gives me that feeling that, oh, I'm I'm not really supposed to be included here.	343
	C: there's so many like explicit policies against like ex conducts, or you know when you do this, like I'm going to take off like 20%, 10% it just feels very like I'm just going to keep going back to the word like punitive	313
Sub-theme 1.3: Disclosing the positive effect on wellbeing	J: ADHD and in terms of you know what's expected and what needs to be done like that helps my anxiety in terms of what to you know know what I have to do know what I can control.	313
	C: You know, recognizing that, like there is still people who like, even though it's not necessarily recognized like there's still a need for accommodations and, like you know, like the fact that he was open, and like explicitly stated like that, yeah, you can have accommodations and not like not have gone through the whole process with the university like that was like, I've never seen that before and that was amazing	272
	M: I think lately, when I've been reading the syllabus, I've kind of noticed that professors tend to use more inclusive language like I mentioned earlier, which is nice.	223
	C: I'm also studying Asian American studies as a minor. So I've been in a lot of spaces where, like I have a it helps being in Asian American studies because I feel I definitely see myself a lot in Syllabi and in classes, and I have, you know I have a I know I have a voice, and I know I have the stakes in my classes so like it's a lot easier for me to be the student that raises their hand a lot, has like things to say a few, I think.	125

Theme One: Manifested feelings from syllabi policies	Line
J: it's very helpful when they list out the textbooks so, I'm able to copy and paste and send that over to accommodations comma so I can get that in digital ahead of time.	285
J: one of the things it has assessments of learning and it breaks down what the weight of each assignment is and then as the estimated time commitment outside of class, that's extremely helpful to know when I'm planning and planning out my workload. It's not all teachers get that to you kinda just have to estimate yourself, or find out the hard way so in that tone and that way as that's very helpful for my ADD	306
J: in terms of you know what's expected and what needs to be done like that helps my anxiety in terms of what to you know know what I have to do and know what I can't control.	313

Note. Theme One: Manifested feelings from syllabi policies and the three sub-themes.

Figure 3.1

Constructivist Paradigm Model
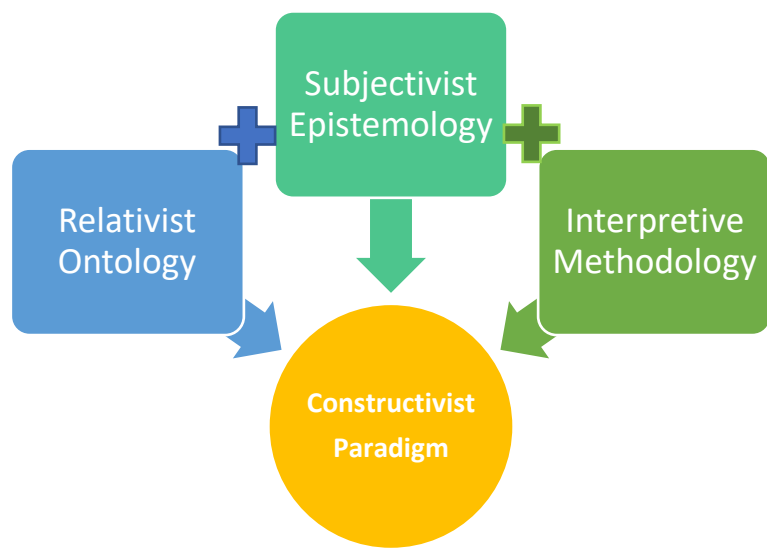
Note. This model shows the components and the relationships within the paradigm.

Figure 3.2

Intersectionality of Participants
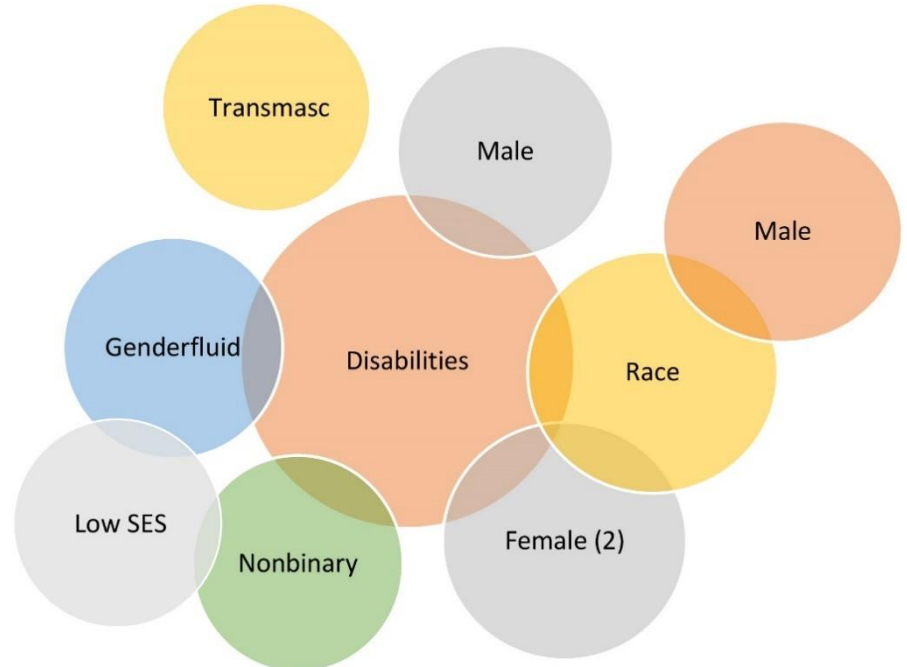
Note. The diagram is of the participants' intersectionality based on Table 3.1.

Figure 3.3

Researchers Journal
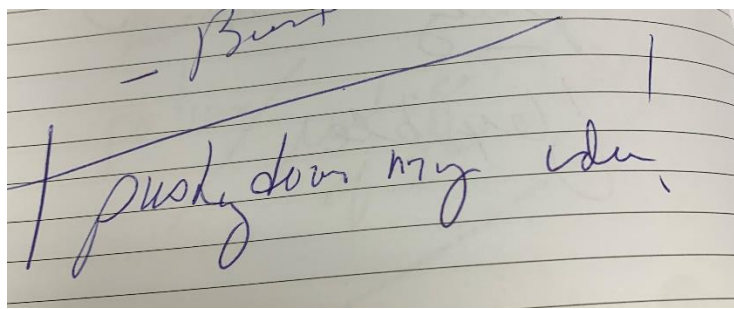
Note. Cover of researcher journal (left) with an example memo (right) taken during the first participant interview noting to push down the idea of wanting to help the student.

Figure 3.4

Memos from Researcher Journal
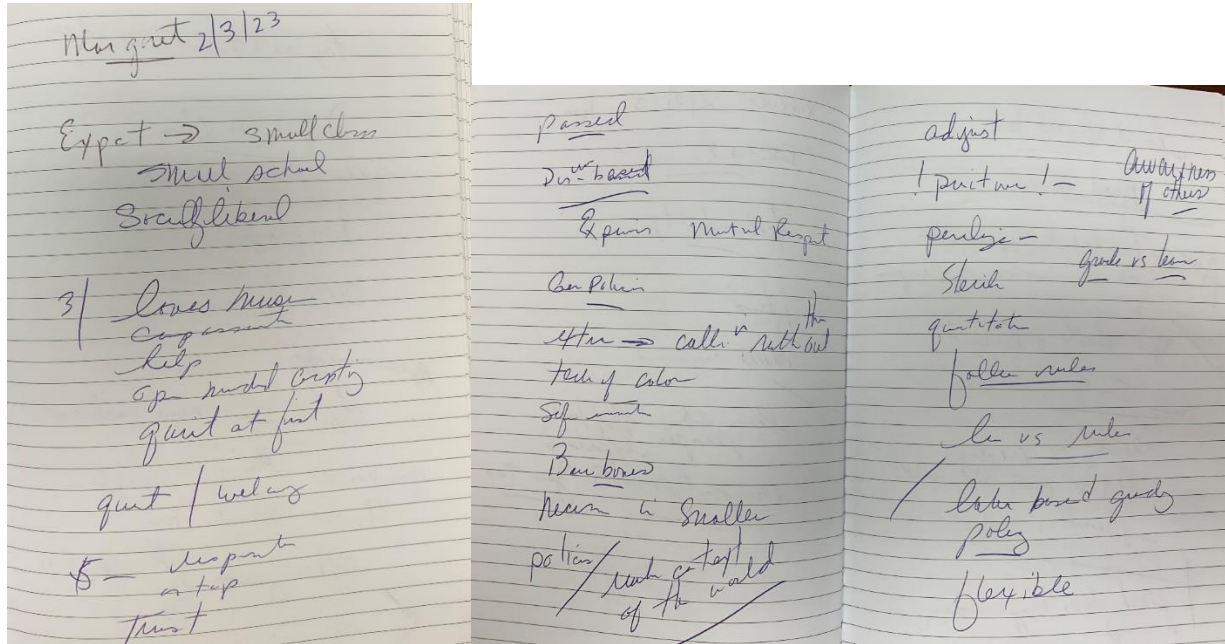
Note. Memos that were generated after two separate interviews. Margaret on the left, Xavier on the right.

Figure 3.5

Example of Julia's Exploratory Notes
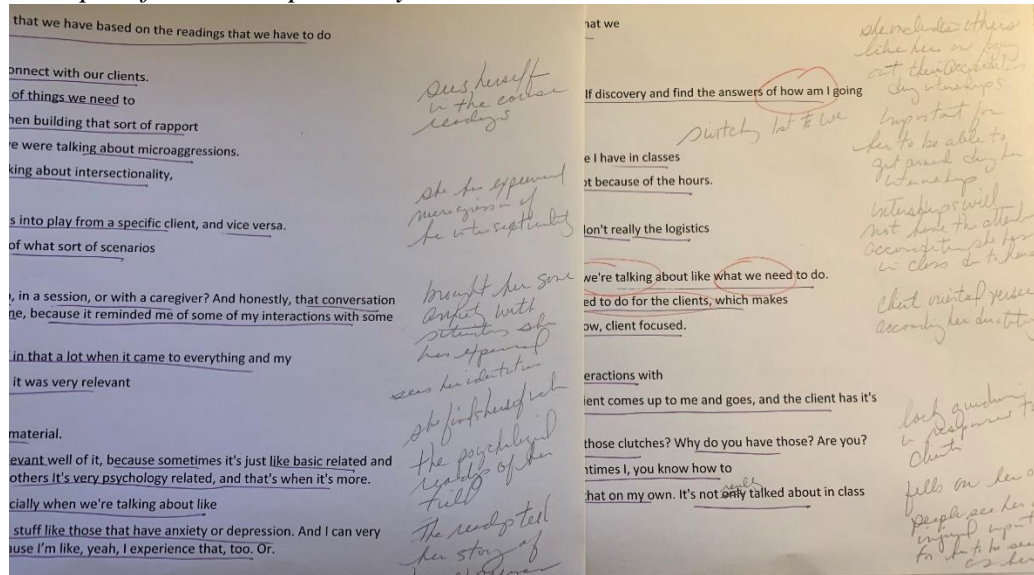
Note. Sample pages from Julia's analysis for exploratory notes.

Figure 3.6

Example of Claire's Exploratory Notes and Experiential Statements
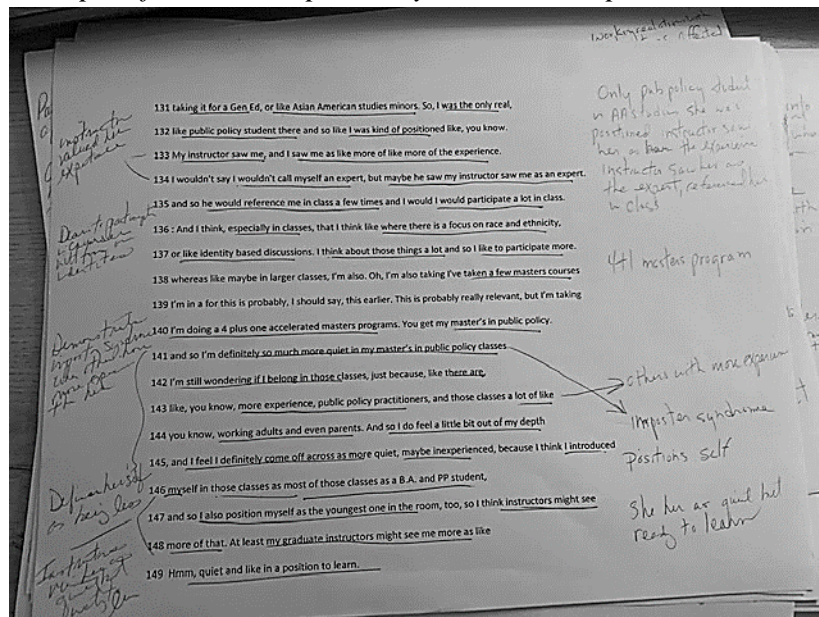
Note. Sample page from Claire's analysis demonstrating the exploratory notes on the right-hand side and experiential statements on the left. Underlined text represents descriptive, linguistic, and contextual ideas.

Figure 3.7

Examples of the Personal Explanatory Analysis
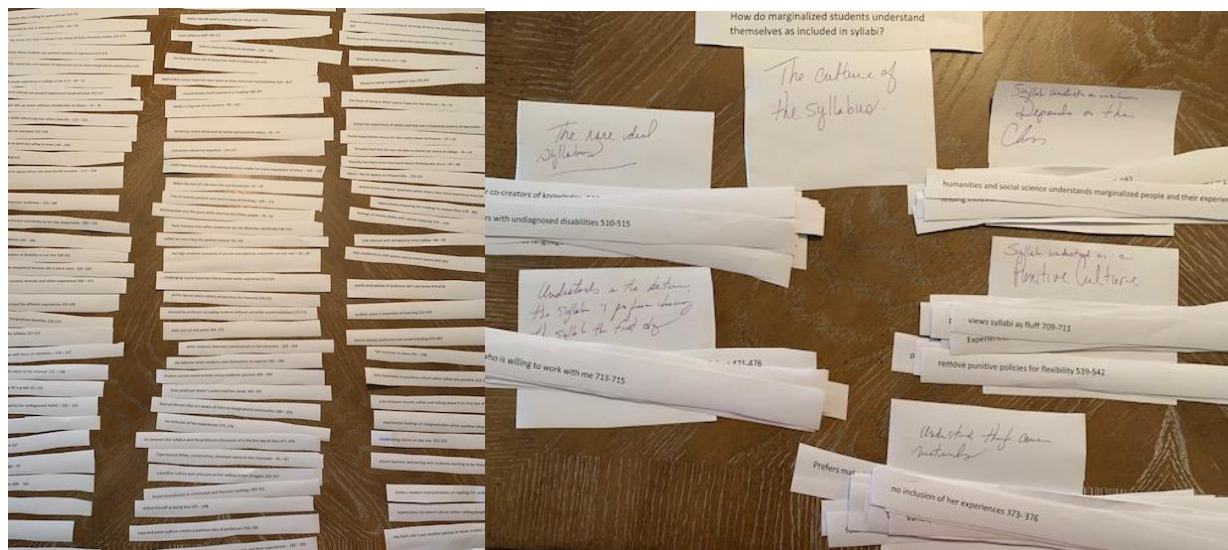
Note. Sample of the explanatory statements on the left before the analysis of clustering like ideas and the gathering of like ideas of explanatory statements on the right.

Figure 3.8

Group Experiential Analysis
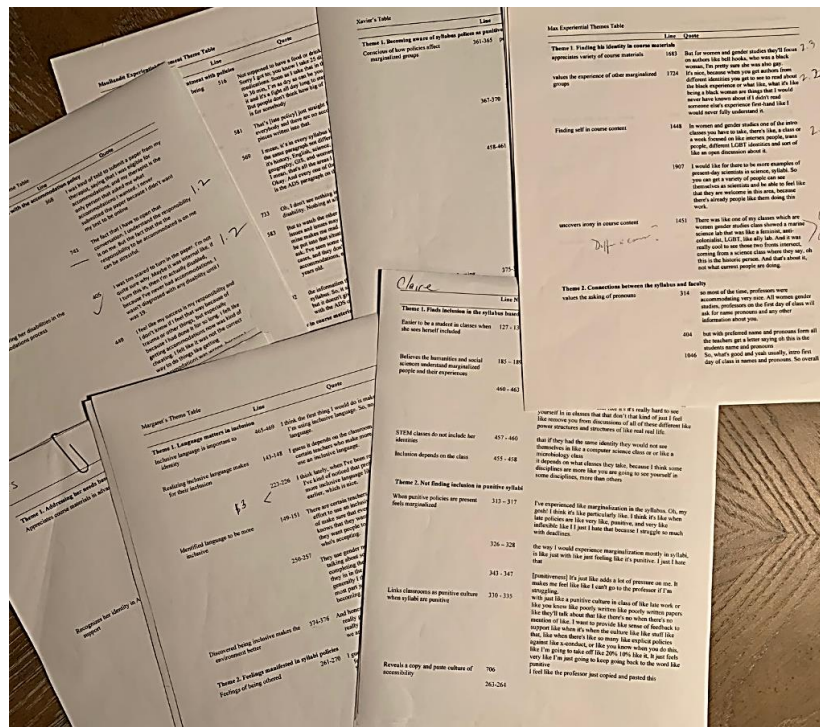
Note. The seven tables of personal experiential themes before the analysis of grouping like ideas. Examples from the Group Clustering Process

Figure 3.9

Group Experiential Themes Clustering
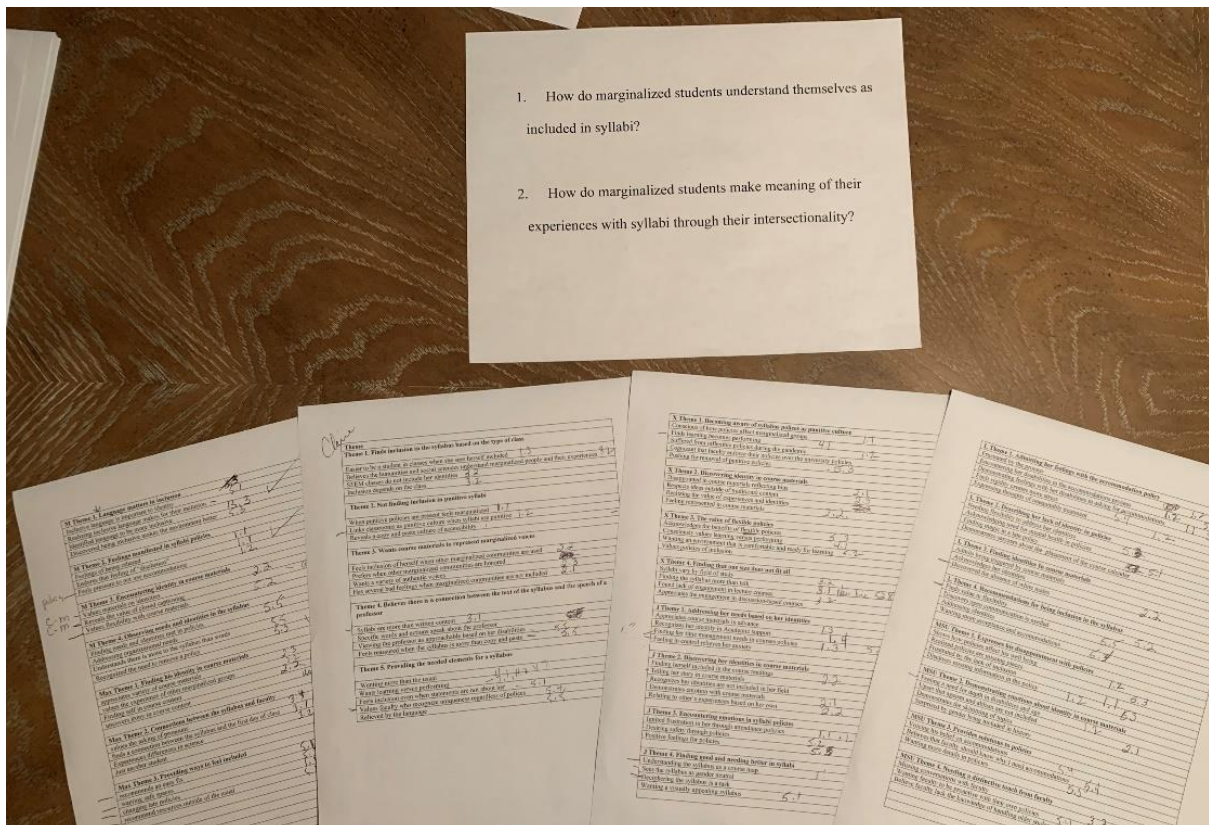
Note. Reorganization of personal themes.

Figure 3.10

Group Clustering
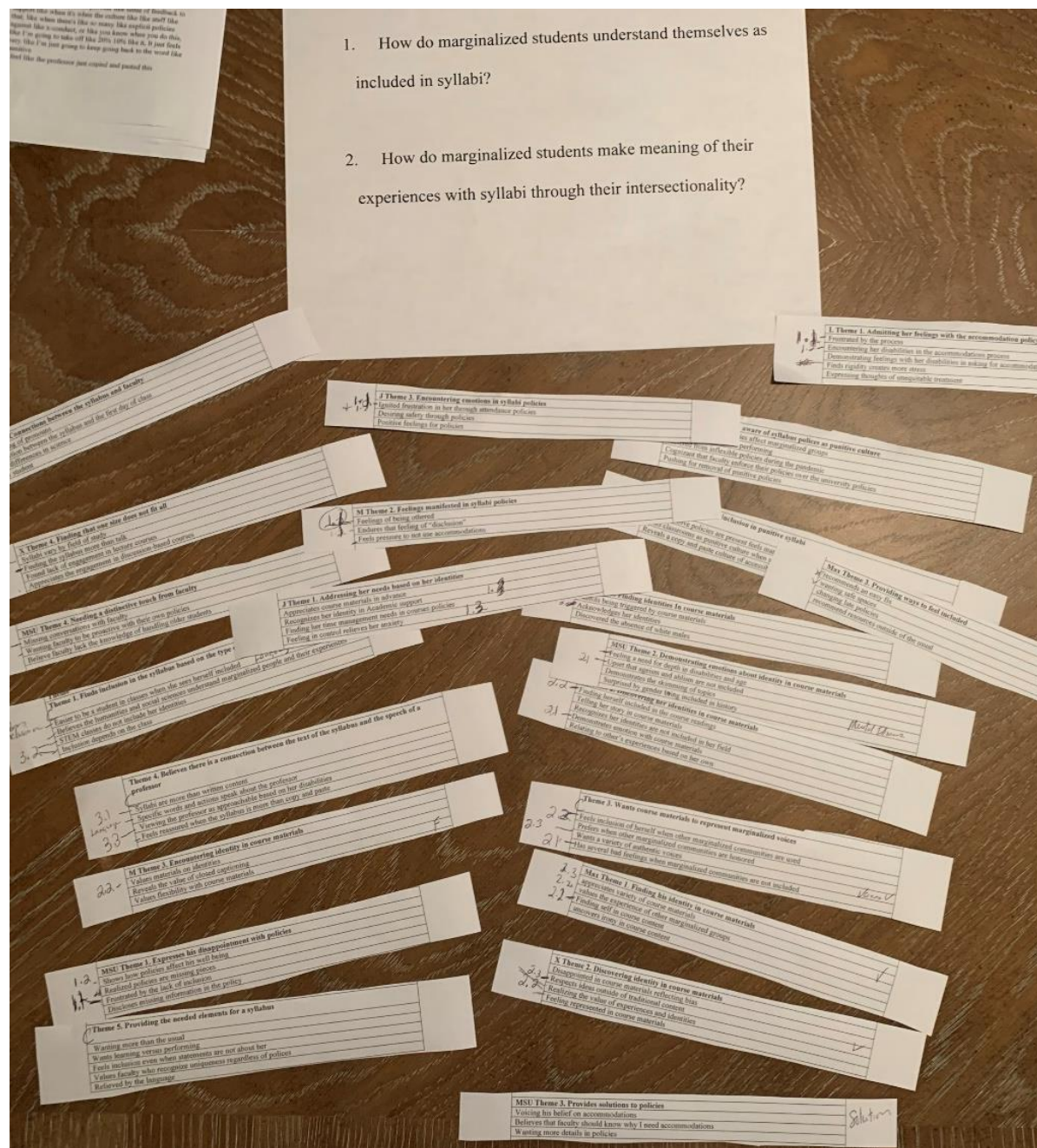
Note. Clustering of the individual themes to form group themes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter begins by presenting the findings in relationship to the research questions. Next, the chapter presents the group experiential themes that emerged from their narratives. The findings are presented in accordance with Smith et al. (2009), Nizza et al. (2021), and Smith and Nizza's (2022) recommendations for reporting the results of IPA research. The findings of this study were determined through a focus on phenomenology, or the lived experience of each participant and their meaning-making of that experience. In addition, the findings illustrate the double hermeneutic nature of the IPA method, since the findings express my interpretation of the participants' interpretation of their experience (Smith et al., 2009). The idiographic nature of interpretative phenomenological analysis was highlighted by presenting the converging themes of the participants' narratives. The group experiential themes provide details into the experiences of participants and the meaning they make from those experiences. The sub-themes highlight the convergent and divergent narrative among the participants.

This IPA study resulted in five themes. The themes and associated sub-themes answer the research questions. There is a crossover in three of the themes between the two research questions (Table 4.1). Four themes and their associated subthemes addressed the first research question: how do marginalized students understand themselves as included in syllabi? The first theme describes how the participants feel about their lack of inclusion in syllabi policies, specifically their frustration. The second theme presents how participants' identities are centered (or not) in course materials, including feeling inclusion in course materials, wanting a variety of voices. The third theme illustrated the link participants made between the review of the syllabus, language choice, faculty, and the course type. The fourth theme demonstrated the idea of

creating equitable partnerships, which includes valuing learning versus performing and shared ownership of knowledge.

Three themes and their associated subthemes addressed the second research question: how do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality? The participants did not describe their experiences with syllabi through multiple identities; rather, they were specific about their experiences through a specific identity. Theme one tells us that the expression of feelings from syllabi policies were demonstrated in two ways. The negative and positive effect on their well-being was shown in their experiences with policies. Theme two, the centering of their identities in course materials, revealed a variety of their emotions through their experiences with course materials. Theme five presents solutions based on the students' experiences. There were five sub-themes included in this theme: providing easy fixes to policies, creating safe spaces, valuing flexibility in policies, making accommodating accommodations, and wanting communication by and with faculty. Overall, the five themes and their associated themes address the research questions by presenting an interpretation of the participants' experiences with syllabi.

The findings are presented using headings for each theme one through five. Included within each theme are the numbered sub-themes headings to the associated theme. The narrative description with the participants' quotes give meaning to my analysis and the associated themes, while answering the research questions.

Presentation of the Findings

The following section details the key findings of the research, which are organized into group experiential themes. Five group experiential themes highlighted the narratives and experiences of the participants:

Theme 1: Expressing emotions from syllabi policies

Theme 2: Centering identities in course materials

Theme 3: Illustrating the links between syllabus, faculty, and course

Theme 4: Creating equitable partnerships

Theme 5: Suggesting solutions for identities.

Each group theme has sub-themes that were essential to organize the data. Following a thorough examination of themes, a summary of the findings is provided. An overview of the findings was provided in Table 3.3.

Theme One: Expressing Feelings from Syllabi Policies

This group experiential theme captures the participants' narratives around the feelings generated through their experiences with syllabi policies. All of the participants showed various feelings of frustration such as anger and disappointment with syllabi policies as they made meaning of their lack of inclusion as "disclusion". Frustration and further marginalization were felt through policies perceived as punitive. Punitive nature of policies relates to punishment and consequences for their identities. The disclosure of making choices as living or going to class as death reveals the inflexibility of policies as experienced through mental health identity.

Participants made meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their identities as having negative and positive effects on their well-being. The negative effects felt by participants included both psychological and physical, or witnessing negative effects on others. Participants psychologically suffered stress, fear, and pressure. The inflexibility of policies, even during a pandemic, created added stress during an unsure time and added to the participant's reality of being disabled and not being able to ask for help. They suffered psychologically due to the inflexibility of policies that did not consider participants' identities. Policies also inflict physical

harm, as experienced by MsuBandit not being allowed food or drink during class to take medication for their disability. The policy added to physical pain and emotional distress, while the policy added to feeling a loss of inclusion.. Bearing witness to the experience of others who have similar marginalized identities created empathy and more feelings of exclusion and marginalization for participants.

The positive effects on well-being were revealed in the participants' meaning-making of their experiences through their identities. Positive effects included relief for anxiety, aid in planning, and language that created inclusion. The relief was experienced when identities were included through a policy that removed barriers. As an aid in planning, which is needed for those with ADD and ADHD, having policies that give the needed information for planning helps the participant's feeling of having some control, where the use of inclusive language in syllabi provides a feeling of inclusion that is considered "nice" or needed as for those with a nonbinary identity. The three sub-themes that developed through this analysis are further described in the following sections along with the participants' meaning-making of their experiences and my analysis.

Sub-Theme 1.1: Frustration from Lack of Inclusion

This group experiential sub-theme illustrates participants' frustration with experiencing a lack of inclusion in policies. All seven participants were frustrated with the lack of feeling included in policies. For example, MsuBandit said angrily during his interview, "I don't see nothing in syllabi about age and disability." His frustration and anger came through loud and clear. Xavier specifically showed frustration from understanding the struggle of marginalized groups. His frustration arose from knowing that marginalized groups were not included. Six

participants revealed their disappointment with their personal identities being unrepresented. The disappointment came through in their tone of voice, and facial expressions that included frowns.

Lindsey and Julia both described how they experienced a loss of control because of how the policies did not take their identities into account. The loss of control was because of their ADHD or mental health, and not being able to focus and complete assignments on time. Lindsey spoke about how the strict late work policy did not consider her mental health:

> One professor refuses to take any kind of late work for any reason that isn't very specific. Props to her for having very specific guidelines for late work; that being said, I don't, it doesn't mention mental health at all. If I wake up and having a bad day and I say a bad day in the same way my therapist means it, where if I'm having a bad day I woke up that day and have to choose between living, like literally being alive and going to class, because to me going to class some days feels like that.

Lindsey revealed how her struggle with mental health can keep her from attending classes. She has to make choices, and sometimes her best option is just being alive. So, she chooses her mental health over meeting a policy of lateness and not turning her work in on time. While some may argue that mental health is not an identity, the participants in this study described mental health as an aspect of their identity. In a similar fashion, Julia found frustration with the course attendance policy:

> Honestly? It kind of makes me feel a little frustrated just because I can't control when I'm gonna be gone. And I try my hardest to do what I can. But it kind of sucks because as someone that has those accommodations what if I'm just sick.

Julia stated that she does not have control over her absences. Her medical conditions and doctors appointments take precedence over class attendance, and she expressed her disappointment with

an attendance policy that does not mention her accommodations. Both Lindsey and Julia

expressed their experiences with syllabi policies based on their disability identities while

expressing their frustration and disappointment through their tone of voice and facial

expressions.

Feelings of marginalization and "disclusion" (Margaret) were evident in Claire and

Margaret's interviews. Like Lindsey, Claire talked about the late policy specifically and shared

the following:

I've experienced like marginalization in the syllabus. Oh, my gosh! I think it's like

particularly like. I think it's like when late policies are like very like, punitive, and very

like inflexible like I, I just I hate that because I struggle so much with deadlines.

Claire described the late policy as punitive and inflexible. Having ADHD makes her struggle

with completing her coursework, and as an adult with ADHD, she often experiences

procrastination and internalized anxiety. The lack of flexibility in the late policy, which she felt

was punitive punishment, most likely triggered this response and makes her feel marginalized

through punishment. Where Margaret's feelings come from the absences policy:

I would probably say again say that the absence policy it's hard for me, partly because,

even though legally it doesn't apply to me necessarily. I still read it and feel like it, it. I

don't know it just. I don't know how to explain it (chuckles) Let me think or I guess it's in

terms of absence, policies and stuff. It makes me feel kind of discluded because it never

in the same paragraph, talks about people who (chuckles) have those accommodations.

They recognized that the policy does not apply to them legally; however, they still have feelings

of "disclusion" because of not being included in the absence policy as it does not reference their

accommodations. For them, it is necessary to connect their accommodation and absence policy

to demonstrate to them that they are included. Claire and Margaret revealed the struggle they encounter with syllabi policies based on their identities and offered ideas for creating more inclusive policies.

From a different perspective, Max, who identifies as transmasculine, may need to be absent from class based on the medical needs he identified in his interview:

There is usually nothing related to the trans identities LGBT [in the syllabus]. I guess if I need to be gone for medical reasons that this is connected to being trans. I could tell them and that would be a university excuse. But that's the only way I could think of being included in any shape or form.

Max is expressing his feelings that his gender is not included in policies and that his accommodation comes from a university policy rather than a course policy. He is burdened by having to link university policy to his course syllabus, and being confronted with his lack of inclusion since the course policy does not align with university policy. The burden of having to educate faculty about university policy then creates more stress.

Xavier expressed his feelings about the lack of inclusion through his knowledge of people of color. While he does share his dislike of the policies, he further shows the struggles of marginalized students and their realities, as noted in this passage:

I generally don't like when professors kind of model their policies and syllabi, after like preparing you for the real world, just because I feel like a lot of them are overly punitive, which I don't know if it necessarily affects me in particular in my identities. But I know you know a lot of people of color tend to be you know, live in like multi-generational households, you know, might be of you know lower socioeconomic status, and I feel like a lot of these policies that are, you know, overly punitive, really penalize students like

that, that you know that might miss something, you know, if they're taking care of family

or you know, just you know, generally like, you know, you might turn something in late,

and then they like you know, dock off like a significant amount of points or so. In some

cases, I've had it where they won't even grade some of your your work, if it's turned in

late.

His thoughts highlight the punitive nature of policies and how they can be inequitable to

marginalized groups. The lens of empathy he uses acknowledges that other students see the

struggles and lack of inclusion in policies.

The frustrations identified by each participant are linked to their identities and

experiences with the policies in course syllabi. Each participant provided insight into their lack

of inclusion based on their identity or others' identity. While they each identified areas of

concern, they also offered ideas to make policies more inclusive. In addition to creating

frustration, policies can also affect the well-being of students as analyzed next.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Uncovering the Negative Effect on Their Well-being

Sub-theme 1.2 provides insight into the experiences the participants had with the policies'

effect on their well-being. Well-being was recognized by participants as physical, psychological,

or witnessing it in others. All participants, except Max, shared experiences with syllabi that

negatively affected their well-being or others. Some of the participants' responses revealed fear.

Lindsey said she feared being, "too scared to turn in the paper" for her accommodations. Lindsey

admitted, "if I turn this in, then I am actually disabled because I never had accommodations."

She feared the fact of accepting her new disability identity and the process of receiving

accommodations. In addition to their own fear, participants also saw fear in others. MsuBandit

recognized this when he stated:

Watch other students that have the issues and issues may be more severe than mine's, makes me mad. I hate anybody having to be put into that situational corner and afraid to ask. I've seen some of the worst disability cases and they don't use any of their accommodations, especially if they're 18 to 19 years old.

He used the term situational corner meaning that students are afraid to ask for help; in this case, students are afraid to ask for accommodations. He also attributed this fear to the student's young age and lack of knowledge about obtaining accommodations. In Claire's experience, she responded to how punitive policies make her feel. Although she doesn't actually say the word fear, fear was clear in the dialogue:

It's [punitiveness] just like adds a lot of pressure on me. It makes me feel like, like I can't go to the professor if I'm struggling, like I, and we all just like while I'm having a hard time on an assignment. I like, consult the syllabus to like, try to get a sense of how they would react if I turn in a late assignment, and it just like., yeah, like it, it doesn't feel good.

That feeling of "doesn't feel good" is fear of punishment as she believes the policy is punitive. The fear of punishment holds her back from getting the help she needs from the professor. In fact, fear holds students with disabilities back and keeps them from getting the accommodations they need to succeed in the course. Fear is paralyzing and disrupts the success of students who need accommodations. If the late work and absence policies were revised to not trigger fear, the students could be more successful.

Coping with stress due to policies was seen in Xavier and Julia's interviews. In times of high stress, such as a pandemic, the lack of flexibility in polices is experienced by Xavier:

One of my like worst experiences with like teachers' policies, and this was during the

Covid, like the, the height of the Covid pandemic. When we were all online, the, the

professor, was very uncompromising in his in his his syllabi, and didn't really adjust it to

the I'd say the, the context of you know the pandemic, and you know the additional stress

and just circumstances that people dealt with.

Xavier's circumstances included not having a learning management system course in place

where he could upload assignments. Instead, his professor wanted assignments emailed to the

graduate assistant. A typo in the email rendered his group assignment a zero, and this strict

policy, in a time of crisis, added to his stress during the pandemic.

Julia did not share a pandemic experience but spoke about how an attendance policy

created a difficult situation. The policy added stress as she had an impossible situation. She

described:

For the attendance, yeah, I just think, I mean with this specific professor I think a part of

her kind of mixes to like, okay, you can do this, and I understand you have to do this,

because it's out of your control [meaning her absence from class]. However, do what I

expect of you, and I won't be mad at you (chuckles), so it's kind of like I can't do both at

the same time, like, it's something has to give, you know.

Her chuckle represents an incongruous emotion, such as feeling uncomfortable with the

professor being mad at her. She obviously did not want to miss class and be in this situation but

knows she can't do both, being present and absent. The situation creates stress. The relief to

these stress-inducing policies is to make them flexible to the crisis and attendance.

In Margaret's case, they feel unneeded pressure. This pressure stems from their feeling of

faculty when they say, "No, whatever is fine because we trust you and really don't worry about

you in terms of getting the things that you need to get done." They understand the faculty's acceptance of their accommodations, "but at the same time, kind of puts some pressure on me. And it sometimes makes me feel a little like I should not try to use my accommodations." Margaret experienced guilt between the acceptance by faculty of their accommodations and the pressure making them not "want" to use them. When Margaret utilized their accommodations, they felt as if they had let them down.

In addition to the negative effect on psychological well-being, policies can harm physical well-being. MsuBandit recalled his experience with a classroom policy:

> And there's certain things I can't do. I can't go an hour and 15 minutes without a drink of
> water, not supposed to have a food or drink in class. Sorry I got to [drink]. You know I
> take 25 different medications.

He felt that faculty need to be aware of issues that people with disabilities face. It becomes more than the accommodation; as he says, "learn the person, learn the disability," and he believes accommodations can be improved through knowledge about the person.

The negative effects on the participants' well-being were both mental and physical. These negative experiences with syllabi and policies created unhealthy situations and further isolated the students. The participants' experiences offer insight into their marginalized identities being excluded in syllabi and paints a vivid picture of the reality of the harm caused by syllabi. In contrast to the negative effect on the participants' well-being, some of the participants did experience positive effects of policies on their well-being and these are discussed next.

Sub-Theme 1.3: Recognizing the Positive Effect on Their Wellbeing

In addition to negative impacts on well-being, the study describes positive effects of policies. Julia, Claire, and Margaret talked about how particular policies aid in relieving anxiety,

help in planning, and use inclusive language. They articulate how their marginalized identities are supported when syllabi clearly lay out expectations of the workload. Julia talked about how her ADD was helped by her ability to plan, which allows her to feel in control. She provided the following context:

> One of the things is, it has assessments of learning, and it breaks down what the weight of each assignment is, and then as the estimated time commitment outside of class. That's extremely helpful to know when I am planning and planning out my workload. It's not all teachers get that to you kinda just have to estimate yourself or find out the hard way (laughs). So, in that tone, and that way, as that's very helpful for my ADD and in terms of you know what's expected and what needs to be done like that helps my anxiety in terms of what to you know, know what I have to do, know what I can control.

Julia's laugh revealed that she had to find out the hard way, about how long an assignment would take to do, and it shows that she did not want to do that again. She feels better when she is in control and knows what to expect with her coursework, as she has experienced not being in control with some of her disabilities. Planning assists Julia with her ADD, and she shows the importance of clear syllabi that allow her to plan and be in control.

Acquiring accommodations for students with disabilities can be an intimidating process. A professor amazed Claire as he was willing to give accommodations without going through the process. As a student with ADHD diagnosed during her junior year, she revealed the value of professors who provide accommodations without the student going through the formal process:

> You know, recognizing that, like, there is still people who like, like, even though it's not necessarily recognized like there's still a need for accommodations and, like, you know, like the fact that he was open and like explicitly stated like that yeah, you can need

accommodations and like not have gone through the whole process with the university

like that was like. I've never seen that before, and that was amazing because, like, I was

in that point like last year, like I didn't. I never even considered it, the fact that I needed

accommodations, or that I had a disability, and so like, if I had heard that earlier, I don't

know if, like, that would have made a hugest difference.

This one professor made a difference for Claire, and brought her relief. Her relief was brought on

by knowing that she could have worked with a professor to receive accommodations before her

diagnosis and feeling inclusion. Claire was joyful when she conveyed this experience and the

relief she felt; I experienced that joy and amazement with her during the interview.

Margaret was soft-spoken, and their choice of the word *nice* has a meaning for them that

is not like most. During our interview, they described others as describing them as nice, and they

were proud of that. In disclosing the positive effect on their well-being, Margaret said, "I think

lately when I've been reading the syllabus, I kind of noticed that professors tend to use more

inclusive language like I mentioned earlier, which is nice." What is *nice* for Margaret, is amazing

for Claire, and in control for Julia. The positive effect on their well-being helps them function

within their identities inside and outside the classroom.

The positive effect on the participants' well-being is shown through their experiences and

intersectionality. When the policies and language support the identities of students, they

experience inclusion based on those identities. The positive effect is felt and contributes to their

well-being. In a similar manner, course materials as included in syllabi are experienced by

students and are discussed next.

Theme Two: Centering Identities in Course Materials

This second group experiential theme captures all seven participants' experiences with identity in course materials. While course materials such as textbooks, open educational resources, journal readings, websites, and videos are listed on syllabi, they are experienced through engagement with those materials. Nevertheless, the participants' experiences with course materials provides insight into the syllabus as a component of the course. These materials support the learning outcomes for the course and represent the ideas from the discipline of the class. As such, the experiences of the participants with course materials range from emotions associated with the experience, feeling included, to not feeling their identities were represented in course materials.

The participants made meaning of their experience with course materials as they explained prior unpleasant experiences. The emotions that surfaced as they recalled their experiences with syllabi were based on their identities of mental health, including anxiety and PTSD. Recalling past experiences brought on anxiety of prior encounters with folks and for one participant, gave relevance to the current situation Participants discussed how course readings that were similar to their life experience triggered PTSD, and made it so the student was unable to continue the reading for the course. Students felt disgust in their experience of irrelevant materials, in which classes were focused on old White scholars who were disconnected from contemporary ideas.

Students reported that diverse gender identities were included in course materials, they experienced feeling included. Two participants revealed that they experience inclusion of their marginalized identities when other marginalized identities are included in their course readings. Variety in marginalized voices as a counternarrative to the traditional White scholars was desired

as it made the participants feel included, and allowed them to appreciate the value of others'
experience to inform their own identities. Participants' experiences illustrate the need for and
value of marginalized voices. The following sub-themes describe the meaning-making of the
participants and the development of the themes.

Sub-Theme 2.1: Expressing Emotion With Course Materials

Three of the participants, Julia, Lindsey, and Claire, shared experiences that evoked
emotions when they talked about course materials. While the emotions for each one was
different, the emotions rose from recalling their experience. Julia recalled a time during a
classroom conversation around a reading for the class where she was reminded of previous
difficult interactions. She explained her experience in the following passage:

> And honestly, that conversation was really hard for me, because it reminded me of some
> of my interactions with some people. But I saw myself in that a lot when it came to
> everything and my identity because it was very relevant. I look at other sorts of material
> it's a little less relevant well, because sometimes it's just like basic related and techniques,
> and then others it's very psychology related, and that's when it's more. I see myself,
> especially when we're talking about like, like mental health stuff like those that have
> anxiety or depression. And I can very much look at that because I'm like, yeah, I
> experience that, too.

Her discussion and experience with the course materials brought back her past unpleasant
experiences and related unpleasant feelings.. She identified with those unpleasant feelings
through her intersection of mental health. The feeling of uneasiness at the thought of the
experience creeping into her discussion was explicit. While the conversation in class was

difficult, she understood during the interview she could relate to others sharing similar experiences.

Similarly, in the recall of past experiences and a triggering event, Lindsey provided her thoughts on course materials:

But I read the first chapter, and it was extremely triggering, because there are only there are[trying to find the words]. It was so beautifully written that I couldn't read it. It's very straightforward. She creates the scene of how she felt very well. But having experienced sexual assault, reading that was extremely difficult, because she's trying to say things that can't be said. And so, she's trying to translate how she feels into words.

Lindsey shared how she was triggered from a book that was part of a class on social justice. This experience triggered her PTSD, and while she stated that she finds the author's words beautiful, they also triggered her personal experience with sexual assault. She experienced her PTSD and her assault through the trigger of the reading. Course materials can trigger students and make them relive an experience that resurfaces the emotions of their trauma.

When Claire talked about her experience with course materials, she specifically recalled a class she had over the winter semester. She described the class as accelerated with very long readings. Her dislike and negative experience of the class were evident in her tone of voice and her description. She shared how the class lacked course materials that she identifies with and were accessible to her:

In the views of everybody in these texts, like, it was like, one like, super inaccessible. It was like I could like barely understand the language and also like, oh, like these White men like they're not thinking, and they're not writing these texts in the interest of, or even like thinking about, the existences of other experiences besides that. So, like that, I felt

like that was just like a horrible class, and it, it really made me dislike like the material

with so much intensity.

During Claire's explanation, her facial expressions and tone of voice changed. I could feel her

disgust for the readings.

The participants' emotions took different paths during the interviews, but they were

generated through their unpleasant experiences they had with course materials. Participants

understood their identities in those experiences even if they were traumatic. Their inclusion can

be through both positive and negative experiences. The following section reveals their positive

feelings of inclusion through their experiences with course materials.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Feeling Inclusion in Course Materials

All seven participants provided details about how they felt included in course materials.

While each participant's experience is unique, they are similar in a few ways. Four participants

provided their experiences from the perspective of their gender or disability identities. Two

expressed their inclusion from the inclusion of other identities. And one participant discussed the

lack of inclusion of identities.

The inclusion of gender identities was revealed in the experiences of Lindsey, Max, and

Margaret. With today's political landscape, it is even more important for inclusion of gender.

Lindsey noted that "in the required readings, it does talk about gender identity and socialization"

and she sees herself included in the gender and socialization. She explained in her interview that

she was socialized as female, but she is gender fluid. For her, the socialization of identity plays a

factor in society of how her gender is perceived and expected to look. Her preference is for

sweats and bulky tops and she has no need for makeup. She is comfortable in her gender fluid

identity and appreciates the readings on this topic where she is included.

Max, who is transmasculine, found his identity in the course materials for a women and gender intro class. He says, "one of the intro classes you have to take, there's like, a class or a week focused on like intersex people, trans people, different LGBT identities and sort of like an open discussion about it." While he noted that his science classes are lacking in representation of his identity, he also found an intersection of his identity and science in a course video from his women and gender class. He explained:

> Class showed a marine science lab that was like a feminist, anti-colonialist, LGBT, like ally lab. And it was really cool to see those two fronts intersect, coming from a science class where they say, Oh, this is the historic person. And that's about it, not what current people are doing.

Max found it ironic that his identities do exist in the scientific community, but they were only presented in a women and genders course.

Conversely, Margaret found identity in the course readings for their capstone class. Margaret shared that the class was a really great one and that the progressive teacher always read about DEI. Margaret states:

> Actually, right now doing a lot of readings about identity and inclusion and privileges and we are reading stuff from a lot of authors that are I'm not sure if they're necessarily queer, but they at least talk about queerness which is still good (chuckles).

The chuckle at the end of Margaret's quote shows their nerves when talking about their identity; however, Margaret displayed some excitement when talking about the inclusion of her identity in course materials during the interview.

Including other identities in course materials was important for Xavier and Claire. Xavier expressed his thoughts:

I think something that's important to me, in feeling represented in the course materials is

even though it's not, it's not like, like directly about me, but like having a lot of like,

having readings and like media from people that aren't just like I don't know, like old

White academics in the in the field, especially for international relations. Just because I

feel like the field has kind of been biased by that perspective in a lot of ways.

This is significant to him in his field of study. The importance of being included is not about

himself, but the feeling of inclusion he feels from other marginalized groups being included. He

discusses how course materials are biased when only one group is represented.

Likewise, Claire presented her understanding of her experience with course materials in a

similar way as Xavier. She feels included when other marginalized groups are present in the

course materials. She described her thoughts as:

But I think I feel included in the sense that, like when I see I'm seeing like the spotlight

on other marginalized communities because I like, I like, like, I think Black folks,

indigenous folks, and right next they face like the brunt of systemic oppression and so

when I'm like seeing course materials that highlight those experiences, I feel included.

She felt included when other marginalized communities are represented in course materials.This

demonstrates how important diverse course materials are to her identity. This finding shows that

inclusion of one's identity can be based on the representation of other marginalized identities, so

although faculty may not be able to include course materials from every marginalized group, by

including some they increase the inclusion of all.

Although Lindsey, Max, Margaret, Xavier, and Claire felt inclusion through course

materials, MsuBandit shared a contrary experience in which he did not feel represented in his

course materials. He noted in his women and gender studies courses that "disability it's talked

about, and it's I don't want to say brush stroked, and they go into it all. But it's not, you know. It's always feminism, gender bias, racism." I sensed his frustration with the lack of inclusion, and he added:

> All of them [his classes] go into gender, all of them go into races, all of them we'll talk about African diaspora, you know. Are you old? No, they don't talk about old people. They don't talk about disabled people.

His feeling of not being included in course materials brought out his frustrations. He clearly wanted his identities to be represented in course materials. He did not see those other identities, such as Xavier and Claire noted, were important for inclusion. His experience was different. However, he was also different in his identities of physical disability and his age.

The feeling of inclusion in course materials is represented in six participants' experiences. For three participants, the inclusion of their gender in course materials made them feel they belonged. For two other participants, the marginalized identities of others in course materials gave them the feeling of inclusion. For one participant, their lack of inclusion due to age and disabilities invoked frustration. All of the participants demonstrated the need for including marginalized identities in course materials. The next section demonstrates the want of a range of marginalized voices in course materials.

Sub-Theme 2.3: Wanting Variety in Voices

The idea of wanting a variety of marginalized voices included in student course materials came through in three of the participants' interviews. As seen in sub-themes 2.1 and 2.2, Claire and Xavier were both concerned with what they called the White voices or traditional voices in course materials. Because they either had emotions about, or felt included, in course materials that represented marginalized groups, it makes sense that they would want a variety of voices in

their course materials. Claire said, "definitely wanting more perspectives making sure that there is voice and credit given to scholars who aren't like traditionally represented." Her statement "wanting more perspectives" shows she values other voices and, in turn, feels included. Similarly, Xavier said:

> Really like enjoy the class because it didn't focus on like the traditional like security folk, like security military and like drug and migration policies. And I feel like a lot of these courses are so heavily focused on like, instead focused on a lot more like environmental like, environmental internal issues, activism, and feminism.

He appreciates the voices of marginalized or non-traditional authors in his class, linking to his thoughts outlined above in sub-theme 2.2.

For Max, he valued the experience of other marginalized groups. He noted in his women and gender studies class that "they'll focus on authors like bell hooks, who is a Black woman, I'm pretty sure she was also gay." This author brings three identities into Max's experience, being a woman who is Black and gay. He appreciated being able to have this experience as he discussed:

> Because when you get authors from different identities you get to see to read about the Black experience or what like what it's like being a Black woman are things that I would have never have known about if I didn't read someone else's experience firsthand, like I would never fully understand it.

Needing the experience of other identities helps Max understand their experiences which in turn enhances his own identities. The recognition of a variety of voices in course materials serves not just one student's identity but allows for the feeling of inclusion for some students, even if their identity is not present.

Claire, Xavier, and Max want a variety of voices in their course materials as inclusion. Those voices provide the perspective of the nondominant culture as a counternarrative. Understanding the experiences of others through these course materials may be the only contact that some participants have. Contrary to this, Msubandit wants representation of his identities of age and disabilities. The desire is present and needed for course materials to link to inclusion. Similarly, the next theme describes the link that marginalized students experience between the syllabus, faculty, and the course.

Theme Three: Illustrating The Link Between Syllabus, Faculty, and Course

Illustrating the link between syllabus, faculty, and course emerged through four of the participants experiences: Claire, Margaret, Max, and Xavier. These four had experienced connections between the syllabus, faculty, and the course. The participants made meaning of the link between the syllabus as more than words on the document and what the professor did on the first day of class. They understood the link as how and what the professor said about the syllabus, as the set up for the class norms, how the classroom environment will be shaped, and whether the right names and pronouns be used. When instructors provide policies that are flexible, make the connection between the words on the syllabus and the first day of class, the syllabus becomes real to students and creates feelings of inclusion.

However, participants reported experiences in STEM courses that were not inclusive. STEM courses failed to acknowledge participants' identities, such as disability, race, and gender. The syllabus did not address the topic of gender identity, invisible disabilities, and lacked inclusion of marginalized scholars in course materials. In Larger classes, the syllabi are bare bones, with faculty spending time on content delivery versus time into a longer syllabus. Language matters, specifically inclusive language, and non-gendered language. This language

gives voice to the student with marginalized identities. Their experiences were similar and different as their identities and understanding them as included. The connections they made are provided next.

Sub-Theme 3.1: Finding Value in Syllabus Day

This sub-theme is evident in the quotes from Claire, Max, and Xavier. It was interesting that the three of them talked about the first day of class and how the professor speaks about the syllabus. Is the syllabus text believable or are they just words? Will the professor talk about the parts of the syllabus that are important to the student's identities so the students can experience actual inclusion? Claire made a connection between the text, the professor, and the course environment, "I think something that's really important is not just the written content, but how the professor talks about it on that first day, because it sets up a lot in the environment". This highlights her idea of the relationship between words and action in order to feel included in the class. It gives her the comfort in knowing that the class will be as represented in the printed words and the professor's voice, making the environment real.

Max recognized that the first day gives him information about the relationship between the syllabus and the professor. He stated:

> So, you check the syllabus for the first day class is kind of like an intro to how the class is going to go. So, I won't know what the professors like etcetera until the first day of class. So, then the first day of class I would have to see if I get called the right name and pronouns.

Max is hopeful that he will be identified correctly when gender information is shared on the syllabus, but he will not know until that first day. Claire goes on to say more about that first day as it, "sets up so many norms for the semester, like, that would change a lot about what students

can expect and how the classroom environment is going to be shaped." Claire recognized that the syllabus is the relationship between the faculty member's text and what they say in class to make her feel and understand her inclusion.

Xavier identified what he calls an important part—the intentionality of the faculty member when they review the syllabus on that first day. He also wants a relationship between the diversity and the policies the faculty provide, thereby making a connection between the words on the page and the intent of the faculty member. He gives context to the first day:

> I think they, they, they do a much better job of translating what's like the words that are said on the syllabus into the classroom, which I think is the, the more important part for me. And I think you can kind of get a sense of that like the first day when they're, they're, you know reading over the syllabus if it's just kind of feels like they're kind of just flipping through versus if they're really intentional and, and having their specifically having their policies reflect these diversity statements, because I think for me that's like the most important part, is having the policies and the atmosphere of the class reflect you know what you know the university provides for all you know of the teachers to say.

Xavier experiences the first day as important because it brings the words on the syllabus to life through the professor's acknowledgement of "this is what I mean, by the text, and will do in the course."

The shared experience of the three participants of syllabus day has meaning that is important for the link between the syllabus, faculty, and course. Words on paper exist, but will they be transferred into action? Syllabus day supplies the answer. For each of these three participants, the connection between the syllabus text, the voice of the faculty, and the course can

greatly influence their inclusion. However, there are differences between the type of course and the syllabus, and the faculty as the next theme describes.

Sub-Theme 3.2: Demonstrating Differences Between Type of Courses

This subtheme emerged in the analysis from Claire, Xavier, and Max. There were no direct questions about differences in course syllabi. Claire, Xavier, and Max brought up the differences they experienced between STEM syllabi and other disciplines. Claire noted differences based on her identities:

> I think some disciplines are more like you're going to see yourself in some disciplines more than others. If they had the same identity, they would not see themselves in like a computer science class or like a microbiology class. They would see more of themselves if they took something more of a social focus like public health or anything in the public health spheres or like social sciences.

Claire identified differences between STEM course syllabi and social science syllabi based on her identities as an Asian American woman with invisible disabilities. Through her experience, she finds herself included in the social science courses where the same experience of inclusion is not provided in STEM courses.

Likewise, Xavier found differences in his STEM and business course syllabi versus his social science courses. He thinks that the size of the class has something to do with the lack of inclusion. He makes an observation about the syllabi in STEM and business courses:

> I haven't taken any super STEM classes, I've taken like some I guess, more quantitative classes like I'm taking like a GIS course, and like some of my econ ones or business I feel like generally they're a little bit more bare bones. I know most of my econ classes, they're usually bigger, bigger classes and I feel like the instructors don't really see anyone too

much. And it's kind of just like you know, talk talking to the crowd you know unless you

know I don't think they really put too much thought into it.

Through his experiences in these courses, he found that the syllabi are basic (bare bones) and

that the professors do not really think about the syllabus. The class is too big for the faculty to

put time into the syllabus as they are just there to deliver content. The basic or bare bones

approach lacks the inclusion that he wants to feel.

The experience of a lack of LGBT identity in science class syllabi was provided by Max.

He stated:

So, for typical science classes, there is nothing much in the syllabus relating to LGBT

identities or like if you use a different name, or different pronouns, like come up to the

professors like there's none of that outlined in the syllabus.

Max takes courses in both his major, marine science, and his two minors—women and gender

studies and biology. He has experienced the lack of his identity of a transmasculine individual in

his science courses and noted the difference in his quote. It relates to the bare bones syllabi in

science that Xavier spoke about and the type of what kind of course that Claire has experienced.

The differences experienced between courses are evident in the participants' meaning-

making as they experienced that STEM courses are bare-bones, lack inclusion of marginalized

identities, and representation of other genders than the traditional binary. The participants found

themselves not included in STEM syllabi and felt like they do not belong in the discipline. This

lack of belonging and inclusion creates feelings of imposter syndrome for participants.

Consequently, language choice in syllabi matters and the participants reveal their experiences in

the following theme.

Sub-Theme 3.3: Revealing that Language Matters

Three participants revealed through the analysis that language matters. Margaret, Max, and Claire described the value of language in a syllabus. In Margaret's experience the language for inclusion is found in the certain types of courses and with certain professors. They explain their experience as follows:

There are certain teachers who make more of an effort to use inclusive language and to kind of make sure that everybody in the classroom knows that they want to be inclusive, and that they want people to see them as somebody who's accepting and honestly I think part of that is just we have really great teachers in our program here that are really willing to be inclusive and make sure that we are comfortable and successful.

In Margaret's experience, it is the individual faculty member who chooses to use inclusive language if they want to be accepting and inclusive. The use of inclusive language makes Margaret feel comfortable and successful, as well as included. When they described their ideal syllabus, Margaret said, "I think the first thing I would do is make sure that I'm using inclusive language so no gendered language." Using inclusive language was crucial to Margaret's identity and feeling included.

Similarly, Claire sees herself based on the language in the course syllabi. She explains that her experiences with syllabi in the social science and humanities as giving her, her voice:

I definitely see myself in a lot in syllabi and in classes, and I have, you know I have I know I have a voice, and I know I have the stakes in my classes, so like it's a lot easier for me to be the student that raises their hand a lot, has like things to say.

For Claire, seeing herself in the syllabus makes her feel included, allowing her to use her voice and participate in the class. Language matters and is evident in Claire's experiences.

Max, too, values the use of inclusive language. He acknowledged the use of inclusive language by faculty in the classroom. He stated:

> So, most of the time, the professors were accommodating, very nice. All women gender studies professors, on the first day of class, will ask for names, pronouns, and any other information about you. There have been a couple of professors in other departments that don't see that, or I don't feel comfortable sharing that with.

Max is comfortable in his women and gender studies classes as faculty use inclusive language in their syllabi and the classroom. His experiences in the science courses are different, and he does not feel safe sharing his identities in the sciences.

Language matters and that language makes or breaks the inclusion felt by participants with marginalized identities. Inclusive language allows students to feel comfortable, successful, and included. Non-gendered language provides the feeling of being safe and included for nonbinary students. Language can also give students their voice in the classroom while feeling inclusion. Subsequently, that voice can be shared in creating equitable partnerships as identified in the next theme.

Theme Four: Creating Equitable Partnerships

Theme four evolved from two of the participants' strong views on the meaning of education. Participants discussed ideas of learning versus performing and shared ownership of knowledge that were related to the value of equity of learning and collaboration. This theme developed from participants' experiences with a performance grading policy and traditional White scholars. The traditional grading practices made the participants feel like they were performing for a grade and following the rules. These participants want to learn, rather than perform, and found inclusion in labor-based grading and flexible policies that valued learning.

Sharing one's experiences enhances both teaching and learning. The experiences and perspectives of others in the classroom adds the lived experience content to the course. Through this practice, the inclusion of other identities is created.

Sub-Theme 4.1: Valuing Learning Versus Performing

An interesting sub-theme that came about in the analysis describes the purpose of education as learning. Claire and Xavier are students who do well in their courses. They presented two similar ideas of learning versus performing. Claire appreciated a faculty member who used labor-based grading in one of her courses. She shared, "what the focus would be on like learning, whereas, like you know with like the labor-based professor." Claire values learning and shared the difference in what she calls traditional classes, "because traditional reading is like students then think like what do I do? How do I phrase my content so that the professor will like it?" This she feels is performing for a grade, "catering your content to what you think the professor wants and I like wouldn't want that." Claire values learning through labor-based grading versus traditional grading. She feels inclusion in the learning that she does not experience in traditional courses.

Xavier also acknowledged experiences of learning versus performing. He referenced a time when class policies were uncompromising and had no flexibility during the pandemic. He stated about the policies, "it felt like it wasn't even like the goal of the class wasn't even to like, have us like learn it was just to see if you could follow rules." In his experience, he did not experience himself as a student but as a rule follower. When he was forced to follow rules, the focus of the course was not about learning, as he hoped. He goes on to explain another time when he faced a similar situation. He said:

I just think that it makes for a very very sterile and it's like it's very uncompromising learning environment that doesn't feel like it feels like you're just going to do it you're just doing it for a grade instead of actually learning the content and to yeah and yeah and it kind of makes me wonder like what's the point.

For Xavier, he feels the policy, in these case assignments, is about performing making sure he does not miss deadlines as this is the most important part of the assignment. The point for him is he wants to learn, and the policy makes him feel he has to perform by getting assignments in by the deadline. There is no compromising by the professor in the deadline, so why do it at all if this is all it is about following rules.

The value in learning versus performing for a grade as experienced by Claire and Xavier reveals that students want to learn. They recognize their identities in their learning and want to be included in the learning process. Rules restrict the learning process and create a sterile learning environment, which is not conducive to learning, whereas the shared process of labor-based grading gives value to learning. In the same way, shared ownership of knowledge reveals the learning value in the next theme.

Sub-Theme 4.2: Shared Ownership of Knowledge

This sub-theme arose from two students, Claire and Xavier. Their experiences highlight the importance of the sharing of the ownership of knowledge in the classroom. Their experiences show a value in using the experiences of other students as making the learning better. Claire approached this theme from the perspective of shared teaching and feeling ownership of the knowledge as it has value. Value in learning and value in teaching. She said:

I want it to be clear that like like teaching should be kind of like level, like the professor, you know, might have like the lectures but the students also bring so much valuable

knowledge in terms of like lived experiences, and that there is teaching. I would want, you know, students to feel ownership over the knowledge and the experiences and the perspectives they have to share, and for that to be valued and treated as knowledge has value.

Claire understands the experiences that each student brings to class have value to the course and the content. She has experienced this in some of her courses and would like more of this to occur as her identities are included through other identities. The students become co-creators of knowledge in courses.

Similarly, Xavier revealed that there is more in the sharing of peoples' experiences than can be provided in reading the content. He stated, "you know, provide, you know, so much more than just simply like reading the content." He values learning through the experiences of other students. He goes on to say:

I really like learning about different people's experiences, and I think letting students and encouraging students to draw upon their you know their backgrounds and what they've grown up with and tied it you know what we're learning.

Xavier provided an example from one of his courses where the professor encouraged the sharing of experiences:

I want you guys to draw from your different backgrounds and experiences, to be able to contribute to class and to sort of create an enriching environment from learning. So, I really like that, just you know. As I said earlier, I really like learning about different people's, experiences.

In Xavier's quotes, there is the inclusion of identities and learning from others' experiences. As he said, "better that reading a book." Students value the lived experiences of other students and find their identities in this inclusion.

Claire and Xavier demonstrate the value of lived experiences as a counternarrative to the traditional readings. They find inclusion in these counternarratives as a shared ownership of knowledge. The value that each individual brings into the classroom from their lived experience makes for inclusion. Therefore, solutions for their identities for inclusion are needed and provided in the next theme.

Theme Five: Suggesting Solutions for Identities

Through the analysis of all the PETs, looking for the commonality of participants' experiences, the ideas of the participants' thoughts on ways to feel included emerged. While there are similar thoughts, there are also different ideas based on the participant's meaning-making of their identity in syllabi. While some suggestions are mentioned in prior themes, the suggestions in this theme are explicit based on the participants' experiences and the meaning they made from their identities.

The idea of easy fixes arose from the participants' experiences as easy to implement. Their "easy" came in the form of their identities and needing inclusion. Through their experiences they recommended the following for inclusion adding chosen name, non-gendered language, asking for personal pronouns, removing stereotyping, adding mental health, and creating a visually appealing syllabus. Their ideas represent inclusive pedagogy and universal design for learning (UDL). Participants revealed the need for safe spaces for students who identity as LGBTQAI+. Participant's' experiences through their LGBTQAI+ identities recommend safe space through Safe Zone Training statements on syllabi. Another addition for

the syllabus is the wording that the classroom is a safe space and there are consequences of violating that safe space. For students with LGBTQAI+ identities, their inclusion is felt in these Safe Zone and syllabi statements. Participants who have PTSD want a trigger warning statement so they experience inclusion and the comfort in the classroom.

The participants, through their identities, value flexibility in policies. Through their experiences, they found the inflexibility caused them harm. Their solutions reflect their identities and what they believe would be inclusive, such as allowing flexibility in late policies to alleviate stress, recognizing the current state of the world and how it affects students, eliminating absence policies and addressing lateness in flexible assignments, and eliminating punitiveness in policies. A In addition, addressing inclusion involves creating accommodations. This concept emerged during the interpretation of two participants' experiences and their disability identities. The idea the participants communicated is faculty offering to accommodate students on the basis of their identities, without the stress of completing the necessary documentation. As an alternative, faculty need to provide the process and what is needed in acquiring accommodations. Faculty should work with the Accessibility and Disability Services offices to develop the needed documentation. Through their experiences of their marginalized identities, participants reveal the need for communication by and with faculty. A statement with the ways to contact the faculty member and the hours the faculty are open to communication would address participants' identities. Where having conversations with students before and after class, and talking about how they are doing would help others. The participants value communication based on their identities. These five sub-themes that emerged are presented in the next sections.

Sub-Theme 5.1: Providing Easy Fixes to Policies

Five of the participants had ideas based on their experiences of ways to change policies and the syllabus in general. The easy fix emerged with comments such as Max noted, "Oh, if you have a different name, let me know. Like that be the easiest way to put it on the syllabus. But nobody, nobody does that." I sensed Max's frustration with the end of the quote; however, he provides an idea to make him feel included in the syllabus. Where Margaret felt ideas about language and gender, they said, "I think the first thing I would do is make sure that I'm using inclusive language. So, no gendered language." For Margaret, the importance of non-gendered language was evident throughout their interview. Their need for full inclusion came through in the idea about inclusive language, "using gender neutral pronouns and not stereotyping. You're making assumptions about students [if they do not use]." Margaret's connection to Max's experience is in gender neutral language. This language keeps faculty from making assumptions about students. The use of gender inclusive language gives meaning to Margaret and Max as included, in the class. Max went on to add:

> I think a very easy way to include people who go by other names or use different identifying words you can just put a line in the syllabus saying hey if you have the wrong name on [the course management] system or your e-mail let me know. And we can like use full use the correct name and pronouns.

Max, through his experiences of having his dead name used, values the addition to the syllabus so that others do not have the same experience he had with his dead name.

Claire added to this conversation, her feeling of inclusion when there is inclusion of other marginalized communities. She said:

> There's like some class I have a section with names/pronouns and self-identification. So, I enjoy seeing that like I identify as like a cisgender woman, but I like think a lot and I worry a lot about like the folks in my class that don't have to identify that way have different pronouns, and I worry a lot about them being misgendered so like just seeing that it's like very reassuring fact.

Claire's experience with a syllabus that included name/pronouns and self-identification created an atmosphere of inclusion for her even though she identifies as a cisgender woman. The participants demonstrated their experiences and how the additions of names/pronouns and inclusive language creates inclusion, especially for students who identify as a non-binary gender or who have transferred gender.

Lindsey provided a different experience based on her mental health. Her experience with deadlines for assignments caused her anguish. She addressed this in the following:

> If I had to make a wish, I would say, I wish that mental health was included, because I can't always do your paper by the due date. I could but the amount of stress that causes me isn't fair.

Her wish comes from her experiences that created stress due to not meeting deadlines for assignments. However, she did discuss the need for structure during the interview. Because of her ADHD there is a conflict in having flexible deadlines and not having structure.

Julia has a disability with her vision. She describes it as low vision which affects her ability to see and read. When Julia discussed how she would design an ideal syllabus, she took into account her experiences of low vision and the syllabus. She said, "Design a syllabus that would help with that, whether that may be make a little bit more lists, less words, and more images. More images I'm like I don't know something that's a bit more friendlier to the eye." She

develops her thoughts from her experiences and the lack of inclusion in syllabi. Her need for more images helps her low vision and is easier to read than a wall of text. A syllabus that addresses Julia's vision needs makes her feel included.

All five participants described their experiences and how they want to be included in the syllabus. Inclusion comes through acknowledgement of gender identity with preferred name/pronouns, non-gendered language, policies that help address mental health, and the visual design that addresses vision issues. The participants' experiences give evidence to the inclusion of these items in a syllabus helps to provide inclusion regardless of the student's identities. Likewise, safe spaces are added to inclusion and are presented in the next section. Sub-Theme 5.2: Creating Safe Spaces

Feeling safe is a sub-theme that emerged from four of the participants. Three of the participants, Max, Lindsey, and Julia, expressed that safe space is needed for their gender identities. Max and Lindsey talked about Safe Zone, which is a training that faculty can attend and become allies for students who identify as LGBTQAI+. Max felt, "if they [faculty] are like safe zone trained should include that on their syllabus like that would be really great quick great indicator to show students that this is a safe space." IMax who identifies as transmasc, this acknowledgement on the syllabus would bring more feelings of safety in the class and with the professor. Likewise, Lindsey noted that syllabi do not include information about a safe space. She said, "sometimes professors will have these like this is a safe place, or like I'm a safe person like placard or sticker, little poster thing on their doors, so you know." Lindsey, who identifies as gender-fluid, values spaces where she can feel safe in her identity. An inclusion of the sticker or image on the syllabus would provide the message of a safe space.

Julia identifies as bisexual, and her experiences of safe spaces lead to this passage:

It would be also helpful to tell students, like so it's not implied like, like you know, the classroom is a safe space if you, like I, identify as bisexual, I don't talk about it in class. It doesn't really come up. That's probably why. But it's also like that kind of feel like, well there could be people that might say things and in the syllabus it doesn't say like OK well if someone's done something bad to you what do you do?

Julia's experience was the lack of feeling safe because of her identity. She does not know what to do as there is nothing in the syllabus that addresses this issue. Having the safe space brings her identity into protection. Lindsey and Julia discussed ideas around their identities of PTSD. They both said a warning should be included on the syllabus. Lindsey said, "she [instructor] does a good job of keeping the classroom a safe place with unsafe topics. But in reference to syllabi, I think it should be on the front page like a trigger warning." Her mention of this warning is from her experience of being triggered by a book that she had to read for class. For her, the trigger warning would have helped with her PTSD before she read the book. She experienced the lack of her identity in the syllabus for PTSD and a trigger waring would help.

Similarly, Julia expressed feelings about being able to escape the classroom. While Julia identified with PTSD, she did not reveal what caused hers. She addressed the trigger warning from the perspective of having class discussions that might trigger a person. She said:

It would be nice to put like an escape option if one would get overwhelmed or triggered by any conversations that are being talked about in class rather than the student having to ask for that. Like hey, I just need to step out of the class because I'm being triggered. You know it's a lot more intimidating to have to do that especially when you're already feeling anxious. But to know that ahead of time if something like that could happen you could just walk out with having to say anything.

She described her asking to leave the classroom as adding to anxiety. Julia suffers from anxiety, and she made meaning of her experience in the classroom with discussions that triggered her PTSD. For her then having a trigger warning would relieve her anxiety and feel inclusion in the syllabus. Xavier experienced a safe learning environment through one of his classes. He notes, "my one of my teachers of color, so, I think you know in particular he had like a good handle on you know how to create like this create like a very safe learning environment." Xavier experienced the safe learning environment through a personal paragraph that a faculty member had in the syllabus. The information included consequences for opinions and behaviors. Xavier said:

> How we don't condone it in class, call the person in instead of calling them out. I really like that distinction to be able to call somebody in and then say why you know what they said you know felt maybe disrespectful or maybe, maybe like belittling, or something in and allow them to understand it in a in a constructive manner.

Xavier felt inclusion with a safe space policy that does not harm an individual but rather helps the conversation around opinions and behaviors that might cause harm. He connected this policy to the race of the instructor and the instructor's experience as a person of color. I felt that it brought comfort to Xavier and his identity of a mixed-race male..

Creating safe spaces for inclusion of identities comes in different formats. One is an acknowledgement on the syllabus for Safe Zone training for the inclusion of LGBTQAI+ student, another is having the safe space in the syllabus for how to handle those who might harm students with marginalized identities. A third brings in the way to include those who make mistakes as a teachable moment. Students with marginalized identities feel inclusion when

safe spaces are provided. In the same way, having flexibility in policies makes marginalized

students feel included and is discussed in the next section.

Sub-Theme 5.3: Valuing Flexibility in Policies

The idea of flexibility was evident in the analysis of six of the participant interviews. The words

flexible and inflexible, or ideas that demonstrated flexibility, were evident in the participants'

quotes.. The value of the idea of flexibility is given in the context of the identities of the

participants. Lindsey had another wish, "I wish a lot of it was given more options. Not so set in

stone. Flexibility I wish flexibility was mentioned in those [policies] in the syllabus." Her

identities of ADHD and anxiety, and her experience with inflexible policies, she realized that she

needs flexibility for inclusion. She also does not like the idea, "that syllabi should be so standard.

I think that it should your class or class should be required to be more flexible for the people that

aren't straight for a play on words there." Lindsey is referencing both her disabilities and gender

in this experience. Straight refers to both her gender and mental health. She furthers her thoughts

by adding another experience where she found relief as she describes below:

> The professor whose policy was before the due date you have 4 hours before it's turned in
>
> to tell me you need an extension, and I will give you whatever extension you want. Her
>
> rule was as long as your assignment is turned in before I have to turn in grades you can
>
> receive full credit. That's magical!

Her exclamation, "that's magical" speaks about her desires of inclusion with her needing

structure but also flexibility.

Similarly, Xavier references the bigger issues of the world and how this affects students.

He notes, "Something that I appreciate a lot in syllabi are instructors that are kind are able to

kind of realize or acknowledge the context of the world we're living in today and adjust their

policies around those expectations." His thought's came from his experience during Covid with a professor who was inflexible. Xavier paid the price during the pandemic and the added stress it caused him during a very stressful time. He draws from this to give an example of another professor with a different outlook who made him feel included:

> And he was very flexible about, flexible about, you know, turning in things late and emailing for extensions, and like generally like wanting to engage and meet with the students and asking for feedback. And I just thought that's like this is like kind of how like education should be like higher education should, should operate instead of just like you know, like trying to like, fail people out.

He explains an experience where he felt engaged in the course, feeling that this is what education should be and is all about. He ties the "fail people out" to his experience in other classes with other polices that were inflexible. He wants to feel included in his education and flexible policies can be accomplish the inclusion..

Margaret offers what they feel is a better way for inclusion. Their experiences with late policies have generated ideas of how to make this better for marginalized identities. They offer the following:

> I would probably not have an absence policy. I know that a lot of professors feel strongly that having some kind of absence policy is important. But I don't, I don't know. I just don't think it's super helpful. So, I probably would just do it within the late work policies. I'll probably have something like generally comment, if you come to me and explain why your work is late or why your work is going to be late. I you know will accept it up to a certain point.

Margaret provides solutions that work for their disability identities. It is flexible because of conversations with the professor and removes the threat of absence, and the harm of anxiety.

Flexibility for MsuBandit comes in the inclusion of his identities and giving more details. He needs flexibility due to his health issues and age-related problems. He said, "I think every professor needs to go into detail how they want to handle disabled, the aged, or others within the class." He wants faculty to give details and address being flexible with disability, age, and other identities in the class. He has experienced policies where he has to ask for the flexibility and accommodation.. With the details of flexibility in the policy, it alleviates the having to ask and reduces his stress.

Claire noted inflexible policies, "when late policies are like very like, punitive, and very like inflexible like I, I just, I hate that because I struggle so much with deadlines." Her experience of inflexibility makes the policy feel punitive and makes her feel a loss of inclusion. Having flexibility would remove that feeling and her struggle with deadlines due to her ADHD..

All five participants have experienced inflexible policies that did not meet their needs and identities. Having flexibility built into policies creates a more inclusive environment. It also relieves mental anguish and makes students feel included. Additionally, making accommodations that are actually accommodating adds to inclusion and is presented in the next section.

Sub-Theme 5.4: Making Accommodating Accommodations

This sub-theme emerged from four of the participants who have disabilities. Each participant has experienced the exclusion of their disabilities in policies in the syllabus. Lindsey strongly stated, "the fact that there is a set of rules to be disabled I think having those is kind of insulting to people. Like I said, not all disabilities are visible as the saying goes." She experienced anger and frustration in the telling of her experience. Her explanation as a "set of

rules" hits hard and makes the question, "why is there a set of rules that demonstrate an equity issue?" She goes on to say:

> Well, I know I'm marginalized, and I experienced this, and I won't ask for help. I don't
> have accommodations because no one told me to go get them. Like any policies that
> makes me stuck in my marginalization without being able they are equal but not
> equitable.

Lindsey has made a powerful meaning in her two quotes. The fact that she "knows" she is excluded and the knowledge that she hasn't sought help speaks clearly about her experiences as a lack of inclusion. She also feels trapped in her identities due to the policies that govern her condition as a person with disabilities. She is a student with invisible disabilities who must adhere to rules that apply to only students with disabilities. In essence, it is a sensation of otherness, which she believes is inequitable.

Like Lindsey's experiences, MsuBandit notes, "the information that you don't get from the syllabus, so it says go to the ADS office, but it doesn't give you specifics on how to deal with the ADS office." Both MsuBandit and Lindsey feel stuck in their disability identities because they did not receive directions for accommodations. The experience of ageism MsuBandit explains as:

> I don't know what to say there's harm in it or that there is no harm. I just don't think, I
> think their [faculty] thoughts of ADS and disabilities for the most part is dealing with 18-,
> 19-, and 20-year-olds, not with the aged you know. They don't have those; they haven't
> dealt with aged for the most case.

His experiences have been with faculty thinking he is here to take a class and not to complete a degree. He expresses the faculty inexperience with the aged make faculty think he is not a

serious student. Where faculty think because of his age he needs accommodations. This has created the feeling that he is not included. He felt it was a simple solution to be more accommodating as he expressed, "plain and simple I mean, it's none of the syllabus have anything as a volunteer of any accommodations." He described accommodations could be achieved by faculty volunteering accommodations in their policy and having conversations with the student about their needs. Lindsey and MsuBandit suffered mental anguish through the lack of accommodations. As they described, there are rules to be disabled, and no one really gives you the rules. Relief for their mental anguish is a statement that the faculty will accommodate students regardless of the paperwork or provide the process to receive accommodations . As a result, Lindsey and MsuBandit will feel included. As a link to these ideas communication, that is needed from and by faculty is discussed in the next section.

Sub-Theme 5.5: Wanting Communication By and With Faculty

The participants expressed communication by and with faculty as a way to address their identities. Five of the participants provided their experiences and the meaning they made through the experience to demonstrate the need for communication. The idea of a personal statement by the faculty was inferred in four of the participants experiences. Margaret, Lindsey, Claire, and Julia gave specific details they felt would address their accommodations of their disabilities. Margaret wants information from the professor and about the professor, "I would probably add and a bit about myself and how I want to support people…That would be pretty clear about the fact that they can always contact me if anything comes up." She values the faculty supporting her and wanting to accommodate her through conversations as an open line of communication. Likewise, Lindsey wants the same line of open communications in syllabi statements:

Honestly, if they just put something in there that said, if you have any questions about anything or any sensitive information, you need to let me know about, my DMS are open as the saying now, but like you can always e-mail me here or I'm open to this conversation. I wish in the syllabi it was stated that they were open to discuss different identities with you or discuss your experience.

The feeling of being able to communicate with the faculty by the statements in the syllabus gives Lindsey a sense of comfort and inclusion. She is a complex individual who needs this support through communication.

Claire wanted information and conversation from the professor about students who may need support but might be unaware that they have an undiagnosed disability. She said, "I really wish that there were more conversation about, like I don't know exactly how to phrase this, but I would want some recognition for students who probably have disabilities and just don't know that they have one." She recognizes a need to support students with disabilities as more than a statement in the syllabus:

If it's just in the syllabus that's just like you know talk, but it sets up a lot in terms of like the mental like comfort and mental reassurance that, like students with disabilities can and like, can, and are encouraged to thrive, and will be accommodated like.

Her experience with an undiagnosed disability provides solutions for others who may have similar experiences. So, for Claire, the open line of communication is not just words on a syllabus; it is also the action by the professor. Accommodating her needs even though she does not know she has a disability. Where Julia sees the line of communication as how she can reach the professor. She wants communication with the professor to get answers for questions she may have about the syllabus. She states:

I'm speaking to like a little bit of my accommodation it's so it has like how I can reach

the professor, how I can ask questions when it comes to the course syllabi or

assignments, how you can meet with the professor that sort of thing.

In Julia's case, it is the contact information and availability of the professor that she needs for

inclusion. She also feels the responsibility is on her to make the contact with the professor

providing the ways and times. With the contact information her responsibility becomes less

stressful.

A different perspective was offered by MsuBandit. He has experienced a lack of

communication with faculty after they received his accommodations email. He stated that on

average only one or two talk with him per semester. His frustration came through in the

following:

Very few actually talk to me I can only think of two who's ever had a meeting with me

about it and maybe another one per semester who'll actually talk to me before and after

class and asked the situation what's my situation? How am I handling it? How is this

working? And you know actually show that kind of concern at all.

His frustration is the faculty's lack of acknowledgement after receiving his accommodation

email. He wants to feel inclusion through conversation with the faculty. While he knows faculty

cannot ask him about his accommodations, he wants them to not be in the dark about his

disability. The expression of, "it is just not a cheap trick or I'm not an old man trying to come

back to school and be a 20-year-old" shows his concern to be taken seriously, and this can only

be done through conversations. As he concluded, the more people know the more they can

accommodate.

The faculty personal statement can address the way and how of communication with students. The statement would help relieve the anguish experienced by the participants and create an open line of communication. The addition of the statement of support for students who may not be aware of their undiagnosed disabilities is another item to include in the statement as it can help mental health. Conversations before and after class with students helps the students. Students will feel inclusion when these conversations take place, and it helps to reduce their frustration. This sub-theme with all the other themes and sub-themes answers the research questions that are discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings to address the guiding research questions for the study: how do marginalized students perceive themselves as included in syllabi, and how do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality. The findings also address the purpose of this study, to investigate how marginalized students experience themselves as included in syllabi and their meaning-making of their experience with syllabi. The five group experiential themes emerged from the data: Expressing feelings from syllabi policies; Centering identities and course materials; Illustrating the link between syllabus, faculty, and course; Creating equitable partnership; and Suggesting solutions for identities. Rich, detailed descriptions from each participant were utilized throughout the presentation of data to convey the details of converging and divergent themes. All group experiential themes represent the underlying convergent themes of all seven participants, while their divergent themes are highlighted throughout. Rich descriptions, including several quotations and examples from each participant, provided a view and journey into the intricacies of the individuals' lives within each participant's experience.

Table 4.1

Participant Data Supporting Superordinate Themes

	Sub-Theme Title	Number of Participants
Theme One: Expressing Feelings From Syllabi Policies		
Sub-Theme 1.1	Frustration From Lack of Inclusion	7 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 1.2	Uncovering the Negative Effect on Their Well-being	7 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 1.3	Recognizing the Positive Effect on Their Wellbeing	3 out of 7 participants
Theme Two: Centering Identities in Course Materials		
Sub-Theme 2.1	Expressing Emotion with Course Materials	3 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 2.2	Feeling Inclusion in Course Material	7 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 2.3	Wanting Variety in Voices	3 out of 7 participants
Theme Three: Illustrating the Link Between Syllabus, Faculty, and Course		
Sub-Theme 3.1	Finding Value in Syllabus Day	3 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 3.2	Demonstrating Between Types of Courses	3 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 3.3	Revealing that Language Matters	3 out of 7 participants
Theme Four: Creating Equitable Partnerships		
Sub-Theme 4.1	Valuing Learning Versus Performing	2 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 4.2	Shared Ownership of Knowledge	2 out of 7 participants
Theme Five: Suggesting Solutions for Identities		
Sub-Theme 5.1	Providing Easy Fixes to Policies	5 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 5.2	Creating Safe Spaces	3 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 5.3	Valuing Flexibility in Policies	6 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 5.4	Making Accommodating Accommodations	4 out of 7 participants
Sub-Theme 5.5	Wanting Communication by and with Faculty	5 out of 7 participants

Note. The five themes and their sub-themes are listed along with the number of participants whose understanding or meaning-making participated in the theme.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study investigated how marginalized students experience themselves as included in syllabi and their meaning-making of those experiences. The research addresses the problem of the lack of inclusion of marginalized student voices with their experience with syllabi. This study fills a gap in the literature due to the changing demographics of higher education students, the lack of faculty who represent these students, and the absence of syllabi studies that include the marginalized student voice.

The primary research questions for this study were the following: how do marginalized students understand themselves included in syllabi and how do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality? I selected the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology to study the phenomenon of how marginalized students find themselves included in syllabi. IPA provided an in-depth analysis of each participant (idiographic) and then afforded the convergence and divergence of experiences among the participants. IPA also gives voice to marginalized students to give a counternarrative to the systems of power. Seven participants were third- or fourth-year undergraduate students with marginalized identities. The participants came from four different universities from the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern regions. Two universities were public and the other two were private. The marginalized identities sought for this study included race, low socioeconomic status (SES), LGBTQAI+, and those with disabilities. Their intersecting identities were used in what?. Using an intersectional perspective gives the ability to understand the narratives of the participants and the connection between the systems of power and privilege in the syllabus (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Seven individual recorded interviews were collected, supplying the data. The in-depth analysis of each participant, followed by convergence and divergence of

the idiographic nature of experiences, produced the findings. These findings of five themes with sub-themes are contextualized within the participants' experiences in different courses and different majors.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the research study. Beginning with a review of the study's purpose, then a summary of the results, and a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions. In this chapter, these findings will be discussed within the context of the literature. Next are the study's limitations, findings' implications, recommendations, and chapter summary. From this discussion, a deeper understanding and exploration of the participants' narratives are understood. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to situate the study and findings. The interpretation of the themes is presented in the discussion in relationship to the literature and the study's conceptual framework. The quotes and meaning-making of participants are presented in context and supported by the literature.

Summary of Findings

The study examined how marginalized students find themselves included in syllabi through an IPA methodology. Seven participants provided their understanding of their inclusion and meaning-making of the experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality. This section is a summary of the findings' relationship to the research questions that directed the focus of the study. Each research question is presented with answers from the study.

Research Question 1: How do marginalized students understand themselves as included in the syllabi? The seven marginalized participants in this study expressed the ways they understand themselves included in syllabi through four emergent themes: *Expressing feelings from syllabi policies*; *Centering identities in course materials*; *Illustrating the link between syllabus, faculty, and course*; and *Creating equitable partnerships*. The participants understood

their lack of inclusion based on their marginalization. Policies did not provide inclusion due to their punitive nature, lack of flexibility, did not include LGBTQAI+ identities, and contributed to loss of control. The loss of control is a lack of agency for the student and is linked to the emotions experienced in academic situations, as described by Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory. Course materials provided inclusion by understanding that their identities were present or other marginalized identities were present, and participants recognized they wanted more marginalized voices in their courses. The connection between the syllabus, faculty, the course through syllabus day, differences in STEM courses, and that language matters helped them to understand their inclusion. The value in equitable partnerships was revealed as respecting of learning versus the performance for a grade and sharing the knowledge in the classroom a being a counternarrative to the dominant voice. Question one was answered through these themes and the understanding of the participants' inclusion.

Research Question 2: How do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality? The seven marginalized participants in this study made meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersecting identities in syllabi through three emergent themes *Expressing feelings from syllabi policies*; *Centering identities in course materials*; *and Suggesting solutions for identities*. The participants expressed the negative and positive effects on their well-being as they made meaning of their experiences. Fear, stress, and a negative effect on physical health were experienced through their disabilities. The emotions expressed through their meaning-making of experiences ranged from being upset, recalling a traumatic event, to an intense dislike for a course. Because of their experiences and the meaning they made from them, participants offered solutions for their identities. Their ideas were easy fixes to policies by creating safe spaces for gender, trigger events, and calling people

in. Providing flexibility in policies that help their disability identities and the general climate in the world would add to their inclusion. Students suggested that faculty may help students with marginalized identities without following a formal procedure. This strategy would assist in easing a student's stress and frustration. It would be accommodating without the formal accommodation. Communication with and by faculty would address their identities through clear understandings, concern about their well-being, and provide the environment that they require. Question two was answered through these themes and participants experiences.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Questions, Literature, and Conceptual Framework

Chapter 4 presented the study's findings through the five themes. The sub-themes were presented within each theme as they emerged from the data analysis. Quotes were provided from the participant's semi-structured interviews. Through the quotes and analysis, the themes' relevance are supported and demonstrates the consistency of the data. In the following sections, each research question is answered in greater depth through the themes and sub-themes, which elaborate on the meaning in relation to the participants' lived experiences, its connection to relevant literature, and its alignment with the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1. This IPA study's conceptual framework includes three complementary theories: interpretivism, critical race theory (CRT), and intersectionality. Interpretivism provided a lens through which to make sense of and interpret the participant's experience (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). CRT tenets provided another lens through which to value the lived experience of each participant as a counternarrative and identify the systems that continue to marginalize these students (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018). Understanding that there is no single identity and that identities cross in every experience was made visible through intersectionality (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks,

2014). The systems of oppression were revealed through the participants intersecting identities (Zambrana & McDonald, 2009). Thus, the purpose of this study was to give voice to the lived experiences of marginalized students, using interpretative phenomenological analysis. As a result of the findings the research brought forward the lived experiences and the meaning-making of the seven participants in the study.

Research Question One

The following themes and subthemes answer research question one: How do marginalized students understand themselves as included in syllabi?

Theme One: Expressing Feelings from Syllabi Policies

This theme emerged in the participants' expression of their feelings about syllabi policies. Every participant expressed their understanding of their experiences of syllabi polices, from feelings of frustration of the lack of inclusion in policies, to positive experiences with policies. Research question one is answered by sub-theme 1.1.

Participants understood they were not included as *frustration from the lack of inclusion.* The emergence of this sub-theme came from the lived experiences of frustration with policies. Their frustration arose from their absence of inclusion in the policies and in the way the lack of inclusion affected them. These feelings manifested through their understanding of their marginalization and the system of oppression that brought on the feelings. Feelings such as frustration are supported by other research such as Jury et al. (2017) whose study found that marginalized students feel psychological barriers that create emotional distress. The participants of this study expressed feelings that included frustration, anger, marginalization, "disclusion", punitive punishment, fear, burdened, and empathy, from the psychological barriers brought on by the policies. Their lack of inclusion came in the form of policies not incorporating their

marginalized identities and not meeting their needs within the policies. The marginalized

identities not considered by syllabus policies for participants included mental health, physical

health, ADHD, age, disability, LGBTQAI+, and empathy for the lack of including people of

color. The policies then are part of a system of privilege and oppression (Duran, 2019). Privilege,

in that students who do not have the identities of the participants have the privilege to interact

with the policies without psychological barriers. Whereas oppression is highlighted in that the

participants are further marginalized based on their identities. In essence they understood

themselves as not included through their marginalized identities and through systems of

oppression (Duran, 2019).

Claire and Lindsey identify as having ADHD with Claire identifying as an Asian

American and Lindsey as low SES. In Lindsey and Claire's experiences, they make meaning of

the late policy for class work as strict and punitive. Punitive is inflicting or intended as a

punishment and this finding coincides with the Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2014) study, where

syllabi shifted from an informational document toward being punitive and consequential. The

late policy becomes punitive justice, a belief that punishment can change one's behavior as

participants expressed the late work policy does not consider their mental health or invisible

disability. Claire and Lindsey suffer not because their work is late but from a policy that does not

consider their disability when they are not capable of making a deadline. The strict late work

policy works from a deficit model rather than from the student's strengths (Valencia, 2010) and

further adds to their feelings of marginalization. As Claire said, "I've experienced like

marginalization in the syllabus. Oh, my gosh! I think it's like particularly like I think it's like

when late policies are like very like punitive and very like inflexible." Because of Claire's

ADHD she struggles with deadlines. Lindsey's experience acknowledges her professor for

having deadlines in a late policy, but at the same time no mention of mental health. Lindsey demonstrates she must choose between being alive and going to class, "because to me going to class some days feels like that." She is punished because the policy does not consider her mental health.

Both Claire and Lindsey suffer from anxiety. Anxiety is a repeating theme as found in the Clouder et al., (2020) study for students with ADHD. The anxiety is real, and students carry it through the emotional, social, and academic spaces of their education, in addition to their learning difficulties and mental health. Students with neurodiversity procrastinate, struggle with attention and concentration, have poor time management, and fail to finish course work on time, all of which contributes to their anxiety (Clouder et al., 2020; Couzens et al., 2015; Sarrett, 2018) For Claire and Lindsey, the syllabus policies they experienced contributed to their anxiety.

Julia and Margaret expressed their experiences with attendance policies. Julia identifies as Asian American with both visible and invisible disabilities (ADD) and Margaret identifies as non-binary, with visible and invisible disabilities (ADHD), and low SES. Julia expressed her feelings with the lack of control she has because of her ADD. Feeling in control allows her to feel "normal". In Julia's experience, she understood that she was not included in the attendance policy even though she has accommodations. The attendance policy does not discuss her accommodations, and she said, "but it kind of sucks because as someone that has those accommodations what if I'm just sick." Julia cannot control when she is sick, but she can plan and not feel frustrated if the attendance policy for her was made clear in her accommodation. Julia displays a stressor that aligns with research by Hong (2015) that discussed stressors as events beyond one's control. Margaret expressed her experience with attendance policies as "disclusion" as she said, "I guess it's in terms of absence policies, and stuff. It makes me feel

kind of discluded because it's never in the same paragraph, talks about people who have those accommodations." For Margaret, if the absence policy addressed accommodations it would make her feel inclusion. A "one size fits all" approach to all students in the classroom is noted to be a barrier for inclusion and Margaret has experienced this barrier in the mismatch of policies (CAST, 2011).

Although other participants discussed their frustration with how attendance and late work policies do not address their mental health, illness, and "disclusion," Max discussed how absence policies frustrate him due to his medical needs as a transmasculine individual. He finds that his gender is not included in the absence policy in the syllabus. This makes him have to make the connection between the university policy on absences, as the university policy allows absences for transgender students medical needs, and his course absence policy. He notes, "I could tell them would be a university excuse. But that's the only way I could think of being included in any shape or form." Like Julia, Max feels stress from this lack of inclusion in the absence policy and something that is out of his control (Hong, 2015).

Xavier expressed his thoughts about the punitive nature of syllabus policies. He took a distinct perspective by recognizing the lack of inclusion of people of color. He comments that, "the syllabi policies as punitive represent the real world," the real world where people of color are more likely to be punished and incarcerated. While Xavier is "mixed race" Asian and White, he understood the lack of inclusion of people of color in syllabi policies. For him, this is a representation of further marginalization of already oppressed communities.

In addition to frustration around mental health, illness, "disclusion" and punitive policies , MsuBandit was frustrated and angry about the lack of inclusion of age and disability in syllabi. "Oh, I don't see nothing in syllabi about age and disability. Nothing at all" is what MsuBandit

angrily stated about his experience with syllabi policies. Through his words, came the anger that

he does not feel included through his identity of age and disability. Ageism is reality in higher

education classrooms. Simi and Matusitz (2016) research investigated ageism in higher

education established that older college students are subject to discrimination. Multiple forms of

discrimination were present. One form concerned instructors, and how they might disrespect

older college students by omitting them from discussions and acting as if they do not exist

(Kasworm, 2003; Simi & Matusitz, 2016). The concept was also evident in the administration of

policies and objectives with older students receiving less financial aid compared to their

contemporary counterparts (Kasworm, 2010; Simi & Matusitz, 2016). Ageism is how MsuBandit

understands his lack of inclusion in syllabi policies.

Theme One, expressing feelings from syllabi polices demonstrates how marginalized

students understand themselves as not included in syllabi. The feelings generated through the

lack of inclusion and policies not incorporating their marginalized identities were expressed in

feelings of frustration. Punitive policies created anxiety, stress, and confusion that added to the

lack of inclusion.

Theme Two: Centering Identities in Course Materials

Course materials are included on the syllabus and the participants understood their

inclusion around *Centering identities in course materials*. Feelings of inclusion occurred when

other marginalized groups were represented in course materials even when the participant's

identity is not present. Feeling the lack of inclusion was noted by one participant. The frustration

came from the lack of inclusion for age and disability. Participants found through their

experiences that a variety of voices in the course materials made them feel included. Two

participants, Claire and Xavier, were concerned with what they called the White voices or

traditional voices in course materials. The inclusion of different perspectives rather than the traditional White scholars gave them the feeling of inclusion. Max noted that authors such as bell hooks and her experiences provided an understanding of the Black, female, LGBTQAI+, experiences that he never would have known.

This theme captures the experiences of all seven participants with course materials. Course materials, such as readings, media, and other literature are usually included in the syllabus. All seven participants provided their experience with course materials listed on syllabus in three sub-themes. The sub-themes 2.2 and 2.3 answer question one.

Sub-theme 2.2, feeling inclusion in course materials, was salient for the seven participants. Two participants described feeling included when other marginalized groups are represented in course materials. Three of the participants describe themselves as included when they found their gender or disability identities present. One participant found their mental health identity in their readings. The divergence in this theme was from one participant who did not find his disability or age in course materials.

Xavier and Claire advocated for the inclusion of course materials authored by those from marginalized populations. They noted that the inclusion was not about themselves but how they feel included when other marginalized groups were represented in course materials. Xavier stated:

> Something that's important to me, in feeling represented in the course materials is even though it's it's not like directly about me but like having a lot of like having readings and like media from people that aren't just like I don't know like old White academics in the field, especially for international relations period just because they feel like the field has kind of been biased by that perspective in a lot of ways. Like the materials reflect you

> know yourself, your interest, your identities, so having like you know diverse readings a
> lot of I think multimedia is also great instead of just having like really kind of like long
> journal art journal articles.

This finding, highlights how participants wanted to see diverse identities represented in course materials is supported by research by Fuentes et al. (2021) that outlines how course assignments, readings, and activities may be designed to address diversity in an intersectional and inclusive manner. The centering of authors/scholars from underrepresented groups is something the study strongly advocates for while recommending that an explanation on the syllabus about why the readings from scholars are included or excluded.

Claire provided similar thoughts about underrepresented scholars:

> I don't see too many like just Asian American like specific like article readings but I think
> I feel included in the sense that, like when I see I'm seeing like the spotlight and other
> marginalized communities because I like I like think I think black folks, indigenous folks,
> and Latinx they face like the brunt of the systemic oppression and so when like I'm
> seeing course materials that highlight those experiences I feel included in the sense that
> unlike these communities that I also face as an Asian American like these are
> communities that face issues the issues of like white supremacy and systemic oppression
> that I also face as an Asian American so I like to see myself included when those voices
> are highlighted as well.

Both Xavier and Claire's experience with course materials are confirmed by the findings of the Fuentes et al., (2021) study that supports inclusive pedagogy and decolonizing the syllabus. Xavier's desire of other formats for course materials, such as media, demonstrates UDL in multiple means of representation.

The experiences of Max and Margaret were with gender identities in the course materials. Max describes his experience in an intro women and gender studies course, "there's like, a class or a week focused on like intersex people, trans people, different LGBT identities and sort of like an open discussion about it." This course included course readings on Max's identity as a transmasc. Max joyfully and vocally expressed his feelings about being included. To further include marginalized identities in course materials, in addition to the required readings for a course, the syllabus could easily include a list of articles and books written by and about transgender individuals (Case et al., 2009). The same could be true for other courses highlighting marginalized scholars in the field (Fuentes et al., 2021). Max also found it ironic that he saw himself in a "video about a marine scientist who was, feminist, anti-colonist, LGBT, like ally lab. And it was really cool to see those two fronts intersect coming from a science class" as the video was presented in his women and gender studies class. Margaret found their identity was included in their capstone course that provided readings on DEI. They said, "readings about identity and inclusion and privileges and we are reading stuff from a lot of authors that I'm not sure if they're necessarily queer, but they at least talk about queerness which is still good." Margaret felt inclusion in those DEI materials and displayed excitement when they talked about this experience.

Julia discussed her inclusion in the course materials through her mental health identity. She said:

> It's very psychology related [course in psychology], and that's when it's more I see myself, especially when we're talking about like like mental health stuff like those that have anxiety or depression. I can very much look at that because I'm like, yeah, I experienced that too.

Xavier and Claire both felt inclusion through the representation of other marginalized groups. Claire said:

> But I think I feel included in the sense that, like when I see I'm seeing like the spotlight on other marginalized communities because I like, I like, like, I think black folks, indigenous folks, and right next they face like the brunt of systemic oppression and so when I'm seeing course materials that highlight these experiences I feel included.

Xavier had similar thoughts:

> I think something that's important to me, and feeling represented in the course materials is even though it's not, it's not like, like talking about me but like having a lot of like having readings and like media from people that just like I don't know like old white academics in the field especially for international relations. Just because they feel like the field has kind of been biased by that perspective in a lot of ways.

Although Xavier, Claire, Julia, and Margaret felt inclusion when theirs or other marginalized identities were included in course materials. The opposite of inclusion was the non-inclusion of ageism and disabilities in course materials that MsuBandit described:

> But my issue in genders, disability it's talked about and it's I don't wanna say brushed over, and they go into it. But it's not, you know all of them go into gender, all of them go into race, all of them will talk about African diaspora, you know are you old? No, they don't talk about old people. They don't talk about disabled people.

MsuBandit expressed frustration with the lack of inclusion of his identities. The inclusion of marginalized identities through diverse content and scholars would help address his frustration. The example in the Fuentes et al. (2021) study of including diverse authors as a way to center the

historically underrepresented and marginalized voices of scholars would bring MsuBandit's identities into the classroom.

Sub-theme 2.3, wanting variety in voices, emerged from the experiences of three participants. Claire and Xavier emphasized wanting more than the White narratives present in their courses. While Max wanted to learn about others' narrative experiences. These experiences are the base for this sub-theme.

Claire and Xavier's thoughts are supported by the findings in the Fuentes et al. (2021) and the Stein and de Oliveira Andreotti, (2016) studies. Claire said she wanted, "authors of color you know maybe not like all of like the most mainstream authors and maybe yeah like definitely wanting more perspectives making sure that there is voice and credit given to scholars who aren't like traditionally represented." Fuentes et al. (2021) stated, "we recommend centering and focusing on readings of historically underrepresented and marginalized scholars in the field and discuss the intentionality behind the purpose of assigning such readings" (p. 75). Where Stein and de Oliveira Andreotti, (2016) recommend supplementation of the Western perspectives with non-Western ideas. Xavier thoughts echoed this when he talked about one of his classes, international security, that:

> didn't focus on like the traditional like security folk, like security military and like drug
> and migration policies and I feel a lot of these courses are so heavily focused on. Like
> instead focused on a lot more like environmental, like environmental and internal issues,
> activism and feminism.

The relationship between the student responses and Fuentes et al. and Stein and de Oliveira Andreotti study demonstrates an inclusive pedagogy. It is also representative of social capital as an exchange of ideas that are reciprocal and provide access to new knowledge and

resources (O'Brien & O´ Fathaigh, 2005). The reciprocal exchange provides more than the traditional White voice and brings new knowledge for their learning. CRT was a part of the conceptual framework for this study, and Max's thoughts demonstrate the importance of the counternarrative in CRT. He wants to hear the Black and marginalized voices. He said:

> It's nice because when you get authors from different identities you get to see to read about the Black experience or what like, what it's like being a Black woman are things that I would never have known about if I didn't read someone else's experience first-hand like I would never fully understand it.

The absence of the marginalized voice for Max would be a deficit in his education. He values learning about others who are not like him. Theme two, centering identities in course materials, answers research question 1 through the participants understanding of inclusion. The inclusion comes from their marginalized identities and other marginalized groups in their course materials. The representation of the works of non-traditional scholars in race, gender, and disability aids in creating the inclusion.

Theme Three: Illustrating the Link between Syllabi, Faculty, and Course

This third theme emerged from the experiences of the participants that shows a link between the syllabus, what a faculty member says, and what takes place in the course. The syllabus is more than text, and this idea is shown in the participants' experiences. There were three sub-themes that emerged in this theme that help to answer the first research question which addresses how students understand themselves as included in syllabi . The following discussion places those sub-themes in the same order as Chapter 4, but without the headings for a more natural discussion of the theme and flow to occur.

Claire had many expressions about the first day of class, the syllabus, and the professor. She said:

I think something that's really important is not just the written content, but how the professor talks about it on that first day because it sets up a lot in the environment. So, it's kind of hard to tell just from looking at the written syllabus itself like what is fluff and what is what, the professor is actually like super serious about, so that that first day gives me a really good idea. The first day of class, it sets up so many norms for the semester like that would change a lot about what students can expect and how the classroom environment is going to be shaped.

The way a syllabus is presented on the first day of class makes a difference. Highlighting the essential parts of the syllabus on the first day is preferred to reading it word for word (Richmond et al., 2016). Wilson and Wilson, (2007) showed a difference between courses that had a positive first day going over the syllabus with no homework versus a syllabus review followed by classwork and homework. Xavier shared the idea that there is a connection between the syllabus and the first day. He described how he sees the first day connection of the syllabus:

I think the words that are said on the syllabus into the classroom which I think is the more important part for me and I think you can kind of get a sense of that like the first day when they're you know reading over the syllabus if it just kind of feels like they're kind of just flipping through versus if they're really intentional.

The first day of class influences the students' beliefs of the professor (Wilson & Wilson, 2007). As Claire and Xavier revealed, it sets up the semester. The syllabus then becomes more than words, it is the link between the professor and the course.

Sub-theme 3.2, demonstrating differences between types of courses, emerged from three of the participants who volunteered their experiences about STEM courses even though they were not asked about differences in syllabi between different courses. Max described his science courses syllabi in terms of gender recognition. He said:

So, for typical science class, there is nothing much in the syllabus relating to LGBT identities or like if you use a different name, or different pronouns, like come up to the professor like there's none of that outlined in the syllabus. So, I identify as transmasculine individuals so depending on your knowledge of the LGBT community, you can see me as a masculine person overall, or see me as like a gender I don't identify as. In science classes, it's just, oh, you're another student. Like my identity doesn't really matter.

Max shared that the women and genders courses he has taken used pronouns in the syllabus and faculty ask for student's names and pronouns on the first day of class. He experience differences between the syllabi in sciences and his women and genders courses. Max only uses his pronouns and identifies as transmasc in the classes he feels comfortable in, and this selective sharing of his identity is in line with the Miller (2015) study that found students revealed their identities when they were comfortable and it was dependent on the faculty, peers, and the class. A sense of belonging for Max as a STEM student is influenced by his connection to his instructor and peers, personal interests, and his science identities which is supported by the Hurtado and Carter (1997) study that examined WHAT. Max did not experience himself in the science courses and he finds a difference from his women and gender study courses. The difference is not being included in STEM and adds to his feelings of not belonging.

Claire and Xavier expressed the lack of inclusion in their STEM courses. When asked the question about having the same identities as what?, Claire shared about her identities in course syllabi. Claire said:

> If they[students]had the same identity [as Claire], they would not see themselves in like a computer science class or like a microbiology class. They would see more of themselves if they took something more of a social focus like public health or anything in the public health spheres or like social sciences.

Claire's response demonstrates her experience with syllabi in different courses and her understanding of where she felt inclusion. Claire's experience is in line with the Gin et al. (2021) study where they found that biology syllabi were more attentive to the course outcomes versus creating an inclusive environment. Also, that students from unique groups were only included through disability statements 80% of the time. A statement on diversity and inclusion was found to be the least represented at 13.3%. There was no report of gender inclusion.

In Xavier's experiences, he found that larger courses were in sciences and business, and they were lecture only courses. He describes a one-size-fits all approach in the syllabi for these large classes (Turner et al., 2017). He said:

> I haven't taken any super STEM classes, I've taken like some I guess, more quantitative classes like I'm taking like a GIS course, and like some of my econ ones or business I feel like generally they're a little bit more bare bones. I know most of my econ classes, they're usually bigger, bigger classes and I feel like the instructors don't really see anyone too much. And it's kind of just like you know, talk talking to the crowd you know unless you know I don't think they really put too much thought into it.

Xavier's experience with larger classes contradicts the class size that the Gin et al., (2021) study reported. They found that instructors based their inclusion of content on class size. If the class was small enough, information could be communicated verbally rather than in the syllabus. This contradicts Xavier's experience with larger classes and bare bones syllabi.

The emergence of the sub-theme 3.3 was through the participants revealing that language matters. Margaret, Max, and Claire each revealed the ways that they found that language mattered in their experiences. For Margaret and Max, it is inclusive language, and for Claire it is the language in the syllabus that speaks to her and gives her voice.

The literature reveals how syllabi language can affect students. As a tool of communication, the syllabus may contain terminology and regulations that have unexpected consequences (Singham, 2005). Faculty have added additional policies to the course outline, transforming it into a document that alienates and devalues students. The use of harsh language in academic materials can be intimidating and demoralizing. According to Gannon (2020), many syllabi are impersonal, use broad language, and alienate students from teachers; hence, inclusive language and practices must be implemented. Claire notes this use in the following, "I want a syllabus that really feels like it's talking to a student, and not just like you know, like professional like professionally like this is the language that the university provides." When instructors apply inclusive language in the syllabus, students feel included. White ideology persists without inclusive language and pedagogy (Haynes, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018).

Socially constructed masculine language is biased, statements that may inflict injury and racial slurs perpetuate stereotyping and discriminatory behavior (Patev et al., 2019). Gender-inclusive language is decided by individual effort, decision, and attitude toward persons who do not identify as male or female. Margaret and Max reference the male constructed language in

their experiences. For Margaret, they addressed the use of pronouns in the following, "there are definitely still people who do the whole his/her. Which you know, it's not like a bad thing, but it just sometimes it feels othering, I guess, when there's a word that can include more people." Those words for them are they/them pronouns. A syllabus absent of gendered language would remove the othering that Margaret feels.

In Max's experience, he found that the women and gender studies courses use pronouns on syllabi and also, "professors, on the first day of class, will ask for names, pronouns and any other information about you." He goes on to talk about other courses, "there have been a couple of professors in other departments that don't see that, or I don't feel comfortable sharing that with them." As Max describes, this comes down to the faculty's decision and their attitudes or beliefs of others who do not fit the binary perspective.

Using a social justice focus, the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) advances the study of language and its uses. Inclusive language is defined by the LSA as "language that recognizes variety, shows respect for all individuals, is sensitive to differences, and supports equitable chances" (para. 2, n.d.). This language incorporates an inclusive and critical pedagogy. This language is vital for creating a welcoming classroom atmosphere for all students, as it serves as a guide for faculty when writing a syllabus.

Theme three emerged as an answer to research question 1 through the link between the syllabus, faculty, and course. Participants understood their inclusion as a link between the words on paper and how faculty demonstrated those words on the first day of class and throughout the course. The participants understood the differences in STEM courses where they felt a lack of inclusion of their identities. The language matters and having non-gendered language creates inclusion.

Theme Four: Creating Equitable Partnerships

Theme four emerged during the analysis as ways to create a better learning environment by creating a learning environment that also includes the identities and experiences of the students in the course. Claire and Xavier provided their experiences with performing for a grade versus their learning as each has experienced labor-based grading in a course and understand this as a partnership. Labor-based grading is a philosophy and practice that seeks to eliminate existing biased structures to meet the needs of all students, particularly marginalized students (Inoue, 2022; Santos, 2022). According to Inoue (2022), all grading and assessment in higher education institutions supports the one dominant norm, which is inherently racist and maintains White supremacy due to its uniform implementation. Any grading system incorporating a standard has a problem, regardless of who evaluates or the nature of the standard. The disparity in evaluation results must then be attributed to the inherent bias of the system (Santos, 2022). That system of grades is the vehicle to exclude, not include (Inoue, 2022). The assumptions made about labor-based grading is that it lowers the standard; however, Inoue argues that the standard is inherently racist while supporting White supremacy.

Claire made meaning of her experience as an Asian American with invisible disabilities in a labor-based course, in the following passage:

I think that was like the best I've ever been included in a syllabus. This was for my race and ethnic politics in a comparative perspective and so this professor also does labor base grading, had a long conversation as well about like, what about like, you know how it's beneficial and like why, why, teachers would want to adopt this, and maybe like some reasons like some misconceptions about that and like, I think I like I see myself in that a lot, because it takes away so much of the like huge perfectionism I deal with in my head

like I think that's one of the barriers for what I write And so when it's like Labor based

grading like you know, we talked about like the process of learning like I really like

enjoy learning. It's just like writing for a grade that trips me up and like, and also like that

that's designed with like a lot of accessibility in mind.

For Claire, she found her identities and made meaning of them in labor-based grading. Claire

also feels relief for her ADHD as it allows her not to be in her head as a perfectionist. She

provides her like for learning versus performing for a grade.

Likewise, Xavier has experienced labor-based grading in one of his courses. He describes

how the environment created provides the basis for learning versus performing in the following:

He's like really creating an environment that that's like great for just you know, learning

in general, not just getting a grade so like having that this labor-based grading policy

where you know everybody, if they do all the required materials are guaranteed a B. And

if you do extra, you can get an A. And he was very flexible about flexible about, you

know, turning in things late and emailing for extensions, and like generally like wanting

to engage and meet with the students and asking for feedback. And I just thought that's

like this is like kind of how like education should be like. Higher education should should

operate instead of just like, you know, like trying to like, fail people out to yeah like that,

this this is kind of like the real model.

 The real model in Xavier's quote speaks volumes to learning. The environment he experienced

becomes about learning versus performance for a grade through policies that are meant to control

and punish (Inoue, 2022). This environment allows for the cultural capital that each student

brings to flourish in the learning process (Fuentes et al., 2021; Oleson, 2021; Tuitt et al., 2018).

It creates an inclusive classroom.

The emergence of this sub-theme is found in the experiences of Claire and Xavier desiring more than the White narrative. The existing body of scholarly literature suggests that the inclusion of students as co-creators and authorities of their learning environments can lead to the creation of productive learning (Cook-Sather & Hayward 2021; Espinoza et al. 2020). This theme also exposes the need for the narratives of marginalized populations in the classroom (Haynes, 2017; Tuitt et al., 2018). It demonstrates the cultural capital that each student brings to the class (Fuentes et al., 2021; Oleson, 2021; Tuitt et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). Cultural capital or cultural wealth is a framework for the strengths marginalized students bring to the classroom as working with the student's strengths versus a one-directional learning environment (Yosso, 2005). The shared ownership of knowledge is in the lived experiences and stories that each student contributes. Supporting students in their capital brings more wealth to other students in the class. Allowing for the sharing of the student voice in the classroom creates a more inclusive environment which enriches the learning.

Both Claire and Xavier expressed the value of other students' experiences in the classroom. Claire provided the view "that content that is reflective of my students' experiences and their own diverse life paths, I just think the quality of things would be so much better especially when students speak in their own authentic voice." The authentic voice relates to the narratives of marginalized groups and the voices become counternarratives to the White dominant voice (Tuitt et al., 2018). Xavier expressed his desire for different people's experiences as, "I think letting students and encouraging students to draw upon…their backgrounds and what they've grown up with and tied in with what you know we're learning…provide you know much more than just simply like reading the content." His valuing of other experiences provides him

with "something that you can get when you're mixed with like so many you know, diverse students at a school."

The literature along with the students' experiences provides for creating a syllabus and classroom that is a partnership. It brings cocreators of knowledge into the environment. It becomes an inclusive classroom as all voices are authentic and heard. Thus, theme four demonstrates how participants understood themselves as included in the syllabus. The participants would feel included in syllabi that include students as co-creators of knowledge and partners in learning. The use of the student voice and experiences helps to create the partnership.

Research Question Two

The following themes and subthemes answer Research Question Two: How do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality?

Theme One: Expressing Feelings from Syllabi Policies

Expressing feelings from syllabi policies emerged in the negative and positive effects on the participants' well-being. Their well-being is linked to their identities such as invisible disability, race, and low SES. Their meaning-making of the experiences affected their well-being. Fear was found to be a by-product of punitive, syllabi policies, and upset the participants from doing something they needed to do for themselves. Stress was found to be an addon from inflexible policies or conflicting policies. Pressure added guilt in making choices between using accommodations or not. Physical well-being was affected by strict policies that did not include accommodation and consider age.

The experience of students reveals their frustrations with their lack of inclusion in syllabus policies and is expressed in the forms of fear, stress, and pressure. Fear is expressed in

this quote by Lindsey, "I was too scared to turn in the paper," for her accommodations. Her fear was generated by the policy that to receive accommodations you need to go through the process, and by her turning in the paper would make her realize, "I am actually disabled because I never had accommodations." Lindsey, by turning in the paper, would recognize herself as having a deficit and make her fear real. This fear affects her well-being and there is a relationship between well-being, race, and low SES students (Destin et al., 2021). The cultural aspect of the syllabus and the policies held created barriers of inclusion for the participants that, in turn, impacted their well-being. The participants experienced these barriers as inducing fear, stress, and unneeded pressure.

MsuBandit's experience came in other students in his courses. While he experienced anger, he established the fear of traditional aged college students who were afraid to ask for accommodations. He noted that students have issues like his or worse than his: "I hate anybody having to be put into that situational corner and afraid to ask." If the policies acknowledged and supported interrelated ways of being and knowing, then these participants would have benefited in those policies (Covarrubias et al., 2016: Stephens et al., 2012). Those policies would encompass more than the one way they have held in syllabi and consider inclusion of all students and their being as cultural capital they bring into the classroom. The fear and the situational corner would be removed. Likewise, Claire shared her experience with the feelings of fear as "it doesn't feel good." Her experience was with a punitive policy that made her feel pressure and not able to talk with the professor when she struggles. In Claire's experience, the policy pushed her away from the faculty member as the rules became more punitive (Gannon, 2020: Singham, 2005). The punitive nature of the policy kept her from speaking with the professor and kept her from experiencing inclusion.

The feeling of stress was exposed in Xavier and Julia's experiences with policies. Xavier provided his experience with Covid and the professor who did not bend in his polices. Xavier noted, "the professor, was very uncompromising in his, in his, his syllabi… the context of you know the pandemic, and you know the additional stress and just circumstances that people dealt with." The emotional distress caused by policies relates to the psychological barriers faced by low SES and students of color that was revealed in the Jury et al., (2017) study. Those barriers include emotional distress caused through cultural norms in higher education settings. The unwavering policy of the instructor induced this emotional distress felt by Xavier. Julia provided a Catch-22 situation with the attendance policy. She noted that her absence was necessary, but the policy made her more stressed, when the professor gave her mixed signals of the policy. She stated, "however, do what I expect of you, and I won't be mad at you (chuckles) so it's kind of like I can't do both at the same time like something just has to give, you know." Julia does not want the professor mad at her, but also has stress induced by the mixed message. Both Xavier and Julia faced unneeded stress in their identities through their experiences.

Margaret experienced unneeded pressure. Their relationships with professors are good and, "professors trust me" and adds, "whatever is fine because we trust you and really don't worry about you in terms of getting things that you need to get done." Margaret understands the faculty acceptance of their accommodations, but at the same time, "kind of puts some pressure on me. And it sometimes makes me feel a little like I should not try to use my accommodations." Margaret feels like they are doing something wrong by using their accommodation (Destin et al., 2021; Jury et al., 2017; Lyman et al., 2016). Their feelings encompass conflict (Destin et al., 2021) of not wanting to disappoint the instructor and self-sufficiency (Lyman et al., 2016), not

wanting to be singled out or negative self-feelings (Jury et al., 2017). These studies also noted that students experience these behaviors and feelings, and they affect their well-being.

MsuBandit experienced threats to his well-being through policies in the syllabus. One policy was about food and drink in the classroom. MsuBandit described this experience as, "I can't go an hour and 15 minutes without a drink of water, not supposed to have a food or drink in class. Sorry I got too. You know I take 25 different medications." This policy affects his well-being physically and lacks the social belonging of his marginalized identities. Well-being can take on many forms, even with efforts to strengthen the social belonging of marginalized students that will result in an increase in academic performance and the student's well-being (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

Not everything experienced by students was negative. Three of the participants discussed their experiences with policies that helped them and cared for their well-being. Those policies include assignments with time needed to complete, inclusive practices, and inclusive language.

Julia's experience with a syllabus that had an assignment section with the estimated time commitment and found this to be helpful. She noted, "that's extremely helpful to know when I'm planning out my workload. It's not that all teachers get that to you…estimate yourself or find out the hard way (laughs)." Julia has found out the hard way; however, she appreciates and finds herself included when assignments include a time commitment that allows her to plan and gives the feeling of being in control. As noted in the Wolfe et al., (2009), students with ADHD or ADD have deficits in planning and keeping track of time. This finding is supported by Barkley (2006) and Oslund, (2014) as these deficits have a negative impact on the student's executive function and learning in and out of the classroom. Claire describes an experience through a

professor who was willing to give accommodations without students going through the process. She values professors who can provide this. She states:

> The fact that he was open and like explicitly stated like that yeah, you can need accommodations and like that have gone through the whole process with the university like that was like I've never seen that before, and that was amazing because like I was at that point last year like I didn't I never even considered it the fact that I needed accommodations or that I had a disability.

Claire's professor shows an inclusive pedagogy (Haynes, 2017; Oleson, 2021; Tuitt et al., 2018) and incorporating UDL through not needing an accommodation process (Li, 2020). Claire was one of the many underdiagnosed females with ADHD (Martin et al., 2018). Her reaction and experience with this policy after her diagnosis reveals how much better her education would have been, "if I had heard that earlier, I don't know if like, that would have made a huge difference." With the underdiagnosis of females with ADHD, faculty who use inclusive pedagogies and UDL frameworks help the undiagnosed while improving the class for all students.

For Margaret, it was reading inclusive language. She stated, "I think lately when I've been reading the syllabus, I kind of noticed that professors tend to use more inclusive language like I mentioned earlier, which is nice." The meaning of "nice" for Margaret is more than the definition. Margaret identifies as non-binary and inclusive language is important to them as it adds to their inclusion and the inclusion of others as Margaret expressed in her interview. In Sauntson (2018), she found that LGBTQAI+ students suffer more exclusion than inclusion without inclusive language. The LGBTQAI+ students felt that faculty are the key to creating this

inclusive environment. When there are inclusive language related barriers in the classroom, students suffer.

All three of these participants were able to share their experiences. The value that their narratives bring is significant as it adds to the conversation, while providing ideas for syllabi polices. Through their experiences they gave meaning to the need for inclusion in the classroom. The feelings that were generated through their experiences with syllabi provide answers to research question 2. Their well-being was affected in positive and negative ways. The negative effects needs to be remedied in syllabi policies.

Theme Two: Centering Identities in Course Materials

The *Centering identities in course materials* evolved in emotions from the meaning-making of the participants' experiences. The triggering of PTSD through course readings made them identify their intersectionality as they could see themselves in the text and conversation. The inaccessibility of course readings in the length, language, and authors (traditional White males) made a participant despise a course as her identities were not present. Gender identities were found in readings and the experiences were positive. The inclusion of other marginalized identities made participants feel inclusion. The experience of not feeling included was provided in the lack of materials on the aged and disabilities.

This theme captures the experiences of all seven participants with course materials. Course materials, such as readings, media, and other literature are usually included in the syllabus. All seven participants provided their experience with this part of the syllabus in three sub-themes. Sub-theme 2.1 answers research question two.

Sub-theme 2.1 emerged in the emotions of the meaning they made of their experiences with course materials. Three of the participants provided emotions in their meaning-making of

their experiences with course materials. Julia and Lindsey from a triggering PTSD perspective and Claire from an intense dislike of course materials.

Julia and Lindsey recalled their past experiences and their explanation of their PTSD. PTSD occurs in people from a traumatic experience they were involved in or saw (Penn Psychiatry, n.d.). The traumatic experience can be triggered through course materials and conversations that provide traumatic experiences. It is an individual trigger for each person and content warnings, or trigger warnings may help. Julia described a discussion in her class from a course reading:

> Honestly, that conversation was really hard for me, because it reminded me of some of my interactions with some people. But I saw myself in that a lot when it came to everything and my identity because it was very relevant…I see myself, especially when we're talking about like, like mental health stuff like those that have anxiety or depression. And I can very much look at that because I'm like yeah, I experience that too.

Julia was triggered by a course discussion on a course reading. She had no warning; however, she did put the experience into perspective after the fact.

Likewise, Lindsey was triggered by a course reading in a social justice course. She said the book was the recount of the story of one of Brock Turner's rape victims. She states:

> But I read the first chapter and it was extremely triggering, because there are only there are it was so beautifully written that I couldn't read it. It was very straightforward. She creates the scene of how she felt very well. But having experienced sexual assault, reading that was extremely difficult because she's trying to say things that can't be said. And so, she's trying to translate how she feels into words.

Lindsey demonstrates her own experience in her words. The connection she had to the rape victim trying to put into words the trauma. I noted in my journal about Lindsey's account and how it created in me empathy that I just started crying in this interview. It was difficult not to empathize with her experiences. Course materials can be triggering as the reliving of a trauma for students. There are advocates for and against trigger or content warnings. Some believe trigger warnings are not necessary as the warning gives no advantage to the student (AAUP, 2014; Bellet et al., 2018; Boysen et al., 2016). The warnings may undermine emotional states, affect normal states of being, and impede critical thinking. Proponents of trigger warnings believe it helps prepare students for triggering materials, and helps their well-being (Beverly et al., 2018; Bentley, 2017). While the debate is presented in the literature, Lindsey feels the need for trigger warnings to feel included.

Intense dislike of course materials was described through Claire's experience. She shared about an accelerated course that had long readings. Her tone of voice and the faces she made during her interview spoke to her intensity. She found the readings inaccessible and did not include her identities. She said, "I could like barely understand the language and also like, like these White men like they're not thinking, and they're not writing these texts in the interest of or even like thinking about the existence of other experiences." Because of the readings, she said, "I felt like that was just like a horrible class, and it, it really made me dislike the material with so much intensity." Her dislike of the readings and the course are clear in her experience. Her description of inaccessible is twofold—one the length and the second the language. In this case, UDL could be implemented to supply other means of representation of the course readings and making them accessible (CAST, 2011.; Lund Dean & Fornaciari, 2014). As for the lack of inclusion, the centering of authors from marginalized backgrounds helps to achieve a narrative

other than the White perspective (Fuentes et al., 2021). Adopting an inclusive pedagogy and UDL principles aid in creating course materials that are accessible and provide a diverse voice. Theme two, centering identities in course materials, emerged through the meaning making of the participants. There is meaning (learning) when other voices are present than just the dominant White voices. The co-creation of knowledge adds to the experience and creates the feeling of inclusion..

Theme Five: Suggesting Solutions for Identities

This theme emerged from the lived experiences of the participants and the meaning-making of those experiences through their identities. This theme answers the second research question: how do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality? Through their experiences with syllabi and their lack of inclusion, they provided ideas for incorporation. These ideas range from easy fixes to better communication. Evident through their experiences is the realization of UDL and inclusive pedagogy. As Li et el. (2020) noted, being active versus reactive by using UDL releases the student from having to disclose their disability as UDL makes the environment accommodating. Likewise, inclusive pedagogy creates inclusion for all students.

Suggesting solutions for identities emerged from the participants, making meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their identities. Easy suggestions to policies were made, such as providing for students to use their chosen name, not using gendered language, adding information on pronouns, adding a mental health policy, having a policy that considers extensions, and a more visual syllabus. These ideas, based on their identities and experience, help address inclusion. This sub-theme 5.1 emerged in the meaning-making of the participants experiences. Each participant provided ways to change or fix a syllabus. The suggestions, as they

say, will help them in several ways based on their identities. The idea of an easy fix for syllabi was found in Max's interview. Max is transmasc and uses his chosen name. The class roster a faulty member receives has Max's given name at birth. For Max, it is important to his identity to be called the correct name. His fix came in the following quote:

> If you have a different name, let me know. Like that be the easiest way to put it on the syllabus but nobody comment nobody does that a very easy way to include people who go by other names or use different identifying words you can just put a line in the syllabus saying hey if you have the wrong name on the learning management system or your e-mail let me know and we can like we'll use the correct name and pronouns.

Max's suggestion follows the research by Case et al., (2009). They provide that although transgender students often communicate their pronoun preferences with faculty, a line in the syllabus requesting students to discuss pronoun and naming preferences with the professor could encourage the necessary clarification. Creating an acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQAI+, students can be conveyed by using the students chosen name versus their birth name. Likewise, with the use of pronouns and the reason behind using them. Margaret said "the first thing I would do is make sure that I'm using inclusive language. So, no gendered language." The use of inclusive language is supported in inclusive pedagogy and by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA).

In Lindsey's interview, she had a wish; that wish was, "that mental health was included, because I can't always do your paper by the due date. I could but the amount of stress that causes me isn't fair." Her wish can be carried out by the addition of a mental health statement. According to the Glueckert et al. (2021) study, mental health statements are a needed addition to syllabi as demonstrated by a student group at the University of Montana. The group encouraged

their faculty to add mental health statements and the available mental health resources on campus. Those resources include basic needs, food pantry, wellness center, health center, and student advocacy resource center. The tone of the mental health statement along with the syllabus has been found to have a positive effect on students in reaching out to faculty (Grung & Galardi, 2022). Also, having a shorter length with the mental health statement included, students found more effective.

Life happens and events that Claire and Xavier had thoughts on not penalizing students when they are going through things. Xavier said, "as things that might be out of their control, or things that you know generally like a 20 something year old shouldn't really have to deal with." Claire describes the assurance she feels with the language when going through things. She said, "in their syllabus like just like language, acknowledging that they understand that students can go through things, and experience like life, happens like I like what the language is in there like life happens." These ideas are recommended by Oslund (2014) and notes that flexibility in educational contexts, including adjustable deadlines, may be incredibly helpful for students when life happens.

Lindsey found magic in a class where she said:

The professor whose policy was before the due date you have four hours before it is turned in to tell me you need an extension, and I will give you whatever extension you want. Her rule was as long as your assignment is turned in before after turning grades you can receive full credit period that's magical!

The magic that Lindsey finds in the policy is the instructor who understands students with ADHD (Martin et al., 2018; Osland, 2014) and applies UDL principles in this policy of deadlines.

Creating safe spaces is another idea that addresses the inclusion of identities. For LGBTQAI+, the need for safe spaces such as Safe Zone was on the syllabus. The knowing that a professor is Safe Zone trained makes for inclusion. Another example of safe space is in an escape clause on the syllabus. If there is triggering material the student could just leave and not stress out more about having to ask. A safe learning environment where students who are harmed through word are called in rather than called out. Calling in becomes a learning exercise.

Max and Lindsey discussed the ideas of safe spaces as Safe Zone. Faculty can demonstrate support through SAFE Zone training, creating an allyship with LGBTQAI+ students. The training also helps the faulty member create safe spaces for marginalized students (Mitchell et al., 2018; Sonnenberg et al., 2021). Max felt that if faculty are SAFE Zone trained, they should "include that on their syllabus like that would be a really great quick indicator to show students that this is a safe space." Lindsey's ideas also address SAFE Zone training by faculty, but she presents a question in her response:

> It doesn't mention anything about a safe place in any of these syllabi. Sometimes professors will have these schools like this is a safe place, or, like I'm, a safe person like placard or sticker, little like poster thing on their doors, so you know. But then that also brings up the question of if anyone without that are you? Are you against LGBT, or you just not want people to talk to you about it, which is fine.

While she would like faculty to acknowledge their SAFE Zone training and having a safe space, her question brings up the lack of safety she may feel. Her question links to Mitchell et al., (2018) and Sonnenberg et al. (2021) studies. Students with non-binary genders do not always feel safe in the classroom (Mitchell et al., 2018). The students question the ability to trust a professor (Sonnenberg et al., 2021). The addition of SAFE Zone training and the display of this

through the syllabus adds a layer of trust for non-binary students and other marginalized students.

Another avenue of safe spaces is for students who have PTSD. Because of the student's prior event that could be triggered through course materials or class discussions, content or trigger warnings are encouraged (Beverly et al., 2018; Bentley, 2017). In Lindsey's case, she was triggered by a course reading. That reading had the experience of a woman who had been sexual assaulted. Lindsey suffers PTSD based on her sexual assault and the book triggered a response for her (Penn Psychiatry, n.d.). There are pros and cons (AAUP, 2014; Bellet et al., 2018; Boysen et al., 2016) for trigger warnings as noted in the prior paragraphs. Likewise, Julia suggested the ability to leave a class without permission would help students who need this escape. The escape is needed due to discussions in the class that might be triggering. Creating a safe environment for students should be the factor in how one approaches their policies in the syllabus.

Xavier provided a distinct perspective on safe space. He noted about a class where the professor had a personal paragraph that included ideas about calling people in versus excluding them. Xavier gave the languages as:

> How we don't condone it in class, call the person in instead of calling them out. I really like that distinction to be able to call somebody in and then say why you know what they said you know felt maybe disrespectful or maybe, maybe like belittling, or something in and allow them to understand it in a in a constructive manner.

Xavier's experience represents providing safe spaces in the classroom. A faculty statement on the syllabus that addresses the beliefs of the professor and how they will handle situations in their classroom presents a positive framework for students (Oslund, 2014). Feeling safe in the

classroom encompasses many avenues to safety. The participants provided three aspects of feeling safe in this study.

Valuing flexibility in policies emerged through the participants' discussion of their intersecting identities. Participants with ADHD said they need flexibility in policies to encompass their ADHD (Oslund, 2014). As they procrastinate, they do not meet deadlines (Martin, 2018; Oslund, 2014). Physical disability participants wanted removal of policies such as attendance, as attendance could be encompassed in assignments. Another was more details on how professors will handle accommodations versus just the standard policy. In general, more flexibility to enable learning versus performing.

Providing options for students and having flexibility in policies is a wish that Lindsey had. She finds that syllabi should not be so standard. These ideas of flexibility and having options fall under inclusive pedagogy and UDL. Where Xavier experiences made him appreciate faculty who understand the issues occurring around students and the world and adjust their policies accordingly. This appreciation stemmed from the issues he faced with an inflexible professor during the pandemic who did not bend on policies. He notes a professor who he recently had and described the experience as follows:

> And he was very flexible about flexible about you know, turning in things late and emailing for extensions, and like generally like wanting to engage and meet with the students and asking for feedback. And I just thought that's like this is like kind of how like education should be like higher education should operate instead of just like you know, like trying to like fail people out.

Xavier has experienced two different situations and found the latter to benefit him and other students. He associates the unbending policies as a "gotcha" and the purpose to fail students.

This is an example of the syllabus as power that Fornaciari and Lund (2014) discuss where there is control by the instructor when students follow the policies and requirements.

In Margaret's experience, they found absence policies not helpful. They would not include them in a syllabus and understand that having have an absence policy is not needed and could be addressed in late work. Margaret said, "I'll probably have something like generally comment if you come to me and explain why your work is late or why your work is going to be late you know we'll accept it up to a certain point."

Having flexible policies alleviates the need to ask for them. This idea was generated in MsuBandit's experiences and is a principle of UDL Alleviating the need to ask for flexibility is an affirmation of UDL practices (CAST, 2011). Due to MsuBandit's physical disabilities and age, he needs the flexibility to function without asking. He suggests, "every professor needs to go into detail how they want to handle disabled, the aged, or others [with disabilities] within the class." Those details should include flexibility as a UDL principle.

Struggles with deadlines are common for students with ADHD. Claire notes that policies are inflexible, and she said, "I hate that because I struggle so much with deadlines." This led her to find the policy as punitive as she is being punished outside of her control. Having flexibility in policies would help Claire and her ADHD.

Making accommodating accommodations are ideas that emerged though students for wanting the removal of the "set of rules to be disabled." This will help inclusion for students who need accommodations and provide conversations with faculty rather than pushing students away. Also, accommodating for age in the syllabus as the student population has changed. This sub-theme developed in the five participants who identified as having disabilities. Throughout their interviews, the frustrations with accommodation were clear. However, they were able to address

the items that they felt would make their lives better in the form of faculty accommodating accommodations.

The reality of students acquiring accommodations through the institution's proper process is low. Both the Hong (2015) and the Lyman et al. (2016) studies revealed that students lack understanding of the services available and how to get them. Students were also not knowledgeable about disability services and accommodations and advocating for themselves. The experiences of participants demonstrated these findings. The frustration that MsuBandit experienced with is clear in his thoughts. He said, "On the syllabus so it says go to the ADS office, but it doesn't give you specifics on how to deal with the ADS office." The solution he provided is a collaboration between the ADS office and the faculty. "ADS needs to, you know within a letter, a presentation or anything to the faculty on campus and then that's to be forwarded within the syllabus for them to give to the students at that particular point." From his experience, the process can be accommodated by a letter providing the necessary steps to take.

Four of the participants are neurodiverse: Lindsey, Claire, Julia, and Margaret. Females are an underdiagnosed population for ADHD (Martin et al., 2018). While Lindsey and Margaret do not identify their gender as female, their experiences with Claire and Julia's are based on their ADHD. Lindsay's frustrations appeared in several of her responses. She describes that to get accommodations is like, "a set of rules to be disabled" as she further discusses her invisible disability and says, "it's hard to ask for accommodations and when I have to go through a process to get it, it's not worth getting sometimes." Like Lindsey, Claire was diagnosed recently with ADHD. Before her diagnosis and accommodations, she believed that faculty believed she was lazy. In a current course, her professor had policies for accommodations where even if you did not acquire them through the university process, he was willing to accommodate students.

Claire said, "I've never seen that before, and that was amazing, because, like I was in that point like last year, like I didn't. I never even considered it, the fact that I needed accommodations, or that I had a disability." This professor made accommodating accommodations through his policy as an inclusive pedagogy. Policies described by Claire help the diagnosed and undiagnosed and the entire class as a UDL and inclusive practice (Martin et al., 2018).

MsuBandit wants details on how the professor wants to handle the disabled, the aged, or others within the class. These details would make him feel included, especially since he said, "I mean, it's none, none of the syllabus have anything as a volunteer of any accommodations." Thus, the faculty providing the details of how they will handle disabilities, age, and other issues provides the sense of belonging he requires.

The participants described wanting communication by and with faculty. One way they addressed communication is providing a faculty personal statement would open the lines of communication between faculty and student. The statement would include how faculty will support students, ways to contact the faculty member, supporting undiagnosed disabilities, and meeting with faculty. Another way is simply just talking to students who have accommodations to see how they are doing. The participants provided this information from their experiences of their identities in syllabi. They value open communication with faculty for feeling included.

In the experiences of four of the participants, they specified the idea of a faculty member's personal statement. Margaret, Lindsey, Claire, and Julia gave specific examples of accommodations they felt would fulfill their needs. Margaret suggested that as a professor, "I would most likely share a bit about myself and my desire to help others... This would make it quite clear that they can always contact me if an issue occurs." Margaret's idea would be through a positive verbal communication as it helps in positive outcomes for students and the sharing by

faculty about themselves (Hoffman, 2014; Wilson et al., 2012). This clear path of

communication would suit Margaret's needs. In Lindsey's experience, she describes the line of

open communication as faculty being receptive to communication. She said, "Communication is

about, anything or any sensitive information, you need to let me know about, my DMS are open

as the saying now." Her need for sharing information about herself is in line with faculty

building rapport with students (Hoffman, 2014). Providing a statement as she describes would

serve her identity.

Claire, due to her late diagnosis of ADHD, wants recognition for students who have

disabilities and just don't know that they have one." Having faculty communicate that they

support all students even if undiagnosed would have made her life better before her late

diagnoses of ADHD. The tie between a syllabus statement and the faculty action of the words is

needed. Julia's needs faculty to communicate to her how she can reach them to ask questions, as

she notes the need for faculty to provide the opportunities for out of class contact. Those

questions she said, "are about course syllabi or assignments, how you can meet with the

professor that sort of thing." Her needs for communication are supported in studies (Hoffman,

2014; Komarraju et al., 2010; Kuh & Hu, 2001). Komarraju et al. (2010) and Kuh & Hu (2001)

reported that the most frequent type of communication with faculty is questions about the course,

and the Hoffman (2014) study reported that opportunities for students to communicate with

faculty outside of the course were needed. Julia needs this to feel inclusion based on her

disability identities.

MsuBandit gave a different perspective. He revealed the lack of communication by

faculty, even after they received his accommodations. As he expressed his experience, his

frustration came through. He said, "On average only two faculty talk to him each semester."

They do not have meetings with him to discuss his accommodations or they do not as he said, "actually talk to me before and after class and ask the situation. What's my situation? How am I handling it? how is it working? And you know actually show that kind of concern with it all." MsuBandit's experience is not unlike what Linder et al (2015) reported, that students revealed frustration with the lack of interaction with their faculty. MsuBandit wants to feel included but for him he needs those conversations to feel included. Up to one-third of college students report having little to no interaction with their instructors outside of the classroom (Snow 1973; Kuh & Hu 2001) and students that do contact their instructors ask for clarification about the course (Kuh & Hu, 2001). The context of communication between faculty and students impacts the development of their relationship (Hoffman, 2014) and with significant psychosocial and academic outcomes (Komarraju et al., 2010). For MsuBandit, talking with faculty before or after class would help him discuss his needs and develop a relationship with faculty. Theme five emerged as an answer to how do marginalized students make meaning of their experiences with syllabi through their intersectionality. Through the participants' experiences and marginalized identities they made meaning of their need for inclusion. That meaning came through in suggestions for faculty to make changes to the syllabus and their courses.

Limitations

This study answered the research questions through a sample of seven participants. The participants were from marginalized populations, including race, low SES, LGBTQAI+, and students with disabilities. However, there are limitations to this study. Due to the nature of IPA, the sample size was small due to the ideographic nature of the methodology. A larger heterogenous sample may have provided different results and experiences. While I was able to recruit marginalized students, another limitation of this study is the lack of a Black or Hispanic

voice. Of the ten that signed up for my research, none were Black or Hispanic. The absence of Black and Hispanic voices prevented me from situating this population in the study's findings within the framework of the existing literature. This may limit the transferability of the findings to Black and Hispanic students. I also experienced difficulty recruiting marginalized third- and fourth-year students. The lack of response, even after repeated efforts, from gatekeepers at PWI institutions, became a barrier to recruiting from the Black and Hispanic student populations. I believe a more individualized connection between the researcher and gatekeepers would advance the recruitment of Black and Hispanic students. The individualized touch could include a Zoom meeting with the gatekeepers to discuss the research and the value of the Black and Hispanic voices to provide the counternarrative.

The participants came from four different PWI universities in three east coast regions. Because of this, differences in experiences are due to the size, type, location, and program of study at the universities. These differences may have influenced the experiences of the students. While each participant is unique in their intersecting identities, their shared experience is with university syllabi. Having connections with other institutions and finding the folks who would assist in recruitment may have helped obtain a large enough sample from one university. Physically going to the universities may also have increased the population of potential participants. Having a sample population from one PWI may have provided different results. Likewise, sample populations from other regions may add diverging findings.

Compensation was provided to each participant for participating in each interview and member checking. Only one of the participants did not want to be paid, did end up accepting payment after discussion. While the payment was more than minimum wage, it was not

exorbitant. Increasing the monies paid to the participants may have provided a larger response rate.

The amount and quality of information differed between participants. While most of the interviews were over 60 minutes long and provided more details, there was always the possibility that the researcher's identities and biases limited the participants' responses. However, I engaged in each interview by pushing back my ideas and journaling after each interview. There was a saturation of the data, with the participants' understanding and experiences answering the interview and the two research questions. Overall, although this study had several limitations these limitations did not influence the outcomes of this study.

Implications of Findings

This is the first known interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research (to date) that captures and emphasizes the voice of marginalized students' experiences of being included in syllabi. As a result, this study fills a significant gap in the literature by describing how marginalized students understand themselves as included and make meaning of their intersecting identities in course syllabi. Notwithstanding the idiographic nature of IPA and the study's use of a small, purposive homogeneous sample, the findings have a significance that can be drawn from.

Practice

The findings in this study have several implications for practice. The experiences of the participants not being included in syllabi and the evidence they provide about how this affects their well-being provides the knowledge that the lack of inclusion in syllabi polices must be addressed. This study found that marginalized students find syllabi policies punitive, not flexible,

and not inclusive. These findings support the use of inclusive language, inclusive pedagogies, and UDL to remedy the lack of inclusion.

The administration and faculty must acknowledge the diverse student population within their institutions and classrooms, and consider how their institutions serve all students. Administrators must support faculty through workshops and training for inclusive pedagogy and UDL. These workshops should have incentives, such as stipends. The workshops would give faculty the time to redesign their courses and could lead to communities of practice (Thiem & Dasgupta, 2022). Educational developers must offer and develop workshops and materials to provide the needed resources for faculty to incorporate inclusive pedagogies and UDL in their teaching.

Faculty must acknowledge the fact that non-inclusive practices are in their syllabi and teaching practice and that these non-inclusive practices further harm an already marginalized population. Through the adoption of inclusive pedagogy and UDL, a shift in pedagogical practices takes place from the traditional method of providing for the needs of the majority of learners and giving extra help to those who struggle, and is replaced by a more inclusive approach (Sanger, 2020). Faculty must be self-aware to understand their biases, and then reflect on how their identities and biases manifest in the classroom and in their interactions with students (Oleson, 2021). They must believe in inclusive practice and make it a priority in their classes for syllabi to reflect inclusion. Inclusion is reflected in the language and flexibility in the syllabus and supports the cultural capital that every students brings into the classroom (Aronson & Laughter, 2020). Incorporating UDL practices are demonstrated on the syllabus through multiple pathways for learning and success within the course (CAST, 2011). The administration must celebrate the success of faculty who engage in these developmental practices.

This study found that marginalized students lack inclusion as a result of the absence of non-traditional scholars in the field. The absent voice of marginalized scholars in course materials must be addressed by faculty. Although a participant's marginalized identity was absent from course materials, they experienced inclusion through other marginalized groups in the course materials. This suggests to faculty that marginalized voices, regardless of the marginalization, are essential in course materials for students to feel inclusion. Faculty should begin by conducting an audit of their course materials. The audit will reveal if there is representation of non-traditional scholars. With a completed audit, a deliberate attempt by faculty to find the non-traditional scholars should be assisted by librarians. A comprehensive pedagogical practice must incorporate the ideas of non-traditional scholars. This practice of including non-traditional scholars gives voice and representation to non-dominant groups. It provides students exposure to views other than the traditional White voice and allows marginalized students to see themselves included through the inclusion of non-traditional scholars in course materials.

The link between the syllabus, faculty, and class gives insight into practices. The participants noted, the first day of class and what the professors address during the first day, gives value to "syllabus day". This day sets up the norms and helps the student make sense of the syllabus, the integrity of the faculty, and the reality of the course. The insight for students is where faculty place their emphasis on the syllabus. Are they just words or does the professor really mean the words? Faculty must use this day to make the connections between their syllabus, themselves, and their practice for students to accept that the three are linked together and for students to feel included.

The differences revealed by the students between course syllabi, specifically in STEM, coursework and the insight that marginalized students are not included in syllabi, is extremely important. STEM faculty must examine their practices in syllabi that perpetuates the colonial, White male perspective to prevent students from feeling imposter syndrome and pushing students away from the STEM fields (Rodriguez & Blaney, 2021). Continuing the male dominated perspective continues the marginalization of women, students of color, and students with disabilities. Using inclusive pedagogy and UDL could help diverse students feel included in the STEM field and may positively impact the recruitment and retention of diverse students (Fuentes et al., 2021). The integration of inclusive pedagogy and UDL should be the primary consideration and infused throughout the course development, including the syllabus (Iturbe-LaGrave et al., 2020). STEM departments must audit their syllabi for inclusive practices, or for policies and course materials that push marginalized students away, such as gendered language and lack of language related to chosen name and pronouns. Concentrating on the syllabus and including inclusive practices such as non-gendered language, valuing the students' cultural capital, and incorporating marginalized students' identities into policies will help improve inclusion and help in de-colonizing the syllabus.

Another implication of this study is the valuing of partnerships that come in different forms. One partnership is encouraging the student voice in the development of course materials and syllabi. The sharing of student experiences helps students learn from one another and gives value to their voices. Their voices add to the context of course materials. Efforts to support student voice may include partnering with students in adding context and content to the course (Benner et al., 2019; Kahne et al., 2022).

Another implication of this study's findings is learning versus performing. Rather than requiring students to perform for a grade by jumping through the hoops of deadlines and grades, faculty should provide learning opportunities grounded in UDL practices, labor-based grading, or other inclusive pedagogies and practices that emphasize learning. Faculty must evaluate their pedagogical practices. They must find alternatives to performing for a grade and not valuing student experience and voice. Faculty developers can aid by offering workshops on labor-based grading, inclusive pedagogies, and other practices that value learning over performing.

The final implication for practice is taking participants' recommendations to improve syllabi and putting them into practice. The suggestions outlined in theme five developed from students' experiences and the way the policies created further marginalization for them. Participants' recommendations include quick fixes, safe spaces, flexible polices, accommodating accommodations, and communication by and with faculty. Faculty awareness of how their policies create marginalization can address each of these categories quickly or through the incorporation of inclusive pedagogy, UDL, or by attending workshops addressing these topics. Implementing these implications will provide better outcomes for not only marginalized students but for all students.

Policy

This study resulted in implications for policy development. A place to start is addressing policies that make students with disabilities feel there are rules to be disabled. As the participants' experienced, federal laws enacted to protect students with disabilities end up causing harm based on the institutional processes required to receive accommodations. That harm comes in following rules for disability to receive accommodations. Due to the students' invisible disabilities, they faced mental health issues that stopped them from completing the

process, and some were unaware that they even had a disability. Campus accessibility and disability services (ADS) directors should work together to understand the issues with the laws and offer ways to address their policies to make the process on their campus more transparent for students and faculty. ADS and faculty developers can work together to provide workshops for faculty that educate on the process of accommodations. Faculty with this knowledge will then address the process in their syllabi. Through this collaboration, the process for students becomes more inclusive, understandable, and streamlined.

Advocates for policy reform at the state and federal levels are needed to champion for the needs of marginalized students so they do not feel there are rules to be disabled. Advocates from the administration, ADS, faculty, and students can come to a consensus on better ways to address the needs of students with disabilities. With their ideas in hand, stakeholders can educate federal and state legislators on the harm caused by laws that were meant to help and giving alternatives for legislators to act upon. The awareness of the harm is key in bringing forth the knowledge for change.

Administrators, such as faculty senates and provosts, must understand their student populations and work to adopt inclusive pedagogy and UDL principles for all faculty. Most faculty are not trained to teach in their graduate programs (Hativa, 1997; Schroeder, 2022) and learn to teach experientially, teach as they learned or how they were mentored (Hativa, 2000; Mazur, 2009; Schroeder, 2022). Faculty presume that making materials accessible to disabled students will compromise academic rigor (Womack, 2017) and these concerns need to be addressed. A policy created to address these shortcomings, with the implementation of workshops that provide faculty with the knowledge of inclusive practices and UDL principles.

Theory

        This study highlights the value of inclusive pedagogy and UDL through the participants'

responses. The participants were not educated about inclusive pedagogy or UDL; however, a few

experienced it, and they and others recommended ideas for practices that are in line with both.

The goal of inclusive pedagogy and UDL is to engage learners in significant, applicable, and

universally accessible learning experiences. The principles of inclusive pedagogy and

UDL,recognize the unique experiences and differences as a method to enrich the learning and

interactions of all students within the course. Without the knowledge of inclusive pedagogy, that

encompasses student-centered teaching and includes the identities of all students, combined with

the three principles of and UDL, students showed the need for both to support their inclusion in

the classroom.

        The marginalized student voice and experience as a counternarrative to policies and

practices shows the value of CRT and intersectionality drawn from the conceptual framework for

this study. The participants' experiences richly described their lack of inclusion while offering

ways to improve practices. The participants revealed systems of oppression in their experiences

with syllabi. The oppression occurred through policies in syllabi that further marginalized their

already marginalized identities, the dominance of the White narrative in course materials, and the

lack of inclusion of their identities.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Future Research

</div>

        This section provides recommendations for future research based on the study, the

limitations, and implications of findings. In this study, marginalized participants did not

understand themselves as included in syllabi. The implications section laid out ways to address

the lack of inclusion through inclusive pedagogy and UDL. The recommendations for future

research address further studies on how marginalized students find themselves included in syllabi. The value in the voice and lived experience of marginalized students suggests a qualitative method; however, a mixed methods or quantitative study could be used to address the topic. To take this study further, a survey could be created and validated that that could be used to confirm whether the experiences of this study's participants are found in other marginalized populations, regions, nationwide, or internationally.

The participants did not find that the marginalized identities of race were included in the syllabus. There were no participants who were Black or Hispanic voices in this study. A study with Black and Hispanic participants would give voice to these marginalized groups. The same IPA methodology could be used to allow for comparison with the findings from this study.

There is a decline in the male population attending and completing higher education (Reeves & Smith, 2021). Taking this study's purpose to give voice to marginalized students' voices, a study with participants who identify as White males and their experiences with inclusion in syllabi or another combination of marginalization could help to understand the declining enrollment.

The idea of syllabus day came forward in this study. Further studies that focus on the relationship between the faculty, syllabus day, the link to the syllabus, and student inclusion is yet another avenue to explore. This research could be carried out through comparisons of classes where faculty include syllabus day versus classes that do not. A quantitative study surveying faculty could be conducted to explore faculty perceptions of syllabus day. Likewise, students could be surveyed about the impact of syllabus day and the effect on their grades.

Another idea that came forward in this study was labor-based grading. Two of the participants participated in courses with labor-based grading and had positive experiences that

took into consideration their marginalized identities. This idea of a contract for work had prominence in the 1970s but lost favor (Inoue, 2022). The recent resurgence in labor-based grading is worth investigating. The investigation could be a comparison of labor-based grading versus structural grading and could offer insights into inclusion for marginalized students. Another study could be longitudinal and examine the long-term knowledge gains of students in labor-based grading courses versus traditional grading. All types of methods could be used to explore the impact of labor-based grading on the inclusion of marginalized students, but qualitative research would allow for the student voice of the experience.

Studies that focus on the outcomes or success of students in classes that use inclusive pedagogy and or UDL would be worthwhile. The comparison of courses that use inclusive pedagogy versus traditional pedagogies could explore marginalized students' perspective of inclusion and successful outcomes in the course. These studies could build upon the findings from this study, future practices, and make believers out of resistant faculty.

A final recommendation for future research is to explore the resistance of faculty to use inclusive pedagogy and UDL. Understanding why faculty are resistant allows faculty developers and administrators to address the needs of the resistant faculty. This new research could help faculty developers create workshops and trainings. The value of these recommendations for future research is ultimately to support the inclusion of marginalized students in courses.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The purpose of this study was to voice marginalized students' lived experiences by investigating how they experience themselves as included in syllabi and the meaning-making of their experiences. The IPA methodology explored the experiences of seven participants and through this analysis five themes emerged. The themes embodied the understanding of

participants' inclusion and their meaning-making through their intersectionality. Many of the participants' experiences were confirmed through the literature. The results of the study have implications for faculty, faculty developers, disability services, and administration by adding the voice of the lived experiences of marginalized students and syllabi. Future studies can further explore the marginalized students' experiences with syllabi, and practices that work to create inclusion for them. This study demonstrated the elements of the syllabus and practices that negatively and positively impact marginalized students, and the value of their voice to provide the narrative.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Doctoral Dissertation Study

Volunteers Needed for Research Study on Inclusion in Syllabi

The purpose of this study is to investigate how marginalized students experience themselves included in syllabi and their meaning-making of their experience with syllabi. Examining how marginalized students experience themselves included in syllabi will provide insight into their needs and the needed elements in syllabi to create inclusion for them in the document and classroom.

You May Qualify If You
- Are 18 or older
- Currently a third- or fourth-year student at the university
- From a marginalized population
- Have copies of current or previous syllabi

Potential Benefits
Participating in this study may help improve syllabi for student inclusion

Participation Involves
- One 60-minute recorded interview
- Possible up to 45-minute follow-up interview
- Possible follow-up for any questions researcher might regarding the interview
- Responding to data analysis from your interview for accuracy
- Reviewing your syllabi

Participants will be compensated.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Please contact Jean K. Bennett at 843-516-0677 or, email jbennet1@coastal.edu

Appendix B: Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FOR HUMAN
SUBJECT RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Introduction

My name is Jean K. Bennett, and I am a *doctoral candidate and staff member* at Coastal Carolina University. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study entitled, *How Marginalized Students Fined Themselves Included In Syllabi: An Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis.* You are free to talk with someone you trust about your participation in this research and may take time to reflect on whether you wish to participate or not. If you have any questions, I will answer them now or at any time during the study.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how marginalized students experience themselves included in syllabi and their meaning-making of their experience with syllabi. Examining how marginalized students experience themselves included in syllabi will provide insight into their needs and the needed elements in syllabi to create the experience of inclusion for them in the document and classroom.

Procedures

During this research study, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, meet in person or via Zoom for a one-hour recorded interview, a possible no longer than 45-minute follow up interview, possible to answer questions via phone for clarification of any questions from your interview, and participate in member-checking. Member-checking is a process where you will review my interpretation of your experience with syllabi and correct any misrepresentation of your experience.

Duration

For this research study, your participation will be required for a one-hour interview, filling out and returning a demographic questionnaire before the interview, possible 45-minute follow up interview, possible clarification questions, and member-checking. The time required should be no longer than three months from the time of your first interview.

Rights

You do not have to agree to participate in this research study. If you do choose to participate, you may choose not to at any time once the study begins. There is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing from the study at any time. If you are a CCU student, your decision to participate or not will have no affect your grade.

Risks

During this research study, *no risks or discomforts are anticipated*.

Benefits

By agreeing to participate in this research study, *it is not expected that you would benefit directly. This research, however, may help gain a better understanding of others within your community or society as a*

whole as a result of finding an answer to the research question.

Incentives
For your participation in this research study, you will be provided $15 dollars per interview, and $10 for the member-checking. The money will be paid via Venmo, PayPal, or a gift card of the participants choosing.

Confidentiality
Unless you provide consent to the contrary, the confidentiality of your participation in this research study, your responses or any individual results will be maintained by the PI and all members of the research team.

Note that confidentiality will only be violated when required by law or the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association. This usually includes, but may not be limited to, situations when your responses indicate that you, or another clearly identified individual, is at risk of imminent harm or situations in which faculty are mandated reporters, such as instances of child abuse or issues covered under Title IX regulations. For more information about Title IX, please see the University's webpage at: https://www.coastal.edu/titleix/.

Sharing the Results
As the Principal Investigator on this research study, I plan to share the results of this study in my dissertation, journal articles and conference presentations.

Contacts
If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me by phone 843-516-0677 or jbennet1@coastal.edu.

My faculty advisor on this study is Dr. Sheena Kauppila and she can also be contacted by phone 43-349-4098 or email skauppila@coastal.edu.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) under the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Services is responsible for the oversight of all human subject research conducted at Coastal Carolina University. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant before, during or after the research study, you may contact this office by calling (843) 349-2978 or emailing OSPRS@coastal.edu**.**

This research study has been approved by the IRB on December 15, 2022. This approval will expire on December 14, 2023, unless the IRB renews the approval prior to this date.

__Consent__

I have read this form and have been able to ask questions of the PI and/or discuss my participation with someone I trust. I understand that I can ask additional questions at any time during this research study and am free to withdraw from participation at any time.

☐   **I agree to take part in this research study.**

☐   **I agree to allow my name or other identifying information to be included in reports,**

publications and/or presentations resulting from this research study.

☐   **I DO NOT agree to allow my name or other identifying information to be included in**

reports, publications and/or presentations resulting from this research study.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

**PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO OR AUDIO
RECORDING AUTHORIZATION**

I hereby release, discharge and agree to save harmless Coastal Carolina University, its successors, assigns, officers, employees or agents, any person(s) or corporation(s) for whom it might be acting, and any firm publishing and/or distributing any photograph, video footage or audio recording produced as part of this research, in whole or in part, as a finished product, from and against any liability as a result of any distortion, blurring, alteration, visual or auditory illusion, or use in composite form, either intentionally or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in the recording, processing, reproduction, publication or distribution of any photograph, videotape, audiotape or interview, even should the same subject me or my to ridicule, scandal, reproach, scorn or indignity. I hereby agree that the photographs, video footage and audio recordings may be used under the conditions stated herein without blurring my identifying characteristics.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Jean K. Bennett by phone 843-516-0677 or jbennet1@coastal.edu.

The faculty advisor on this study is Dr. Sheena Kauppila and she can also be contacted by phone 843-349-4098 or email skauppila@coastal.edu.

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I have read this authorization and have been able to ask questions of the PI and/or discuss my participation with someone I trust. I understand that I can ask additional questions at any time during this research study and am free to withdraw from participation at any time.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

Doctoral Dissertation Research Questionnaire: How marginalized Students Find Themselves Included in Syllabi

My name is Jean K. Bennett, and I am a doctoral candidate at Coastal Carolina University and a staff member. I am conducting research on marginalized students and how they find themselves included in syllabi. Specifically, third- or fourth-year marginalized students. The following questionnaire has eight questions and should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete. Your response will be kept anonymous, and will not be identified with your name, but with your pseudonym/alias that you choose. If you have any questions about the questionnaire, please call me at 843-349-2481 or email jbennet1@coastal.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

1. Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Email: Click or tap here to enter text.

3. Phone: Click or tap here to enter text.

4. Pseudonym/Alias: Click or tap here to enter text.

5. I am 18 years old or older: yes ☐ no ☐

6. Name of University you attend: Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Current undergraduate college status:

   third-year ☐   fourth-year ☐   not applicable ☐

8. I identify with the following (answer all that apply):

   Race non-White specifically: Click or tap here to enter text.

   Low Socioeconomic status: Yes ☐   No ☐ Not sure ☐
   (Information on Socioeconomic Status)

   Gender: Click or tap here to enter text.

   Student with a disability (describe): Click or tap here to enter text.

9. Do you have prior syllabi that you can bring with you to the interview: Yes ☐   No ☐

Syllabi are for your reference purpose and will not be collected.

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Welcome
(Say participant's name) As you know through our previous conversation, I am Jean K. Bennett, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the higher education administration program, at Coastal Carolina University. I am also a staff member. I want to thank you for your time and participation today as we explore your experiences with higher ed syllabi. You are the expert in your experiences with syllabi. I am here to listen and understand your experiences.

The interview will be recorded so that I can have a transcript that will be edited, and I can review the files in my data analysis. All files will be stored on my personal computer. Upon completion of editing the transcript, the data analysis, and the completion of my dissertation, I will delete the audio and video files.

You have signed an informed consent for both the study and the recordings. If at any time you want to stop, please let me know.

I want you to be a comfortable as you can and know that I am here to listen and understand your experience. I am open to your experience and want to understand it through your perspective. I will take brief notes while you are speaking and these notes will be interesting things you say, or mannerisms you use while you are speaking, so please do not think I am not listening to you when I am writing these brief notes.

This interview will not last longer than an hour unless you agree to extending time based on your experience. I have a few prepared open-ended questions and will use them unless your responses take us in another direction.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself and your background.

2. How did you come to be a student at this university?

3. What were your expectations about being a student at the university?

   Prompts: What did you expect? What were your expectations based on?

4. If someone did not know you, how would you describe yourself to that person?

   Prompts: What did you choose [insert an identity they chose]?

5. How do you think students and or instructors see you?

   Prompts: What was/were the experience(s) like? Can you give me some specifics

   about why you think that?

6. How have you experienced (any of) your marginalized identity(ties) in the classroom?

Prompts: What was that like? What changes did you make because of this/these experience(s)?

7. Tell me about your experience with syllabi,

Prompts: How have you experienced yourself as included in the syllabus?

Can you give me a specific example from a course? What made you feel that way?

8. How have you experienced (any of) your marginalized identity(ties) in the syllabus?

Prompts: Can you give me a specific example? What made you feel that way?

9. How are you included or not included in the policies in syllabi? (only ask if they did not include in their prior responses)

Prompts: Can you give me a specific example? What made you feel that way?

10. How are you included or not included in the course materials? (only ask if they did not include in their prior responses)

Prompts: Can you give me a specific example? What made you feel that way?

11. Suppose I was a new student with the same identities as you, what would you tell me about my identities in the syllabus?

12. Describe the ideal syllabus that you would design based on your identities.

13. Is there anything you would like to tell me that I did not ask?

Appendix E: Member Checking Email

From: Jean Bennett <jbennet1@coastal.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 6:36:28 PM
To: Margaret
Subject: Member checking

Hello Margaret
Here is the link to the document containing the table with my analysis of your interview. Margaret'sthemetable.docx
Please do the following to participate in member-checking:
Read the theme, then the subtheme and quotes for each subtheme.
Check for the accuracy of what you meant in the quote versus the theme.
The quotes are taken verbatim from the transcript and are accurate to what was in the audio recording.
If you misspoke or feel I did not capture the true meaning of your experience, please advise in response to this email within the next 48 hours.
Once you respond, I will send the Venmo payment.

Thanks again

** My working hours may not be your working hours. Please do not feel obligated to reply to this email outside of your working hours.**

Jean K. Bennett
(she/her/hers)
Center for Professional Development and Academic Technology
Baxley Hall 223-D
P.O. Box 261954
Conway, SC 29528-6054
843-349-2481

The land on which Coastal Carolina University stands is part of the traditional territory of the Waccamaw Indian People.
We honor them and express our gratitude to the ancestors who lived here in the past,
the Waccamaw Indian People today, and the generations to come.

Appendix F: Email Johnathan Smith, PhD

Jean Bennett

From: Jonathan Smith (Staff) <ja.smith@bbk.ac.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, February 15, 2023 4:52 PM
To: Jean Bennett
Subject: RE: IPA Research

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Dear Jean

There is not an absolute correct answer to this question as the different responses you are getting illustrates. It certainly is the case that IPA studies have been published with Ns of 1 and 4. At the same time the PhD is a substantial piece of work which is generally considered to be the equivalent of something like three papers. There is some degree of agreement at present around the idea of 10 being the number of participants to aim for in a phd- this may be in one big study or spread over two or three smaller ones. Another issue to factor in is quality. If the data obtained and the analysis performed are exceptional that counts for a lot and may point to a smaller number being needed overall. Similarly if one has accessed an extremely difficult to reach or a very unusual sample, then again a smaller number can be justified.

Finally part of the job of the advisor/supervisor is to try to predict and pre-empt difficulties in the viva. it is the case that whatever student and advisor think, there will be other assessors who are more sceptical of a low number and one needs to be prepared for that.

Best wishes with your work

Jonathan Smith

From: Jean Bennett <jbennet1@coastal.edu>
Sent: 15 February 2023 20:55
To: Jonathan Smith (Staff) <ja.smith@bbk.ac.uk>
Subject: IPA Research

Hello Dr. Smith,
I am a Ph.D. candidate working on my dissertation, How Marginalized Students Find Themselves Included In Syllabi: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. I have a question that I hope you can answer.
I have interviewed four fourth-year undergraduate students and believe I have enough data from these interviews to answer my research questions. In your many scholarly works, I have read that IPA can be a single case or multiple cases and that it comes down to the researcher making this decision. How should I approach other who believe more are needed? I can cite many passages from your work in defense of only using four, and I believe I can show this in my analysis, but I wonder how you would address this dilemma.

Thank you for your time, research, guidance, and consideration of my question.

*** My working hours may not be your working hours. Please do not feel obligated to reply to this email outside of your working hours.***

Jean K. Bennett
(she/her/hers)
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Conway, SC 29528-6054
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