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## **A Comparison Study of Vocational Factors Influencing Academic Satisfaction for Marginalized and Majority Students**

Sara Driver

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A COMPARISON STUDY OF VOCATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING  
ACADEMIC SATISFACTION FOR MARGINALIZED AND MAJORITY STUDENTS

by

Sara Adee Driver

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School,  
the College of Education and Human Sciences  
and the School of Psychology  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by:

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## ABSTRACT

Marginalized college students experience increased rates of discrimination resulting in poorer academic outcomes whereas majority students are often afforded more privilege and access to resources allowing them to be more successful (Bardhardt et al., 2017; Milkman et al., 2015; Hanson, 2021). Psychology of Working Theory (PWT; Duffy et al., 2016) posits that experiences of discrimination and marginalization can negatively impact the chances for one to be successful in the world of work. PWT argues that decent work is a desired outcome by marginalized individuals and research confirms that securing future decent work is important to marginalized college students (Ma et al., 2021). Research appears to argue that future occupational prestige is most important for majority students (Walker & Tracey, 2012). Currently, the literature suggests the needs of marginalized students and majority students are different, but it is possible these two groups overlap (Schreiner et al., 2011). The proposed study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by comparing the perceptions of future decent work and future occupational prestige via occupational aspirations in marginalized and majority students as well as the impact these perceptions have on academic satisfaction. A total of 323 participants recruited via the School of Psychology's research recruitment system, SONA, were used in a multi-group structural equation model with invariance testing between the two groups. No meaningful differences were found between the two groups and future decent work was found to significantly affect academic satisfaction for the group as a whole, but not occupational prestige. Implications for this study include informing colleges and universities about the needs of marginalized students and aids in efforts to increase retention across all students, with an emphasis on marginalized students which colleges

particularly struggle to retain.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family who have supported me through my many years of education and this dissertation even when you didn't understand what I was doing and when it meant losing quality time or missing family events. Additionally, I would like to dedicate this work to my friends, Kayla, Liz, Nick, Melanie, Ben, Roxanne, and Madison as they provided continuous encouragement, love, and support which made this experience easier. Finally, I would like to dedicate this to my dog, Butters. You had your moments of almost non-stop barking while I was working, but instead of barks for attention I choose to see these barks as you cheering me on.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
DEDICATION .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	x
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION .....	1
Marginalized and Majority Students .....	2
Psychology of Working Theory .....	5
Future Decent Work .....	6
Future Occupational Prestige .....	8
Academic Satisfaction .....	10
Current Study .....	11
CHAPTER II – METHODS .....	14
Participants and Procedures .....	14
Instruments .....	18
Demographic Form .....	18
Future Decent Work .....	20
Occupational Prestige .....	21



Academic Satisfaction .....	22
CHAPTER III - RESULTS.....	23
CHAPTER IV – DISCUSSION.....	27
Limitations and Future Directions .....	30
APPENDIX A – Figures and Tables.....	36
APPENDIX B – Instruments .....	40
Demographic Questionnaire .....	40
Future Decent Work Scale .....	46
Career Aspirations Scale – Revised.....	47
Academic Satisfaction .....	48
APPENDIX C –IRB Approval Letter .....	50
REFERENCES .....	51

## LIST OF TABLES

Table A1. Demographics .....	36
Table A2. Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics for the Total Sample .....	37
Table A3. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics by Marginalized and Majority Participants.....	38

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Multigroup Structural Equation Model of Future Decent Work and Future Occupational Prestige’s Impact on Academic Satisfaction for Marginalized and Majority Students..... 13

Figure 2. Multigroup Structural Equation Model of Future Decent Work and Future Occupational Prestige’s Impact on Academic Satisfaction for Marginalized and Majority Students with Path Coefficients ..... 26

Figure A1. Structural Equation Measurement Model..... 39

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CAS</i>	Career Aspirations Scale
<i>CFI</i>	Comparative Fit Index
<i>DWS</i>	Decent Work Scale
<i>FDW</i>	Future Decent Work
<i>FDWS</i>	Future Decent Work Scale
<i>GPA</i>	Grade Point Average
<i>PWT</i>	Psychology of Working Theory
<i>RMSEA</i>	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
<i>SEM</i>	Structural Equation Model
<i>SES</i>	Socioeconomic Status
<i>USM</i>	The University of Southern Mississippi

## CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities across the United States are facing what some have argued is the most significant challenge to date: determining how to best support and promote the success of marginalized students (Kezar & Kitchen, 2020). Research has demonstrated that marginalized students experience more academic difficulties during college compared to their majority peers such as lower GPA and lower levels of academic satisfaction (Chen, 2005; D’Amico & Dika, 2013; Mandy & Paulsen, 2005; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Despite ongoing research, marginalized students continue to struggle in college (Kezar & Kitchen, 2020; Bardhardt et al., 2017) and universities and colleges continue to struggle with retaining them (Galicki & McEwen, 1989; Wells, 2008; Tranter et al., 2018). Statistically, research suggests that only about 41% of college students will complete their college degree with the overwhelming amount of those students falling to complete their degree identifying as marginalized (e.g., students of color, ethnically diverse students) (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.; McClain & Perry, 2017).

There is a variety of research comparing various identities, marginalized and majority, to what vocational factors each group might identify as being important for their well-being and future career. For example, Ma et al., (2021) has argued that marginalized students are concerned that their future work is decent work. Walker and Tracey (2012) have found that the occupation’s prestige or what we aspire to for work is commonly important to majority students. Yet, Nunez and Sansone (2016) have shown us that the prestige of the occupation is also important to the marginalized student. The picture is complex and not fully understood from a research perspective. There was no

research identified that examined what importance the commonly researched concepts of decent work and occupational prestige or aspirations may hold for both groups, especially as it relates to academic satisfaction (Allan et al., 2021; Reysen et al., 2020). The current study seeks to clarify if there is a distinct difference in what marginalized and majority students hope for and aspire to while in college. Perhaps they share more in those hopes than much of the previous research has assumed (Schreiner et al., 2011).

In sum, this is a study comparing marginalized and majority students and how their perceptions towards future decent work and future occupational prestige via occupational aspirations impact their academic satisfaction. By comparing these constructs across these two student populations, we can begin to test the assumption that the two groups are meaningfully different and warrant different approaches to achieve academic satisfaction. This study not only tests a long-standing assumption and fills gaps in the literature, but it also exists to potentially assist with the retention of all students.

#### Marginalized and Majority Students

Hays' (1996) "ADRESSING model" was used as a framework to help inform our definition of marginalized students for the current study. The ADRESSING model (Hays, 1996) focuses on the following nine groups which have historically been marginalized by the field of counseling: age/generational, disability, religion, ethnicity/race, social status, sexual orientation, indigenous heritage, national origin, and gender. The social status group in Hays' (1996) model was expanded to include first generation college students as they are marginalized in a college environment (NASPA, 2017). For this study, first-generation college students were defined as any student whose parents do not have a college degree. Those self-identifying as non-gender minority women without other

intersecting marginalized identities were not included in the marginalized category. Many policies enacted, such as Title IX and affirmative action, that were meant to diversify higher education, have arguably done more to advance white women and less to advance women of color justifying the inclusion of white women in the majority group (NCAA, 2021; Klein & Martin, 2021; Buchanan et al., 2009; Kalof et al., 2001; Yoon et al., 2010; Skrentny, 2006; Walker et al., 2021; Nelson, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2019)

Broadly, marginalized students tend to perceive themselves as being less capable while in college and thus incapable of obtaining certain types of work in the future (Lenton, 2015). Marginalized students may endure many struggles during their college experience (e.g., economic hardship and discrimination) which can negatively affect their perceptions of themselves and what they can achieve (Ma et al., 2021). Marginalized students also do not report the same level of academic satisfaction as majority students while in college for similar reasoning (discrimination and classism) resulting in poorer academic outcomes such as lower GPAs and lower rates of degree completion (Allan et al., 2016; Allan et al., 2020; Allan et al., 2021). Parallel with institutions of higher education, in the world of work those with marginalized identities are underrepresented in occupations considered to have high prestige when compared to those with majority identities (Signorelli, 2009). Additionally, college students judge occupations that require more education as predominately consisting of majority individuals (Crawley, 2014). Despite the aforementioned research, there is no evidence thus far to suggest that marginalized students do not want or aspire toward occupational prestige (Schneider et al., 2017). In fact, many, regardless of identity, enter college with the aspiration of attaining a high-prestige occupation after graduation as a way to obtain stability in an

ever-growing, competitive job market (Schneider et al., 2017). Therefore, if a marginalized student finds they are unable to achieve the original goal and wanted outcome with their college degree, their outcome expectation and goals may consistently go unmet, thus lowering their academic satisfaction (Sheu et al., 2016) and pushing them toward settling for a job they do not truly want.

Hays (1996) argues identities such as being white, cisgender, heterosexual, and male are considered to have more privilege. Additionally, white women are increasingly considered to be a part of the dominate culture because their worldviews and cultural values are becoming more like the dominant culture (Hays, 1996). Thus, any man or woman who also identifies as cisgender, heterosexual, white, and a non-first-generation college student will be considered to belong to this study's majority group. Majority students are afforded privilege which can make college less complicated and equates to more success. Majority students are more likely to have the necessary human capital (Hanson, 2021; Kimmes & Heckman, 2017; Hurd et al., 2016), cultural capital (Milkman, 2015; Jez, 2014), and social support (Johnson-Esparza et al., 2021). The increased amount of capital and support often creates less of a barrier for majority students allowing them to be more successful, which is reflected in education statistics. As of 2021, 55.2% of college students nationwide identify as white or Caucasian while Latinx students make up 19.5% of college students and Black students make up only 9.6% (Hanson, 2021). Additionally, white students graduate at higher rate, finish school faster with most finishing in a maximum of four years, and have an increased earning potential because of their degree when compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Hanson, 2021).



## Psychology of Working Theory

Psychology of Working Theory (PWT; Duffy et al., 2016) is a vocational psychology theory that is social justice focused and expanded the realm of what should be considered when thinking about the world of work (Blustein, 2019). PWT highlights workplace issues such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and inequity and states that these issues impact one's world of work making it difficult for the affected individuals to gain access to opportunities and dignified work (Blustein, 2013). Blustein (2013) outlines several core tenants of PWT which, in sum, argue that work is an important aspect of a person's life as it has implications for one's well-being as well as overall survival and that contextual factors should be taken into account as these can also influence one's work life.

Two relevant key constructs of PWT are decent work and economic conditions (Duffy et al., 2016). An occupation can be considered decent work if the environment is safe physically and interpersonally, there is time for rest and leisure, adequate compensation, access to healthcare, and compatible values (Duffy et al., 2016). Achieving decent work leads to outcomes such as meeting basic survival needs, increased social connectedness, self-determination, achieving work fulfillment and increased well-being (Duffy et al., 2016, Swanson, 2012; Blustein et al., 2016). Consequences of not achieving decent work include an increased risk of poverty, gender-based discrimination, safety issues, and child labor (Horne et al., 2016). Economic conditions refer to the ability to earn a living wage and underemployment (Duffy et al., 2016). When a person's educational level is mismatched with their occupational status, they are considered to be underemployed and most often the person's educational level is higher than their level of

employment which can have negative consequences such as lowered perceptions and levels of occupational prestige (Medvide et al., 2019; Kim & Allan, 2019; Koen et al., 2014). Many college students want and need to find quality work after graduation, meaning that their education is appropriately matched with the level of employment they secure (Medvide et al., 2019; Kim & Allan, 2019). Having a marginalized identity threatens one's ability to achieve an educational experience that will supply occupational prestige whereas belonging to a majority group makes it more likely one will secure the occupational prestige they set out to achieve (Masdonati et al., 2021).

Historically, PWT has focused on working adults, but PWT is also relevant in college populations as many of its constructs have been linked to important academic outcomes. Further, academic variables appear to be influenced by contextual factors such as discrimination and can bring about detrimental consequences. Research has shown there to be a link between a student's academic satisfaction and a positive perception of future work with some researchers suggesting that academic satisfaction is comparable to job satisfaction when in academic settings (Allen, 1996; Ma et al., 2021). In sum, academic satisfaction in college seems to be related to a student's later success in their career which, as mentioned previously, is important not only for career satisfaction, but overall well-being. Therefore, Psychology of Working Theory is a good basis for understanding what is needed for all college students to achieve and be satisfied in their academic setting to assist them in being successful in their careers.

#### Future Decent Work

Future decent work is defined as one's outlook that their future work will be decent in contrast to their current work experiences (Kim et al., 2020). Existing literature

has demonstrated that future decent work is important to marginalized and majority students (Ma et al. 2019). Kim and colleagues (2019) studied college students and their perceptions of future decent work and found college students with greater resources believed they had more choice in career decision making, felt like they were more likely to achieve the career they wanted after college, and had a higher chance of achieving future decent work. Secondly, more resources were found to be positively related to higher occupational engagement which the researchers hypothesized was due to those with more privilege feeling a greater sense of freedom in their career choice. These findings have implications for both marginalized and majority college students. One implication is that systemic barriers, or lack thereof, impacts a student's perception of their occupational options thus impacting how engaged a student is during college and what a student perceives as an achievable occupation (Ma et al., 2021). Additionally, access to resources, especially economic resources that are many times afforded because of privilege, are an integral component for college students feeling like they have better occupational opportunities, such as access to future decent work. This study speaks to the issue that future decent work perceptions are not unique to students with marginalized identities. It also speaks to the issue that marginalized students may settle for an educational experience that will help them secure future decent work, as opposed to feeling more freedom in their options for a career (Wei et al., 2021). Wei and colleagues (2021) emphasize that college students have identified future decent work as being an important vocational factor and that there are wellbeing implications on whether or not you find decent work. Therefore, the current study utilized future decent work as a variable to understand its relationships for marginalized and majority students.

## Future Occupational Prestige

Occupational prestige is the preferred level of aspiration, occupation, training, public recognition, esteem, and responsibility coupled with the desire for high income and socioeconomic status (Gottfredson, 1996). Many operational definitions have been used and include concepts such as status, socioeconomic level, and level of difficulty and responsibility that comes with a job title (Walker & Tracy, 2012). Lower occupational prestige is associated with higher levels of psychological stress, poorer physical health, poverty, substance use, discrimination, and even death (Christ et al., 2012; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Cheng & Furnham, 2019). Similar to PWT, research supports the notion that contextual factors, privilege, and oppression influence perceptions of occupational prestige. For example, those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds perceive themselves as capable of achieving occupational prestige and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not (Cheng & Tracy, 2013). This has been associated with a lower self-esteem and self-efficacy of students from low SES backgrounds (Kraus & Park 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2002; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols 2007; Wiederkehr et al., 2015). Regarding race and ethnicity, white students and black students perceive occupational prestige differently. White students' prestige perceptions, when compared to black students, were more consistent with what is considered to be the standard, widely accepted prestige ratings for occupations. This also suggests that majority students set the norms for various aspects of the college experience (Walker & Tracey, 2012). In terms of gender, men typically have more positive perceptions about their ability to achieve occupational prestige compared to women and job titles perceived as belonging to more men are ranked higher in occupational prestige than job titles perceived as belonging to

more women (Oswald, 2003). This has implications for those with intersecting identities such as black women.

There is a difference in perception of occupational prestige between marginalized students and majority students as outlined above, however this difference in perception does not speak directly to the wants of students, especially marginalized students. In the research reviewed thus far, none have mentioned students with marginalized identities not wanting occupational prestige. In fact, some research suggests that marginalized students attend college because they think it will increase their chances of achieving occupational prestige (Nunez & Sansone, 2016) only to have their perceptions about their ability to obtain it changed as they progress through their studies (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols 2007; Wiederkehr et al., 2015; Kudrna et al., 2010) leading them to perceive themselves as incapable of attaining high occupational prestige (Kudrna et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important to know if occupational prestige desires persist whether one perceives it as achievable or not.

Historically, studies have failed to measure occupational prestige in a way that allows us to understand how a college student's desire for future occupational prestige is being met while still in school, how identities may play a role, and what implications this has for educational outcomes. Occupational aspiration measures have been used to study occupational prestige in research and the two have been found to have shared components and practical implications such as influencing career decision making and predicting later occupational attainment (Tracy & Rounds, 1996; Rojewski, 2005; Howard et al., 2011; Lee & Rojewski, 2009; Guntern et al., 2016; Gottredson, 1996; Holland & Lutz, 1967; Strong 1953). Like occupational prestige, occupational aspirations

are influenced by variables like race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender. Specifically, those identifying with marginalized identities are more likely to restrict their occupational aspirations and perceptions of prestige due to barriers they face (Lee & Rojewski, 2009; Saw et al., 2018). Those who identify with a majority identity tend to aspire higher and perceive themselves as capable of obtaining more occupational prestige (Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Lee & Rojewski, 2009). Due to similarities between occupational prestige and aspiration, and no current measure evaluating college students' perceptions of occupational prestige, measuring perceptions of occupational prestige appears to be best measured via occupational aspirations. Thus, the current study utilized a career aspiration measure in order to measure future occupational prestige amongst marginalized and majority college students as accurately as possible.

#### Academic Satisfaction

Academic satisfaction is an important outcome in vocational research (Ma et al., 2021; Perera & McIlveen, 2017). It is considered similar to career adaptation in the workplace setting (Perera & McIlveen, 2017) and is comparable to job satisfaction (Allen, 1996). Differing levels of academic satisfaction have been found in marginalized and majority students. First generation college students, those from low SES backgrounds, as well as gender, racial, and ethnic minorities commonly report lower academic satisfaction (Allan et al., 2016; Allan et al., 2020; Flores et al., 2021; Tram et al., 2020). Many studies examining academic satisfaction in marginalized populations have used white students as their comparison group, and many studies have found meaningful differences between the levels of academic satisfaction suggesting that

majority students may experience higher levels of academic satisfaction compared to marginalized students (Flores et al., 2021; Flores et al., 2014).

Academic satisfaction also aligns with concepts and constructs of PWT. Research by Duffy and colleagues (2016) assert that the ability, or inability, for students to secure necessary resources subsequently impacts that student's ability to actively decide their occupation after graduation, with the inability to secure resources and make career decisions leading to poorer academic satisfaction. Ultimately, marginalized students often fail to get their needs met, feel bad about their work in college, are less confident in their future career choices, and experience lower levels of academic satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2012). Additionally, students with marginalized identities often report less choice and more barriers negatively impacting their academic satisfaction (Allan et al., 2016). On the other hand, students in the majority group often have more privilege and thus more career choices while in college which is predictive of academic satisfaction (Allan et al., 2020).

### Current Study

The present study aimed to further our understanding of what may be important to all students and contribute to satisfaction in the college environment. Specifically, this study explored how perceptions of future decent work and future occupational prestige via occupational aspirations impacted both marginalized and majority students' level of academic satisfaction. The literature reviewed revealed there have been some long-held assumptions that differences exist in what these two populations want. The assumptions followed the pattern that marginalized students want future decent work (Ma et al., 2021) and majority students want future occupational prestige (Walker & Tracey, 2012). The literature also indicates that current approaches to supporting marginalized students are

not working. The ineffectiveness of current approaches is shown in outcomes related to low college retention rates (Tranter et al., 2018), poor well-being (Kezar & Kitchen, 2020), and lower academic satisfaction (Allen et al., 2016). However, current research efforts stop short of program development and how best to solve the issue of how to support and ensure the success of students. Thus, this study begins to fill this gap by testing the previously mentioned assumptions in the literature as well as provide evidence as to whether program development should support these assumptions or go in a different direction in order to best support students. Research also suggests that career development concepts, like occupational prestige, exist on a spectrum meaning that while individuals value vocational factors differently the value cannot be dichotomized simply as yes or no (Valentino, 2022). In fact, marginalized students were shown to endorse future occupational prestige as an important factor in their future career as well as future decent work (Nunez & Sansone, 2016; Wei et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021). Similarly, majority students typically report future occupational prestige as something of importance when considering careers in college (Oswald, 2003; Walker & Tracey, 2012). However, no literature was found that explores the construct of future decent work with majority students, and there was no literature that compared these two groups and their perceptions about future occupational prestige and future decent work. Therefore, it remains unclear if the assumption that majority students wanting future occupational prestige and marginalized students wanting future decent work is true.

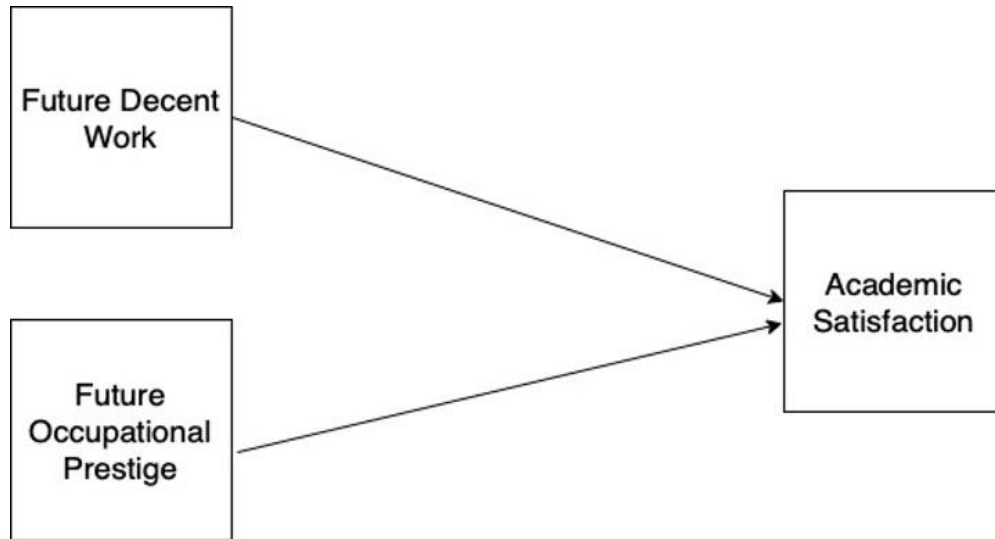
Given the evidence presented thus far, hypothesis one (H1) stated that for both groups, future decent work and future occupational prestige would significantly impact academic satisfaction. We hypothesized (H2) there to be no meaningful difference



between majority students and marginalized students in terms of what significantly impacted their academic satisfaction (e.g., future decent work or occupational prestige).

The model is presented in Figure 1.

*Figure 1. Multigroup Structural Equation Model of Future Decent Work and Future Occupational Prestige's Impact on Academic Satisfaction for Marginalized and Majority Students*



## CHAPTER II – METHODS

### Participants and Procedures

Data was collected from two distinct groups, marginalized college students and majority college students between August 2022 and December 2022. At this time, face-to-face instruction had returned and COVID was considered less of a threat to the university where data was collected (e.g., limited mask use, extracurricular events allowed). As mentioned previously, marginalized and majority student groups were determined using Hays (1996) “ADRESSING model” which argues there are nine cultural influences that should be considered which are age, disability, religion, ethnicity/race, social status, sexual orientation, indigenous heritage, national origin, and gender. For this study, marginalized students included students who self-identified as any or a combination of the following marginalized groups: students of color (e.g., African American, Latino, Native American), those having indigenous origin and/or national origin that is outside of the United States, low socioeconomic status, first-generation college student, belonging to a sexual minority, identifying with a gender minority, and those who identify as disabled. Majority students included those who identified as a man or woman that also identified as cisgender, heterosexual, non-first-generation college students, white, and a non-gender minority. While women have been defined as a marginalized group (Hays, 1996), those self-identifying as non-gender minority women without other intersecting marginalized identities were not included in the marginalized category for this study. This was determined because research has shown that policies (e.g., affirmative action and Title IX) enacted by the United States government and universities to help marginalized students have been found to disproportionately help

white women instead of marginalized students as a whole furthering the lack of support for students with other marginalized identities (Skrentny, 2006; Walker et al., 2021; Nelson, 2016).

After receiving approval from the institutional review board, participants were recruited through the School of Psychology's online survey management system for research participation, SONA. Participants were rerouted to Qualtrics, a secure online survey system, to complete the survey. Participants were instructed to review and complete an informed consent form and report their age to ensure all participants were 18 years or older. After this, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, which is included in the appendix, followed by measures of future decent work perceptions, occupational prestige in their future career, and academic satisfaction. The mean completion time for this survey was 32 minutes. For compensation, participants were awarded extra credit for their chosen psychology course.

Using the Meade & Craig (2012) approach, efforts were made to assess the consistency and validity participant responses in order to promote data integrity. This study included two different types of quality assurance checks. The first was three directed response questions (e.g., please select strongly disagree for this item) dispersed throughout the survey to align with item format in the study's measures. Participants who answered two out of three validity checks incorrectly were routed to the end of the survey and a message stating they will not be receiving SONA credit due to their inconsistent responses to survey items was displayed. Participants who did not respond correctly to validity checks had their data removed from the final sample used for analysis. The second quality assurance measure was to assess the amount of time a participant took to

complete the survey. Participants with a survey time that was less than half of the mean completion time were considered to fall at the less than expected amount of completion time threshold. These responses were individually reviewed post data collection to determine if they were valid and could be kept in the final sample.

A multi-group structural equation model was used. The appropriate sample size minimum for this type of analysis has changed over the years. As a result, this has created variance and uncertainty when researchers need to determine an appropriate sample size for psychology research using SEMs. A study by Wolf and colleagues (2013), revealed sample size requirements ranging from 30 to 460 participants. The current general rule of thumb regarding multi-group SEMs and sample size requirements is 100 participants per group meaning a total sample size of at least 200 participants for this study (Kline, 2015).

A total of 358 individuals engaged with the survey. Twenty-three people were removed due to a lack of survey completion. Specifically, these individuals completed the required demographic information but did not complete any of the survey measures. There were no instances of individuals completing some measures but not others. Eleven people failed the validity checks due to incorrectly answering two out of the three attention checks (e.g., Please select moderately true of me for this question) distributed throughout the survey. No individuals were removed from the sample due to significantly short survey completion time. One person did not list their age and therefore was removed as we could not confirm that the participant met the minimum age requirement of 18.

A total of 323 participants were used for analyses. Of these participants, 220 were categorized as marginalized students and 103 were categorized as majority. For gender,

82% identified as female, 13.6% identified as male, and 3.7% identified as gender fluid or non-binary. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the overall sample was 70% white, 24.5% African American or black, 2.2% Asian, 0.3% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 3.1% as other. The overwhelming majority of the sample, 80%, identified as straight. Those who identified as bisexual accounted for 10.8% of the sample and third largest group was those identifying as pansexual which accounted for 2.5% of the sample. Thirty-eight percent of the sample endorsed growing up in a home where the income was less than \$50,000 which was determined to be the cut off for being considered as part of the marginalized sample for income. Participants were asked about their status as a first-generation student in a series of questions and 39% were considered to be first-generation college students. Participants were also asked about their classification. Fifty-one percent were freshman, 20.7% were sophomores, 13.9% were juniors, and 14.2% were seniors. All demographic frequencies can be found in Table 1 in the appendix.

The majority group was composed of 17 men and 86 women that also reported identifying as cisgender, heterosexual, non-first-generation college students, white, and a non-gender minority. Of the marginalized student group, 79.5% endorsed multiple marginalized identities. For example, many of those who identified as a racial/ethnic minority also identified as a first-generation college student or a gender minority or coming from a lower socioeconomic background. The marginalized group was composed of 27 males, 179 women, and 14 individuals who identified as a gender minority (e.g., non-binary, gender fluid). The breakdown for race and ethnicity is as follows: 1 American Indian/Alaskan Native, 7 Asian/Pacific Islander/Middle Eastern, 79 Black/African American, 123 White, and 10 identified as other with most of these

individuals identifying as biracial. Also in the marginalized sample, 5 identified as lesbian, 4 as gay, 35 as bisexual, 4 as queer, 4 as asexual, 8 as pansexual, 156 as straight, and 4 as other. Approximately 7% reported being born outside of the U.S., 55.5% did not have a religious affiliation, 48.7% reported a household income of less than \$50,000, and 50.5% were first-generation students.

## Instruments

### *Demographic Form*

A questionnaire was used to capture demographic information of all participants. This demographic form assessed different indicators of a student belonging to a marginalized group or a majority group. Specifically, questions assessed ability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, racial and ethnic minority, indigenous origin, national origin, religious affiliation, and if someone was a first-generation college student. Ability status was assessed via 6 questions that are considered to be the minimum required by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to assess for ability status in government documentation such applications for disability benefits (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). These questions asked about being deaf or hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired, difficulties bathing or getting dressed, serious difficulties walking or climbing stairs, as well as issues with concentration and difficulties running errands alone due to a person's mental state and/or mental illness. Participants were placed in the marginalized student group if they endorsed having difficulty with hearing, seeing, bathing/dressing, and/or walking and climbing stairs. For religiousness, participants were asked whether they had a religious affiliation and those who selected yes were asked to list their religious affiliation. Individuals who either did not have a religious affiliation or

were affiliated with a non-Christian religion (e.g., atheism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhist) were marginalized and those who endorsed a Christian religion were in the majority sample. This classification of religiosity is supported by the literature with Ahmadi and colleagues (2019) stating that non-Christian religious groups within the U.S. receive a disproportionate amount of hate, prejudice, and discrimination (e.g., antisemitism) when compared to Christian religions.

To assess social status, MacArthur's Scale of Subjective Social Status was used to help explain the sample as well as help categorize participants into either the marginalized or majority category. Participants were shown a picture of a ladder with 10 rungs, and were asked to imagine the ladder as representing the different places in society where people stand with those best off (e.g., have more money, more educated, better jobs) at the top of the ladder and people at the bottom are those who are worse off (e.g., least amount of money, least educated, and worse or no job). This subjective measure of social status has been useful in previous research and has been found to be related to important outcomes such as health and psychological factors (Adler et al., 2000; Garza et al., 2017). Participants were asked to place themselves on the rung that is most representative of where they believe they are. Respondents for this study mostly reported falling at or between rungs 4 and 7 as evidenced by a percentage of 54.1%. The three rungs selected the most were rungs 5, 6, and 4 as evidenced by percentages of 28.3%, 17.6%, and 17.3% respectively. More objective indicators of social class were also used to help describe the sample by asking participants for their household income when they were growing up. Based off a recent report released by the US Census Bureau (2021) on income and poverty in the US, those who endorsed a household income of \$49,999 or

below were considered to be of low economic status and marginalized. Therefore, participants were categorized as marginalized based on social status if they reported themselves as having a household income below \$50,000. As mentioned previously, thirty-eight percent of the sample endorsed growing up in a home where the income was less than \$50,000 and 62% endorsed growing up in a household where the average income was over \$50,000. A more specific breakdown of household incomes can be seen in Table 1.

### *Future Decent Work*

Future decent work was measured via the Future Decent Work Scale (FDWS; Kim et al., 2019). The FDWS was created using Duffy and colleagues' Decent Work Scale (Duffy et al., 2017). The DWS assessed for decent work using five subscales including safe working conditions, access to health care, adequate compensation, time for rest and leisure outside of work, and organizational values that align with one's own values. The DWS was found to have good internal consistency as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha ranging from .82 to .97 for the five subscales and total score (Duffy et al., 2017, 2018).

To assess perceptions of future decent work, Kim and colleagues (2019) modified the instructions and questions from the DWS to reflect future orientation. Participants were asked to "think about a job that you will have in the future" and answered questions such as "at my future work, I will feel safe from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind" and "I will have good healthcare benefits from my future job". Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with the statement via a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Similar to the DWS, the FDWS



is comprised of five subscales: physically and interpersonally safe working conditions, access to healthcare, adequate compensation, hours that allow for free time and rest, and organizational values complement family and social values. A total score can be achieved by adding the scores from the five subscales. Previous studies have demonstrated that this scale has strong internal consistency with Cronbach alpha of .85-.97 for the total score and .73-.94 for the subscales (Kim et al., 2019, 2020). In the current study, the FDWS yielded an acceptable internal reliability as evidenced by an  $\alpha = .86$ . Future decent work subscales had the following reliability coefficients: physically and interpersonally safe working conditions  $\alpha = .79$ , access to healthcare  $\alpha = .92$ , adequate compensation  $\alpha = .76$ , hours that allow for free time and rest  $\alpha = .82$ , organizational values complement family and social values  $\alpha = .86$ .

### *Occupational Prestige*

Future occupational prestige was measured using the Career Aspiration Scale (CAS; O'Brien, 1996). The CAS measures career aspirations and is comprised of three subscales: leadership aspirations, achievement aspirations, and educational aspirations. The leadership aspirations subscale assesses how much one aspires to obtain a leadership position in their career (e.g., "when I am established in my career, I would like to manage other employees"). The achievement aspirations subscale refers to the degree to which one aspires to be recognized and/or have significant achievements in their career (e.g., "I want my work to have a lasting impact on my field"). Lastly, the educational aspirations subscale measures how much one aspires to continue their education or receive training once in their career (e.g., "Every year, I will prioritize involvement in continuing education to advance my career"). The CAS consists of 24 items and participants are

asked to indicate how much they agree with each item on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all true of me) to 4 (very true of me). Total scores are obtained via summing the score of each subscale with higher scores being indicative of stronger career aspirations. The CAS has been shown to have adequate internal reliability based on Cronbach's alpha in previous research ranging from .71 to .88 (O'Brien 1996; Gray & O'Brien, 2007). This study produced a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = .92$ . Internal consistency for career aspirations subscales are as follows: leadership aspirations  $\alpha = .87$ , achievement aspirations  $\alpha = .76$ , educational aspirations  $\alpha = .86$ .

### *Academic Satisfaction*

Academic satisfaction was measured using the Academic Satisfaction Scale that asks participants how satisfied they are with specific parts of their academic career as well as how satisfied they feel overall (Lent et al., 2005). The scale consists of 7-items (e.g., "I am generally satisfied with my academic life, I enjoy the level of intellectual stimulation in my courses") and participants rate how much they agree with the statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A total score for this measure is obtained by summing item responses and dividing them by 7 with higher scores meaning higher levels academic satisfaction. This scale has demonstrated good internal consistency as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha ranging from .86 to .94 (Lent et al., 2005; Lent et al., 2007). Moreover, this measure has been shown to correlate with related constructs such as academic persistence and life satisfaction (Lent et al., 2007). This measure was shown to have good internal consistency in the current study as evidenced by an  $\alpha = .86$ .

### CHAPTER III – RESULTS

Data were downloaded from Qualtrics and cleaned in SPSS (IBM Corp., 2021). All scores for the various measures used in the current study were recoded as necessary. The data were analyzed via SPSS and JASP (JASP Team, 2023). Future Decent Work and Future Occupational Prestige served as predictor variables. Academic Satisfaction served as the outcome variable. Marginalized students and majority students were the two groups under comparison in the Multigroup Structural Equation Model analysis.

The relationship between variables was initially examined via correlation matrix using total scores and subscale total scores. When computed for the total sample, all correlations among study variables were significant and in the expected direction save a couple exceptions. Specifically, the Future Decent Work Rest/Leisure subscale was not significantly correlated with Leadership Achievement subscale or Education Achievement subscale in the Occupational Prestige measure. A full correlation matrix as well as means, standard deviations, and ranges for the total sample is shown in Table 2 in the appendix.

A correlation matrix was also run by group separating majority and marginalized student participants. To compare the correlations between the majority group and marginalized group, a Steiger test was run first to determine if correlations matrices between the two groups were significantly different. In this case, the correlations between the two groups were significantly different as evidenced by  $\chi^2(110) = 373.9, p < .001$ . Like total sample correlations, most relationships between study variables were significant in the expected direction with a few exceptions. For the marginalized group, the Future Decent Work Compensation subscale as well as the Leadership Achievement subscale

within the Occupational Prestige measure were not significantly correlated with the Academic Satisfaction measure. Additionally, the Future Decent Work Rest/Leisure subscale was not correlated with any of the Occupational Prestige measures, total score or subscales. For majority students, the Future Decent Work Rest/Leisure subscale was not correlated with Academic Satisfaction, the Future Decent Work Healthcare subscale or Core Values subscale, nor the Occupational Prestige Leaderships, Achievement, and Education subscales. Further, the Future Decent Work Compensation subscale was not significantly correlated with the Future Decent Work Core Values subscale or the Occupational Prestige Leadership subscale. A full correlation matrix as well as means, standard deviations, and ranges separated by grouping is shown in Table 3 in the appendix.

A multigroup SEM involves two phases. Phase one requires an omnibus comparison using RMSEA and CFI to determine if there is a difference between the groups due to the sensitive nature of chi-squared difference test (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). If there is a salient difference in RMSEA and CFI, then one can assume there is a meaningful difference between these two groups. A meaningful difference would allow us to move to phase two which would be determining which path(s) differ between the two groups. A lack of salient differences in RMSEA and CFI suggests that the model is invariant. Significant differences in RMSEA and CFI suggest a lack of invariance and a difference between the two groups.

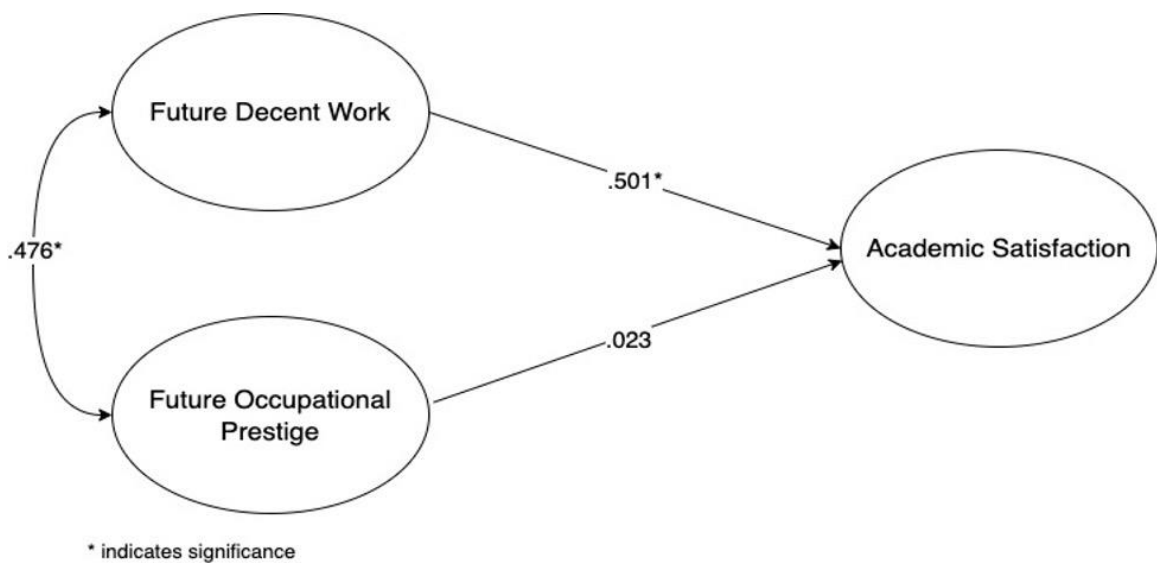
To assess the hypothesized lack of meaningful difference between marginalized and majority students and what impacts their academic satisfaction, the model and corresponding analysis was run in JASP as a multigroup structural equation model with

the two student groups (e.g., marginalized students and majority students) as the grouping variable. The model was significant as evidenced by  $p < .001$ . Configural invariance yielded an RMSEA value of .068 and a CFI value of .822. Metric invariance was used to match loadings across the two groups. Metric invariance yielded a RMSEA value of .067 and a CFI of .820. Metric invariance testing indicated there was minimal change in RMSEA and a difference of .002 in CFI between the two models when factor loadings were constrained. Additionally, scalar invariance yielded an RMSEA of .067 and a CFI of .818. Due to minimal to no change in RMSEA values and a change in CFI that is less than .01, current research supports the current model being invariant (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). Therefore, hypothesis 2, which states we expect there to be no meaningful difference between majority students and marginalized students in terms of what significantly impacts their academic satisfaction (e.g., future decent work or occupational prestige), is supported.

Due to the original model being invariant, the model was run again but as a structural equation model with a single group design. This was significant as evidenced by a p-value of  $< .001$ . This single group SEM yielded a RMSEA of .048 and a CFI of .908 suggesting this model is a better fit of the data than model tested above. According to path coefficients Future Decent Work on Academic Satisfaction produced a standardized estimate of .501 and is significant ( $p < .001$ ). The standardized path coefficient for Occupational Prestige on Academic Satisfaction is .023 but is not statistically significant ( $p = .75$ ). Factor covariance between Future Decent Work and Occupational Prestige yielded a standardized estimate of .476 suggesting somewhat weak, but positive variance that is significant as  $p < .001$ . Therefore, hypothesis one,

which states that for both groups, future decent work and future occupational prestige will significantly impact academic satisfaction is only partially accepted. Specifically, future decent work significantly effects academic satisfaction for the group as whole, but occupational prestige does not. Additionally, future decent work and occupational prestige, although separate vocational constructs, are significantly related to one another in the model. The structural equation model described above with path coefficients can be seen below in Figure 2. A full structural equation measurement model without path coefficients can be seen in Figure 3 in the appendix.

*Figure 2. Multigroup Structural Equation Model of Future Decent Work and Future Occupational Prestige's Impact on Academic Satisfaction for Marginalized and Majority Students with Path Coefficients*



## CHAPTER IV – DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine and compare how perceptions of future decent work and future aspirations of occupational prestige impact current academic satisfaction levels among marginalized and majority students. The study drew from literature asserting that marginalized students aspire towards decent work (Ma et al., 2021) and that majority students aspire for occupational prestige (Walker & Tracy, 2012). However, these arguments appeared to be assumptions as evidenced by a lack of theoretical basis and statistical testing in the literature available to date. Further, there is some literature that supports that majority students and marginalized students might both aspire towards similar goals such as occupational prestige (Nuñez & Sansone, 2016; Wei et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2021; Oswald, 2003; Walker & Tracey, 2012). Therefore, the current study attempted to explore this gap in the research by testing the long-held assumption that marginalized and majority students are different when it comes to what vocational factors significantly impact their academic satisfaction.

There were two hypotheses tested. One hypothesis stated that future decent work and future occupational prestige will significantly impact academic satisfaction for both marginalized and majority students. The second hypothesis proposed that when the student groups were compared, there would be no meaningful difference between them. A multigroup structural equation analysis was run and revealed the two student groups are invariant. In other words, there is no meaningful difference between marginalized students and majority students in terms of which future vocational factors significantly impact their current academic satisfaction. Moreover, future decent work aspirations were found to significantly and positively impact all participants' academic satisfaction, but

future occupational prestige did not. Thus, it seems that future decent work is more of an impactful and important future career factor when it comes to all students' current academic satisfaction than aspirations of occupational prestige. Lastly, future decent work and occupational prestige were significantly and positively correlated suggesting that if values for future decent work were to increase, so would values for future occupational prestige.

Findings from this study have implications for universities and colleges as well as career practitioners. Based on the current literature, existing structures in higher education operate from the understanding that marginalized and majority students are different in what they value and what they need with regards to a college experience and support while pursuing a degree. The current study's findings support the idea that there is no meaningful difference between what contributes to the academic satisfaction of marginalized and majority students. This suggests these two groups of students may not require significantly different approaches, associated with aspirations, by universities and colleges when it comes to what types of support marginalized students need (Deil-Amen, 2011). Therefore, it may be more helpful for universities and colleges to focus less of their energy and resources into perceived differences in values between the two groups. For example, Cross and Atinde (2015) found that misrepresentation and a lack of understanding in regard to marginalized students can lead to further perpetuation of marginalization and instances of discrimination. Instead, universities may have more success by focusing on how best to ensure all students can get an education that ensures academic satisfaction and meets the needs of their future career goals, given majority and marginalized groups seem to share more than they differ in these areas. To ensure



students feel supported, Masdonati and colleagues (2022) assert that a multidisciplinary approach drawing from different areas of working and life in general, which is also supported by PWT, is key to further the career development of college students. Additionally, it seems that perceptions regarding future decent work and a student wanting decent work in their career after graduating are important for that student's current academic satisfaction.

The current study also has implications for the theory of PWT. As mentioned previously, PWT is not only concerned with the world of work, but also with life and contextual factors that impacts a person's life outside of work (Blustein et al. 2013), Therefore, PWT is concerned with pre-employment activities such as college and how one's aspirations regarding their future career can be impacted by different social and economic factors. Similar to how experiences of oppression, discrimination, and privilege, or lack thereof, can negatively or positively impact one's aspirations in their work, the same can be said for students who might experience these things and their subsequent academic satisfaction. For example, if a student cannot see a pathway to their aspired job due to instances of discrimination this may have ramifications for their academic satisfaction and later employment. These ideas seem to support the applicability of PWT in the college student context.

These findings have implications for career practitioners such as assisting and educating students on what future decent work is, how to find it in a job, how to attain a future career that aligns with these values may lead students to be more satisfied academically, and how to advocate for the development in decent work factors once employed. Moreover, the relationship between aspirations of future decent work and

academic satisfaction has implications for institutions of learning as well. Spellman and colleagues (2022) suggest that program development efforts should focus on things such as reducing barriers (cultural and systemic), culturally sensitive pedagogy, and emphasizing student voices when designing programs and experiences as this will support the needs of students, especially marginalized students. Designing degree tracks, programming, and resources with this understanding in mind could help increase levels of academic satisfaction among students and potentially help with larger issues such as student well-being, retention, and finding gainful employment upon the completion of college.

#### Limitations and Future Directions

While the current study supports the idea that majority and marginalized students perceive the relationship between decent work and prestige similarly, there are a few important factors this study does not address or fully clarify that could also have implications for the supports different students need. First, the current study found substantial correlations between future decent work and occupational aspirations. Future research could clarify more about how these variables may be linked in the minds of college students. Given that future occupational prestige did not account for variance in academic satisfaction, does the link between how college students perceive these concepts provide a better understanding of what college students are looking for from their college experience and degree? Moreover, are there other concepts such as instances of discrimination or privilege that influence how future decent work and future occupational prestige account for changes in the experience of college students?

Additionally, this study explored a limited number of vocational factors by only examining how perceptions of decent work and occupational prestige may differ across majority and marginalized college students. There are many other relevant variables and factors that may differentiate these groups with regards to their needs in college. The literature already tells us that there is value in questioning the idea that the image of college success looks like the traditional full-time, first-time, four-year college student (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). College students, specifically marginalized students, identify things such as increased financial support (Howard-Sims & Barnett, 2015), increased resources for social capital such as faculty relationships and familial support (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). Further, social-emotional-based interventions are also necessary as these promote social and emotional adjustment to college as well as identity development of marginalized students (Garriot, 2020; Jehangir, 2009). Promoting the success of marginalized students is a multifaceted issue involving things such as social and emotional well-being, belongingness, and perceived support in addition to academic satisfaction, additional research is needed as there may be additional needs desired by marginalized students not covered in this study but are important, nonetheless. Future studies could benefit by addressing questions mentioned above such as what factors students are looking for in their college experience and degree as well as what interventions are beneficial for all students and what interventions could meet needs specific to marginalized students.

Adding to the idea that experiences of marginalized individuals is multifaceted, this study is limited due to grouping of all, different marginalized identities into the one overarching category of marginalized students. There are benefits to the approach to

diversity or marginalization measurement in this study. Research that addresses diverse experiences often focuses on samples of a particular area of diversity such as a particular race or an LGB identity. This study did provide a wide scope on diversity and possible areas of marginalization. Yet, intersectionality, a theoretical framework supported by much of the literature, is rooted in the idea that a person's experience is shaped by multiple positions they may hold in society and as a result cannot be fully understood by considering these positions independently (Bauer et al., 2021). For example, white women and black women in institutions of higher education have different experiences even though they share one of the same identities (e.g., identifying as female) and these different experiences result in different academic and vocational outcomes (Simien et al., 2019). This example of intersectionality much of the time results in different experiences which has been supported quantitatively and qualitatively for many years (Skrentny, 2006; Walker et al., 2021; Nelson, 2016). Thus, future research should utilize an intersectional approach to tease apart how different identities experience academic and vocational factors.

An additional limitation of this study is that its sample size consists of college students from one region of the United States. Different regions of the United States are apt to have different values, cultural makeups, and even different career options (Muthukrishna et al., 2020). Designing a similar study and using participants from different areas of the United States would allow for more generalizability as well as a more tailored approach to account for diversity between groups in different regions. Furthermore, this potential variability in data due to multisite data collection could highlight valuable nuances about this multifaceted issue. This study is also limited as to

inferences it can draw from the findings. This study more confidently answers what, be it future decent work or future occupational prestige, is impactful for college students' academic satisfaction. The current study cannot answer why or how. For example, the study answered the question concerning what future vocational factors impact academic satisfaction. It did not answer questions such as why future decent work had a significant effect on academic satisfaction, when aspirations of future occupational prestige did not. It should also be noted that context is an important factor when examining one's perceptions. More specific to this study, contextual factors such as type(s) of marginalized identities, type of university one attends (i.e., HBCU vs. predominately white university), and messages one received from their parents or support system are all impactful to a person's perceptions about their future beyond college and would benefit by being researched in the future. Where you are positioned in college (e.g., involved in campus groups populated by people with which you share a key identity) and the company you keep (e.g., many friends with a shared identity) may impact how marginalized you feel despite the boxes one may check on a survey.

Lastly, the current study's independent variables posed some challenges and limitations. First, it is limited by the lack of available valid and reliable instruments intended to measure perceptions of future occupational prestige. As mentioned previously, available measures only assess current perceptions of occupational prestige, but given the demographics of the sample (e.g., mostly young, college students) current, traditional measures of occupational prestige were found to be limited in their usefulness and practicality for this study. Instead, a career aspirations instrument was used to measure aspirations toward future occupational prestige and although career aspirations

and occupational prestige are closely related concepts, they are different. The difference between constructs might be small but meaningful and help explain the lack of significance that runs counter to existing research. The significant correlation between future occupational prestige and future decent work also suggests that a better-designed, fitting instrument might have a significant impact on research findings. Given the diverging research findings concerning perceptions of future occupational prestige as well as knowledge gained from this study, it may be helpful for future research to focus on developing an instrument specifically measuring the concept of future occupational prestige. A validated and reliable measure in this area will help ensure the validity and reliability of future research. Second, the typical college student may not understand all the nuances of employment such as quality pay or health care. This lack of understanding may impact how students provided ratings with some measures, especially the future decent work measure, which is evidenced by insignificant correlations in the correlation matrices.

In conclusion, this study supports that marginalized students and majority students may be more similar than initially thought with regards to future vocational factors impacting their current levels of academic satisfaction. As mentioned previously, this study has implications for the college programming for and retention of all students, but arguably more important, it has implications for marginalized students which universities and colleges have historically had issues retaining (Galicki & McEwen, 1989; Wells, 2008; Tranter et al., 2018). Given the long-standing issues surrounding student satisfaction and retention and how best to achieve it, it is likely that many researchers from different backgrounds and schools of thought will need to continue to

conduct studies in this area in order to get a better idea of how universities, colleges, and career practitioners can better assist every student towards their career goals.

APPENDIX A – Figures and Tables

Table A1. *Demographics*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Household Income</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	44	13.5%	\$0-\$24,999	52	16.1%
Female	265	82.0%	\$25,000-\$49,999	72	22.3%
Non-binary/ Gender Fluid	12	3.7%	\$50,000-\$74,999	86	26.6%
<b>Latinx</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	\$75,000-\$99,999	54	16.7%
No	297	92.0%	\$100,000-\$149,999	42	13.0%
Yes	26	8.0%	\$150,000 or more	16	5.0%
<b>Native American</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>SES Ladder</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
No	313	96.6%	Rung 1 (lowest)	2	.6%
Yes	10	3.1%	Rung 2	6	1.9%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Rung 3	22	6.8%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1	0.3%	Rung 4	56	17.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Middle Eastern	7	2.2%	Rung 5	91	28.2%
African American/Black	79	24.5%	Rung 6	57	17.6%
White	226	70.0%	Rung 7	55	17.0%
Other	10	3.1%	Rung 8	24	7.4%
<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Rung 9	7	2.2%
Inside the U.S.	308	95.4%	Rung 10 (highest)	3	.9%
Outside of the U.S.	15	4.6%	<b>Deaf or hard of hearing</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	No	316	97.8%
Lesbian	5	1.5%	Yes	7	2.2%
Gay	4	1.2%	<b>Blind or partially blind</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Bisexual	35	10.8%	No	310	96.0%
Queer	4	1.2%	Yes	13	4.0%
Asexual	4	1.2%	<b>Concentration issues</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Pansexual	8	2.5%	No	251	77.7%
Straight	259	80.2%	Yes	72	22.3%
Other	2	0.6%	<b>Difficulty walking/climbing stairs</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Prefer not to say	2	0.6%	No	314	97.2%
<b>First-Gen College Student</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Yes	9	2.8%
No	197	61.0%	<b>Difficulty bathing</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	126	39.0%	No	320	99.1%
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Yes	3	0.9%
No	122	37.8%	<b>Difficulty doing errands alone</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	201	62.2%	No	289	89.5
<b>Classification</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	Yes	34	10.5
Freshman	165	51.1%			
Sophomore	67	20.7%			
Junior	45	13.9%			
Senior	46	14.2%			



Table A2. *Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics for the Total Sample*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Academic Satisfaction Total Score	1	.412**	.329**	.317**	.201**	.283**	.288**	.312**	.181**	.304**	.335**
2. FDW Total Score	.412**	1	.693**	.676**	.716**	.663**	.659**	.427**	.336**	.460**	.322**
3. FDW Safety	.329**	.639**	1	.378**	.301**	.308**	.418**	.342**	.270**	.379**	.253**
4. FDW Healthcare	.317**	.676**	.378**	1	.413**	.230**	.332**	.347**	.294**	.388**	.230**
5. FDW Compensation	.201**	.716**	.301**	.413**	1	.397**	.269**	.296**	.252**	.268**	.239**
6. FDW Rest/Leisure	.283**	.663**	.308**	.230**	.397**	1	.265**	.150**	.103	.168**	.126*
7. FDW Core Values	.288**	.659**	.418**	.332**	.296**	.265**	1	.336**	.242**	.389**	.258**
8. OP Total Score	.312**	.427**	.342**	.347**	.296**	.150**	.336**	1	.867**	.870**	.820**
9. OP Leadership	.181**	.336**	.270**	.294**	.252**	.103	.242**	.867**	1	.678**	.485**
10. OP Achievement	.304**	.460**	.379**	.388**	.268**	.168**	.389**	.870**	.678**	1	.618**
11. OP Education	.335**	.322*	.253**	.230**	.239**	.126*	.258**	.820**	.485**	.618**	1
Mean	29.07	78.21	16.52	17.19	14.76	13.77	15.98	69.99	21.98	25.67	22.35
Standard Deviation	4.14	12.32	3.44	3.36	3.92	3.84	3.50	15.73	7.30	4.77	6.40
Range	13-35	43-105	3-21	3-21	5-21	3-21	4-21	13-96	0-32	11-32	2-32

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table A3. *Correlations and Descriptive Statistics by Marginalized and Majority Participants*

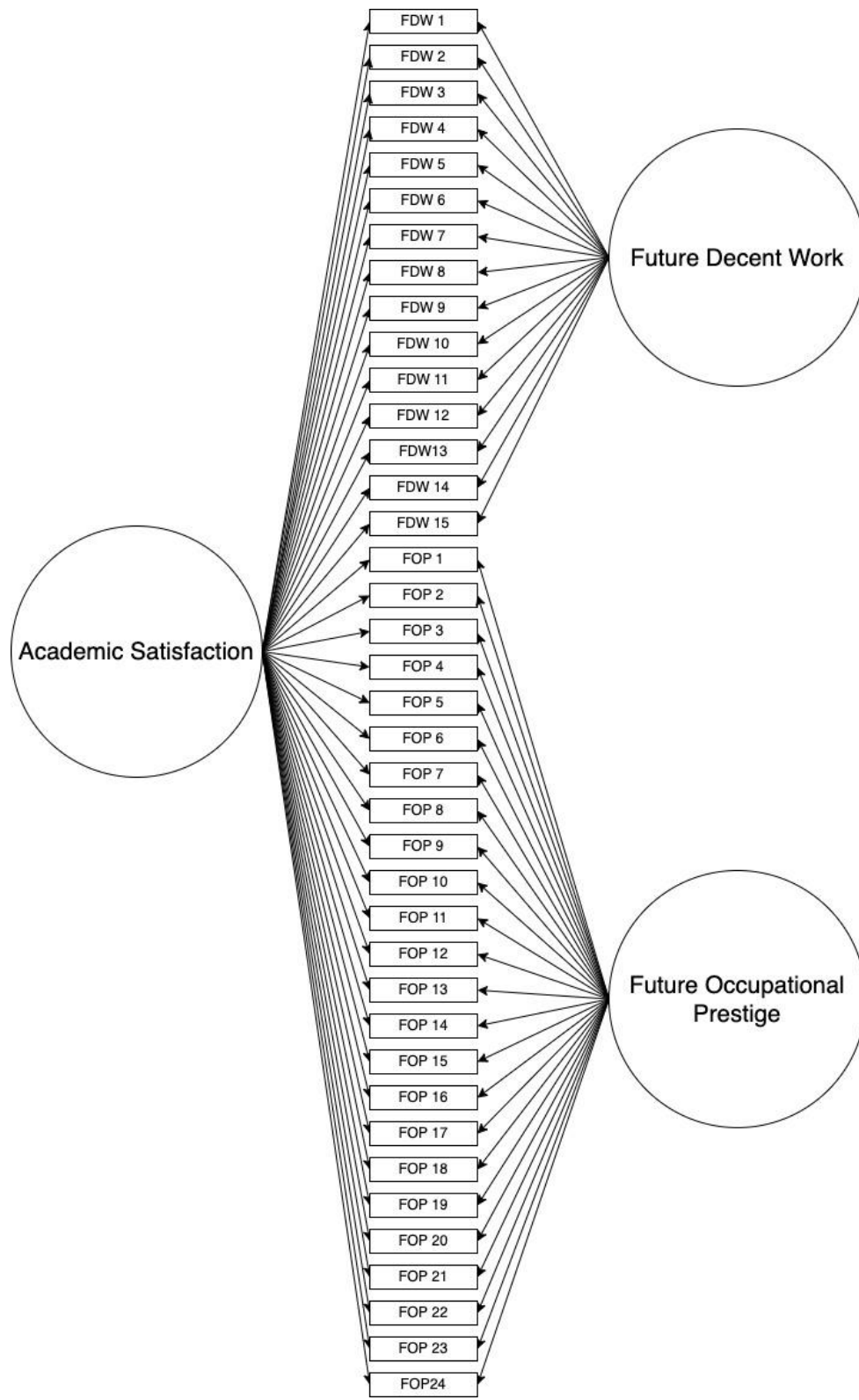
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Academic Satisfaction Total Score	1	.393**	.316**	.251**	.168*	.324**	.300**	.291**	.153*	.297**	.320**
2. FDW Total Score	.450**	1	.678**	.701**	.707**	.679**	.681**	.407**	.330**	.466**	.294**
3. FDW Safety	.347**	.709**	1	.379**	.273**	.310**	.412**	.296**	.220**	.355**	.212**
4. FDW Healthcare	.471**	.602**	.355**	1	.451**	.280**	.344**	.343**	.302**	.391**	.207**
5. FDW Compensation	.260**	.734**	.335**	.313**	1	.385**	.293**	.305**	.273**	.269**	.240**
6. FDW Rest/Leisure	.177	.618**	.287**	.088	.420**	1	.316**	.141*	.114	.168*	.092
7. FDW Core Values	.246*	.585**	.407**	.284**	.192	.114	1	.331**	.235**	.372**	.267**
8. OP Total Score	.360**	.485**	.476**	.357**	.273**	.171**	.350**	1	.865**	.877**	.822**
9. OP Leadership	.242*	.353**	.397**	.268**	.202*	.070	.254**	.873**	1	.685**	.486**
10. OP Achievement	.316**	.495**	.441**	.373**	.259**	.158	.428**	.851**	.662**	1	.630**
11. OP Education	.375**	.417**	.387**	.294**	.244**	.128*	.241**	.813**	.486**	.591**	1
Marginalized Mean	28.90	77.05	16.10	17.03	14.52	13.64	15.77	69.75	21.84	25.52	22.40
Marginalized SD	4.15	12.76	3.54	3.49	3.90	3.95	3.64	16.19	7.40	4.98	6.59
Marginalized Range	18-35	43-105	3-21	3-21	5-21	3-21	4-21	13-96	0-32	11-32	3-32
Marginalized Alpha	.836	.869	.774	.915	.753	.820	.888	.920	.877	.785	.864
Majority Mean	29.43	80.71	17.42	17.53	15.29	14.06	16.42	70.49	22.27	26.00	22.26
Majority SD	4.09	10.95	3.04	3.07	3.94	3.61	3.12	14.77	7.11	4.27	6.01
Majority Range	13-35	54-105	9-21	10-21	7-21	5-21	9-21	34-96	4-32	12-32	8-32
Majority Alpha	.856	.843	.810	.913	.753	.830	.872	.906	.862	.678	.856

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This table shows correlations broken down by the student grouping variable. Correlations above the diagonal are for the marginalized student group and correlations below the diagonal are for the majority student group. Marginalized sample includes 220 participants and the majority sample includes 103 participants.

Figure A1. *Structural Equation Measurement Model*



## APPENDIX B – Instruments

### Demographic Questionnaire

Subheadings were for committee review only, they were not included in the survey distributed to participants

Directions: Please fill in the blanks or check the response/responses that best apply to you.

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (must be 18 years or older to participate)

Assessing gender identity

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Non-binary/Gender Fluid
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

Assessing racial/ethnic minority/indigenous origin

3. Are you of Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish origin?

- Yes
- No

4. Are you or an immediate family a member of one of the 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages?

- Yes
- No

5. Race/Ethnicity:

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- African American/Black
- White
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Assessing national origin

6. Where were you born?

- North America (i.e., America, Canada)
- Latin America (i.e., Mexico, Central America, South America)
- Pacific Islands (i.e., Fiji, New Zealand)
- Africa (i.e., Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Cameroon)
- Caribbean Islands (i.e., Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago)
- Europe (i.e., France, Greece, Italy, Russia, Australia)
- Asia (i.e., China, Iraq, India, North Korea, Japan)

7. Marital Status:

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed/Widower

Assessing sexual orientation

8. Sexual Orientation:

- Lesbian

- Gay
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Asexual
- Pansexual
- Straight
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

Assessing ability status, these questions were taken from the CDC and they state that these 6 questions are the minimum required by the US Department of Health and Human Services to assess for ability status. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020).

Population Surveys that Include Standard Disability Questions.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/datasets.html>)

9. Are you deaf, or do you have serious difficulty hearing?

- Yes
- No

10. Are you blind, or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?

- Yes
- No

11. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?

- Yes
- No

12. Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?

- Yes
- No

13. Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?

- Yes
- No

14. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?

- Yes
- No

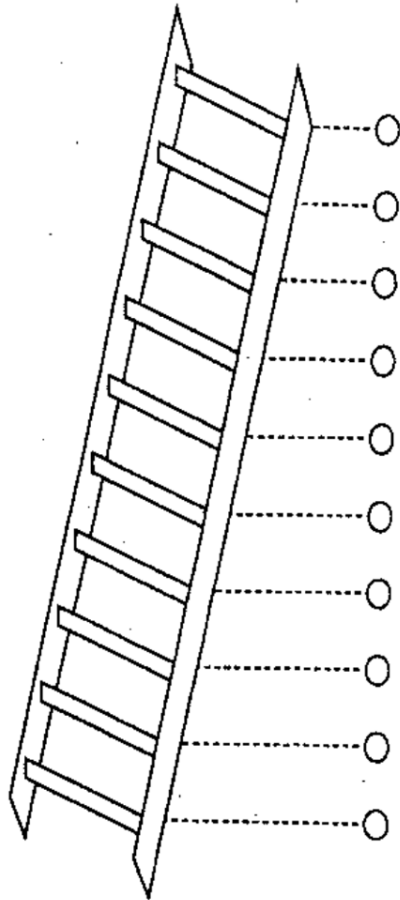
Assessing social status

15. What was your household income growing up? (based off a report released by the US Census Bureau at the end of 2021 on income and poverty in the US those who endorse a household income of \$49,999 or below will be considered to be of low economic status and marginalized (U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). Income and Poverty in the United States: 2020.

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.html>)

- \$0-\$24,999
- \$25,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

16. Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in our society. At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off, those who have the most money, most education, and best jobs. At the bottom are the people who are the worst off, those who have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job. Please indicate where you think you fall in relation to other people in the United States.



17. How many semesters have you been in college? (Please count summer even if you did not take classes. Please count current semester.) \_\_\_\_\_

18. Have you declared a major yet?

- Yes



- No

19. If yes, how many semesters have you been in your current major? (Please count current semester) \_\_\_\_\_

20. Current Major: \_\_\_\_\_

21. Current Standing

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

22. Current GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessing first-generation college student status

23. Did either of your parents attend college?

- Yes
- No

24. Did your father complete a 4-year college degree?

- Yes
- No

25. Did your mother complete a 4-year college degree?

- Yes
- No

26. Are you a first-generation college student (an individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree)?

- Yes
- No

### Future Decent Work Scale

The following is a question about work. Take a moment to think about a job that you will have in the future and answer to the following questions. Please choose one answer to each of the following statements based on this scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Moderately Disagree
- 3 = Slightly Disagree
- 4 = Neutral
- 5 = Slightly Agree
- 6 = Moderately Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

1. I will feel emotionally safe interacting with people at my future work.
2. At my future work, I will feel safe from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind.
3. I will feel physically safe interacting with people at my future work.
4. I will get good healthcare benefits from my future job.
5. I will have a good healthcare plan at future work.
6. My future employer will provide acceptable options for healthcare.
7. I will not be properly paid for my work. (r)
8. I will feel I am not paid enough based on my qualifications and experience. (r)
9. I will be rewarded adequately for my work
10. I will not have enough time for non-work activities. (r)
11. I will have no time to rest during the work week. (r)
12. I will have free time during the work week
13. The values of my future organization will match my family values.

14. My future organization's values will align with my family values.
15. The values of my future organization will match the values within my community.

#### Career Aspirations Scale – Revised

In the space next to the statements below please circle a number from “0” (not at all true of me) to “4” (very true of me). If the statement does not apply, circle “0”. Please be completely honest. Your answers are entirely confidential and will be useful only if they accurately describe you.

- 0 = Not at all true of me
- 1 = Slightly true of me
- 2 = Moderately true of me
- 3 = Quite a bit true of me
- 4 = Very true of me

1. I hope to become a leader in my career field. \_\_\_\_
2. I do not plan to devote energy to getting promoted to a leadership position in the organization or business in which I am working. \_\_\_\_
3. I want to be among the very best in my field. \_\_\_\_
4. Becoming a leader in my job is not at all important to me. \_\_\_\_
5. When I am established in my career, I would like to manage other employees. \_\_\_\_
6. I plan to reach the highest level of education in my field. \_\_\_\_
7. I want to have responsibility for the future direction of my organization or business. \_\_\_\_
8. I want my work to have a lasting impact on my field. \_\_\_\_
9. I aspire to have my contributions at work recognized by my employer. \_\_\_\_

10. I aspire to have my contributions at work recognized by my employer. \_\_\_\_
11. I will pursue additional training in my occupational area of interest. \_\_\_\_
12. I will always be knowledgeable about recent advances in my field. \_\_\_\_
13. Attaining leadership status in my career is not that important to me. \_\_\_\_
14. Being outstanding at what I do at work is very important to me. \_\_\_\_
15. I know I will work to remain current regarding knowledge in my field. \_\_\_\_
16. I hope to move up to a leadership position in my organization or business. \_\_\_\_
17. I will attend conferences annually to advance my knowledge. \_\_\_\_
18. I know that I will be recognized for my accomplishments in my field \_\_\_\_
19. Even if not required, I would take continuing education courses to become more knowledgeable. \_\_\_\_
20. I would pursue an advanced education program to gain specialized knowledge in my field. \_\_\_\_
21. Achieving in my career is not at all important to me. \_\_\_\_
22. I plan to obtain many promotions in my organization or business. \_\_\_\_
23. Being one of the best in my field is not important to me. \_\_\_\_
24. Every year, I will prioritize involvement in continuing education to advance my career. \_\_\_\_
25. I plan to rise to the top leadership position of my organization or business. \_\_\_\_

#### Academic Satisfaction

Instructions: Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Undecided
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I feel satisfied with the decision to major in my intended field
2. I am comfortable with the educational atmosphere in my major field
3. For the most part, I am enjoying my coursework
4. I am generally satisfied with my academic life
5. I enjoy the level of intellectual stimulation in my courses
6. I feel enthusiastic about the subject matter in my intended major
7. I like how much I have been learning in my classes

## APPENDIX C –IRB Approval Letter

### Office of Research Integrity



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#### NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident submission on InfoEd IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22-1056  
PROJECT TITLE: A Comparison Study of Vocational Factors Influencing Academic Satisfaction for Marginalized and Majority Students  
SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Psychology  
RESEARCHERS: PI: Sara Driver  
Investigators: Driver, Sara~Yowell, Emily~  
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved  
CATEGORY: Expedited Category  
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 14-Jul-2022 to 13-Jul-2023

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Sacco".

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.  
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

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