DISSERTATION

MAKING MEANING OF WHITENESS: LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT INFORM

CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS STUDENT AFFAIRS LEADERS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

MAKING MEANING OF WHITENESS: LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT INFORM

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Four white student affairs educators shared their histories, experiences, and critical

incidents that helped shape their focus on inclusive practice at predominantly white

institutions of higher education. Critical white studies and the construction of whiteness,

identity development models, privilege, multicultural competence and consciousness, and

social justice provided a conceptual framework for this narrative inquiry. Through a

series of interviews, participants shared their understanding of identity, critical incidents

that influenced their development, and their experiences as engaged white student affairs

educators. Eighteen total themes were developed in this study throughout the

participant's stories. The most emergent themes developed in the study included (1)

Contextualized Identity, (2) Individual Story, (3) Action and Presence, (4) Core Values

and Beliefs, (5) Responsibility and Accountability, (6) Transformational Practice, (7)

Campus Ecology, (8) Justice, (9) Assessment, (10) Spirituality, (11) Progressive and

Continual Development, (12) Self-reflexivity, and (13) Emotional Intelligence and

Mindfulness. Overarching findings included the possibility of developing "positive"

white identities that make space for inclusive practice; race privilege and the relationship

to power must be examined in order to locate and understand self in the context of

engaging in justice work; various stages exist within the process of coming to terms with

a "positive" white identity; and, personal and professional development is continual and

ongoing. Participants expressed challenges coming to terms with whiteness through

memory recall and critical incident exploration, acknowledged unearned privileges,

articulated the interconnectedness of their multiple layers of identity, and lived with the

conflict and messiness surrounding their identity and how it influences their practice.

Possibilities for future research are also provided.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Colleges and universities are often considered microcosms of the larger society and are plagued by similar inequities in structures, policies, and practices (Jones, 1990). These inequities are fueled by the divide between the advantaged (those who benefit from structures, policies, and practices) and the disadvantaged (those who are marginalized by the same structures, policies, and practices) (Eichstedt, 2001). The system in which whites are the beneficiaries of these existing structures, policies, and practices is based on power, often called racism (Eichstedt, 2001). This diversity between the range of advantaged and disadvantaged is one component that is inherently present in the struggles we face as our populations grow (Bordas, 2007). Bordas provided a perspective about society's ever-changing demographics and the need for intentional leadership:

> Tapping the potential of the changing workforce, consumer base, and citizenry requires leadership approaches that resonate with and are representative of a much broader population base. Mainstream leaders must be able to use practices and approaches that are effective with the many cultures that make up the U.S. population. In today's global environment, in which people from widely varying backgrounds live and work side by side, the cultural flexibility and adaptability are needed leadership traits. (p. 4)

The societal problem of racism has long been identified as an issue relating primarily to minority groups (DuBois, 1920). Likewise, challenging societal injustice has been shouldered primarily by minority groups. Beginning in the last century, educators and others called for a shifting of responsibility in order to restore some accountability by the majority population (Frankenberg, 1993; Feagin and Vera, 1995; Rothenberg, 2000; Johnson, 2001; Wise, 2002). While this call for a shift in responsibility pertains to

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broader society as a whole, there is an application to the educational systems, particularly higher education systems, that affect a significant number of our citizens.

Higher education Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) are challenged to provide open and equal access to programs and services for all potential students. Roper and Conneely (2009) stated that the primary issue faced in colleges and universities with regard to inclusive environments is the inability to communicate truthfully about diversity (p. 19). Encouraging institutions to move beyond basic acknowledgement of diversity in mission and vision statements, Roper and Conneely called for "a true commitment to inclusiveness and respect for individuality; words and actions that are aligned; and, zero tolerance for 'violating' the values of the institution" (p. 19).

Especially in PWIs where the norms, cultures, and beliefs can favor the dominant population, administrators need to be more in tune to issues of inequality for historically marginalized and underrepresented students (Goldberg and Levin, 2007). This problem underscores the need for increased attention to socially just and inclusive movements. "Social justice efforts are understood most commonly as a challenge to privileged groups in order to increase the representation and empowerment of oppressed groups" (Howard, 2011, p.1). From larger issues, such as policies that are not inclusive of all students, to smaller issues, such as everyday micro-aggressions, the concerns are equally problematic and negatively impact institutional climate. Sue (2010) provides a definition of microaggressions:

> It is the constant and continuing everyday reality of slights, insults, invalidations, and indignities visited upon marginalized groups by well intentioned, moral, and decent family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, students, teachers, clerks, waiters and waitresses, employers, health care professionals, and educators. The power of microaggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator, who is

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unaware that he or she has engaged in a behavior that threatens or demeans the recipient of such a communication. (p. xv)

Microaggressions exist in many forms and at all levels of colleges and universities. These subtle forms of oppression that damage the spirit and taint the educational environment for many learners can take place in cafeteria and hallway conversations, as well as campus-wide lectures and keynote addresses. From institutional policies that are overtly discriminatory to undertones that are nearly invisible in the campus climate, these problems require administrators and leaders who are committed to social justice and anti-racism practices.

Roper and Conneely (2009) highlighted the challenges institutions face when policies and practices are implemented by administrators and leaders who do not understand the intricacies and dynamics of working with diverse populations (p. 19). As Astin and Astin (2000) reminded us, institutions are comprised of leaders who must adhere to principles that enable us to change and transform our educational environments in order to positively impact student learning, growth, and development. This can be done by "teaching students to take risks, challenge those with power, honor critical traditions, and be reflexive about how authority is used in the classroom" (Giroux, 1997, p. 265). Further, administrative leaders at PWIs have a responsibility to critically examine and propose change to policy and protocol that continue to marginalize students (Roper and Conneely, 2009). McKinley and Brayboy (2003) emphasized this point and outlined a need for broad-based institutional restructuring and commitment. Institutional leaders are uniquely positioned to instigate the needed changes required to restructure small and large segments of hierarchies. This notion of commitment, through the participants in this study, will be explored further.

In emerging literature over the past decade, scholars and researchers from history, sociology, education, and cultural studies have brought whiteness into the discussion of race in an attempt to confront privilege and "create a more human social order" (Kolchin, 2002, p. 160). "Whites need to acknowledge and work through the negative historical implications of 'whiteness' and create for ourselves a transformed identity as White people committed to equality and social change" (Howard, 2006, p. 17). Some in higher education make a conscious effort to move beyond identification as white administrators toward a more inclusive identity as white social justice or white anti-racism educators (Latino, 2010).

Divisions of student affairs in colleges and universities encompass a multitude of functional areas and employ many administrators who have undergone varying levels of education. The American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2010) declared that practitioners must "ensure [that] institutional policies, practices, facilities, structures, systems, and technologies respect and represent people's diverse abilities, beliefs, and characteristics" (EDI Competency section, paragraph four). When white administrators are in tune with issues of white privilege, they are more adept at influencing positive changes in discriminatory policy and practices that marginalize certain student populations (Latino, 2010). Similarly, Pope, Reynolds and Mueller (2004) stated:

> If multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills are not incorporated into administrative and management competence, student affairs administrators are forced to use incomplete theories to explain multicultural dynamics on campus; offer generic interventions to address multicultural concerns; or create additive, and often fragmented, approaches to tackling multicultural issues. (p. 53)

Given these research and educational imperatives, it is important to examine why some administrators take it upon themselves to intentionally incorporate social justice into their roles as educators. Additionally, how did the experiences of administrators influence their administrative practice? What does a practice of active engagement look like? This chapter presents the background, the purpose of the study, primary research questions, the significance of the study, and the researcher's perspective.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop personal narratives of white[1] social justice and anti-racism student affairs educators who have increased their understanding of social justice and made meaning of their roles in higher education. More research is needed to understand the experiences of white student affairs educators who choose to immerse themselves in social justice and anti-racism work. Much of the research about whites, primarily focused on faculty and students, illuminates a major deficit in whites' understanding of their role in furthering racism and institutional racism (Pope-Davis and Ottavi, 1992; Mercer and Cunningham, 2003; Spanierman and Heppner, 2004). Tochluk (2008), through the voices of activists, writers, and educators, begins to bridge this gap and calls upon whites and specifically white educators to address "the deep distress to which we must bear witness…" (p. 17). This study explored white student affairs leaders' and their journeys toward becoming culturally competent leaders at institutions of higher education. Because the term *culturally competent* has become a buzzword in the academy in recent years, the following definition provides clarity. The terms *multicultural competence* and *cultural competence* are used interchangeably throughout the literature, however, I will typically use *cultural competence* to signify the expansive and inclusive

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definition of culture. Multicultural competence, according to Pope and Reynolds (2004) is a "category of awareness, knowledge and skills essential for efficacious student affairs work…" (p. 9). Beyond multicultural competence, however, is the need for action oriented practice, ultimately resulting in social justice.

A narrative inquiry of four white social justice student affairs educators at PWIs provided insight into the experiences that shaped these educators' perspectives and paths. I am hopeful that this inquiry leads to empowering other white administrators to intentionally examine their own experiences and develop intentional practice, thereby positively impacting the communities in which they work.

Research Questions

The primary research questions guiding this study were the following:

1. How did white social justice student affairs educators describe and make meaning of their roles in higher education?

2. What influences, experiences, and critical incidents contributed to their journey toward becoming culturally conscious leaders?

Significance of Study

Educators working in higher education PWIs are the intended beneficiaries of this study. Rothenberg (2000) saw her audience as other white individuals needing to engage in discussions about the distribution of privilege and power in our society (p. 2). Similarly, the ideal audience for this study is white student affairs educators in positions of authority. The participants themselves are also intended beneficiaries of this inquiry. This study has the potential to contribute to theoretical constructs around white identity and specifically white anti-racism identity. The possibilities extend beyond the

participants to those white student affairs educators who might read the outcomes of this study. A contribution to how white student affairs educators view their roles as change agents is ideal. As a result, these educators could critically examine their role and responsibility in addressing policies and procedures that perpetuate systemic racist practices. They might undergo a transformative experience, thereby shifting their influence within the system. Beyond the majority and dominant population, diversity educators could find merit in finding ways to bring white allies into their programs and services as support for both underrepresented and majority students, as well as the general campus community. As a diversity educator for five years, I understand the necessity in reaching out to majority populations through programmatic efforts and experiential opportunities that contribute to transformative learning. Doing so can invite critical reflexive self-examination, followed by steadfast participation in continued discussions and action-oriented practice aimed at addressing issues of privilege and power dynamics.

Understanding white racial identity, recognizing white privilege, increasing one's cultural competence, and connecting these tenets—all are necessary factors to positively impact institutional policy and practice that continues to marginalize underrepresented individuals (Pope, Reynolds and Mueller, 2004). Practice can include designing, facilitating, and evaluating co-curricular events; conducting outreach and in-reach to student populations; and producing marketing and promotions materials for a variety of target audiences.

Studies conducted of faculty, counselors, and other populations have focused on whether understanding racial identity predicts racism or awareness of privilege (Carter,

Helms, & Juby, 2004; Hays, Chang, & Havice, 2008; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992).

Further research addressed the psychosocial costs of racism to whites (Spanierman &

Heppner, 2004; Sifford, Ng, & Wang, 2009). However, a lack of research exists that

explores the influences, experiences, and critical incidents that prompt white student

affairs educators to delve into incorporating social justice as a constant practice. Are there

connections between understanding white racial identity, recognizing privilege and power

dynamics, and positively impacting the workplace to improve equitable outcomes on the

part of social justice educators? Will developing these narratives enhance anti-racism

attitudes for white student affairs educators at colleges and universities? These questions

can be answered through a narrative inquiry of individuals who self identify as social

justice and anti-racism educators.

Methodology

Narrative inquiry was the qualitative approach used to engage the participants in

discussion. Narrative inquiry was chosen as the approach for several reasons: (1) personal

narratives capture a truth about lived experiences (Riessman, 2008); (2) the life story

provides an opportunity to reflect upon transition and self-empowerment (Nash, 2004);

(3) narrative provides the possibility of discovering a more developed perspective to

normative beliefs about white student affairs educators and privilege and power; and, (4)

"stories can mobilize others into action for progressive social change" (Riessman, 2008,

p. 9). As a practitioner, narrative inquiry allows for co-constructing and strengthening,

through this research partnership, a community of educators with similar goals.

Researcher's Perspective

Becoming culturally competent cannot be accomplished through a set of trainings, workshops, readings, or life experiences alone. An ongoing journey is required to continue to be in tune with the connections we make in our environments, communities, and places of work. Nearly twenty years ago this exploration began for me and continues today. As a white student affairs educator, I struggled to make meaning of my own racial identity and the privileges connected to it, both in my personal and professional life. I recognized that a responsibility existed and that I needed to start doing something about the inequities surrounding me, both personally and professionally. How could I shift responsibility for addressing racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of oppression? Critically examining my own biases and attempting to discern their origin was where I began. There are individuals who have a similar worldview and way of thinking about the need to shift and share the role and responsibility for ending racism and racist practices in our institutions of higher education (Frankenberg, 1993; Feagin & Vera, 1995; Rothenberg, 2000; Jensen, 2005; Wise, 2005). I recognized personal bias is an underlying theme for this study—commitment to change—but that was secondary to the primary need to understand how white social justice student affairs educators make meaning of themselves and their practice. My guidance for this inquiry was carefully considered throughout the process. Participants' and researcher's perspectives were intentionally addressed throughout the process to ensure a collaborative and co-constructed process.

Reflecting upon the materials I've used to inform this narrative research study, I would be remiss if I didn't mention my thoughts about counter-narratives. I propose that

a white anti-racism community can be found and strengthened if we are willing to provide counter-narratives to what Tochluk (2008) calls the culturally normative stories that exist about white supremacy and white power. I believe wholeheartedly that the white anti-racism student affairs community must speak up about racism, privilege, power, and oppression in order to create safety within the larger community of educators. White anti-racism and social justice student affairs educators must join others, both marginalized colleagues and other white educators, to increase the dialogue about privilege and power dynamics so that other whites understand they have a role and responsibility to dismantle discrimination in the systems in which we work and live (Tochluk, 2008).

In this study, stories were developed about white social justice and anti-racism educators whose life experiences have informed an intentional and purposeful life journey toward becoming culturally conscious educators.

Conceptual Framework

As I began to narrow my focus for this study, I reviewed literature that was relevant to identity development, with a focus on white identity development. Recognizing the need to broaden my scope to focus on practice, I then examined the literature regarding social justice (Ortiz and Rhoads, 2000; Watt, 2007) and multicultural competence (Pope, Reynolds and Mueller, 2004). Finally, I delved into Critical White Studies (Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1997; Clark and O'Donnell, 1999; Kolchin, 2002; Delgado and Stefancic, 2007; Hartman, 2009). During this immersion and specifically acknowledging Kochin's (2002) criticisms of Critical White Studies, I began to see how imperative it was to uncover and develop stories of actual lived experiences versus

representations. It is one thing to discuss among colleagues perspectives about identity

development and engagement in practice. Discovering the actual experiences, through

stories, provides a deeper examination. Further, addressing the complexities of fluid

identity and their relationship to combating oppression resonated with me. Looking

through a critical lens, I anticipated the process of narrative inquiry could be

transformative for the participants, the researcher, and those intended beneficiaries of this

research. This perspective and the literature provided a conceptual framework that guided

this research (See Appendix A).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the research problem, the purpose of the study, the

primary research questions, and the significance of the study. There is a need to shift and

share responsibility for ending practices that perpetuate institutional racism in our

colleges and universities, and white student affairs educators need to play a role in this

endeavor. This study sought to develop personal narratives of white student affairs

educators who have increased their understanding of social justice and made meaning of

their roles in higher education. This study explored their journey toward being culturally

competent leaders at institutions of higher education. The primary research questions

guiding this study were as follows: How did white social justice educators describe and

make meaning of their roles in higher education? What influences (and critical incidents)

contributed to their journey toward becoming culturally competent leaders? Through a

qualitative paradigm, specifically using narrative inquiry as the research design, this

study illuminated the stories of white social justice educators, their experiences with

identity, their recognition of privilege and power dynamics, and the ways those aspects

have impacted their roles in higher education. Researcher perspective and bias was addressed as well.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature about the critical white studies, identity development models, multicultural competence, and social justice. The literature review is categorized into two inquiry domains. Inquiry domain 1 summarizes literature addressing the foundational research on critical white studies, including the construction of whiteness, and applicable models of identity development. Inquiry domain 2 reviews literature related to multicultural competence, including tenets of privilege and social justice as a practice in the life of educators and student affairs professionals.

Critical White Studies

Whiteness literature is incredibly diverse, with many different foci. Kolchin (2002) provided a summary and outline of the contributions of the growing body of literature. First, a thorough examination of how race is constructed and examined in our society has helped us to think differently about race in America and beyond. The literature highlights the social construction of race and explains the part whites play in the making of race and racial constructs in society. Second, the literature has contributed to our understanding of race itself and broadened our thoughts about race as a binary construct. Indeed, it is very complex. Kolchin (2002) summarized the final contribution by stating "they have found a new way to emphasize the absurdity—and oppressiveness—of race as a system for categorizing humans" (p. 163). Kolchin also provided a critical perspective on how these studies have contributed to our understanding of social relationships. He and others (Clark and O'Donnell, 1999)

suggested that, in studying whiteness, many researchers and scholars come close to reifying whiteness as its own category, thereby assigning it an unintended power. Further, Kolchin (2002) criticized scholars for concentrating on representations of whiteness instead of lived experiences and for ignoring other forms of oppression.

Widely recognized as a pioneer in the discourse on critical white studies, Du Bois (1969) provided an early examination of the "personal discovery of whiteness among the world's peoples" and explained how that discovery paved the way for the introduction of white power over others (p. 30). He criticised society in the following words:

> Instead of standing as a great example of the success of democracy and the possibility of human brotherhood America has taken her place as an awful example of its pitfalls and failures, so far as the black and brown and yellow peoples are concerned. And this, too, in spite of the fact that there has been no actual failure; the Indian is not dying out, the Japanese and Chinese have not menaced the land, and the experiment of Negro suffrage has resulted in the uplift of twelve million people at a rate probably unparalleled in history. (p. 51)

Du Bois' words provide educators with an historical perspective that is relevant today as racial tensions and inequities between dominant and non-dominant populations continue to exist.

Frankenberg (1993) introduced whiteness (in reaction to the dissonance between white women and women of color in the feminist movement) as a layered concept that impacts the way we allow race to shape our worldview. Race privilege is one such component of whiteness. It is a "location of structural advantage," a point from which white folks look at themselves, at others, and at society as a whole (p. 1). The question often posed in the literature is how white Americans can see race as a problem without seeing themselves implicated as part of the problem (Hartman, 2009)?

Whiteness also refers to: a set of unidentified and unspecified cultural practices; a social status based on physical characteristics; and, a problematic identity for those who engage in anti-racism endeavors (Frankenberg, 1993; Eichstedt, 2001; Hartman, 2009). Delgado and Stefancic (1997) maintained that it is impossible to understand whiteness unless there exists a parallel understanding of nonwhiteness. Whites are encouraged to think about and reflect upon race and to question biological and social constructions of race in order to become more aware.

Critical white studies are important in education, particularly for white student affairs educators who aspire toward anti-racism practices because as Giroux (1997) explained:

> Analyzing whiteness opens a theoretical space for teachers and students to articulate how their own racial identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture and what responsibilities they might assume for living in a present in which Whites are accorded privileges and opportunities (though in complex and different ways) largely at the expense of other racial groups. (p. 314)

It is necessary to deconstruct whiteness with regard to race, privilege, and a social construction (Giroux, 1997). If that were not part of the equation, there would be no room for discussing practices that are focused on anti-racism (Aveling, 2004; Giroux, 1997; Delgado and Stefancic, 1997). A major criticism in the literature, sometimes referred to as white fetishism (Clark and O'Donnell, 1999), is that even those interested in the anti-racism struggle continue to focus the discussion around whiteness. This prioritization of white issues and white identity in the discussion is problematic because it can "exacerbate White supremacy by putting White and whiteness at the center again" (p. 5). Widely referenced in the literature, Ansley (1989) defined white supremacy as

> a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white

superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (p. 592)

A concern about centering on whiteness is important to this study as the focus is on meaning making for white student affairs educators who are engaged in social justice and anti-racism practices. Simultaneous to that focus is the supported premise that, in order to make room for anti-racism practice, individuals must be willing to explore and deconstruct their whiteness. There are tensions between these two perspectives, and this study attempts to address both.

Construction of Whiteness

Because the focus of this study is how the life experiences of selected white student affairs educators informed their practice, I explored the construction of their individual whiteness. There were multiple definitions that vary in meaning and provide different interpretations for research. Terminology in the literature surrounding white racial consciousness was varied.

Frankenberg (1993) defined whiteness as having a set of characteristics: a "structural advantage" or privilege, a "standpoint" from which white people see themselves and the world around them, and a set of nebulous practices (p. 1). McIntyre (1997) used the term whiteness to "refer to a system and ideology of white dominance that marginalizes and oppresses people of color, ensuring existing privileges for white people in this country" (p. 3). These definitions help to frame the context through which the participants in this study see themselves.

Nakayama and Martin (1999) provided a perspective on whiteness as a social construction, saying that "whiteness gains its meaning from its encounters with

nonwhiteness. The negotiations and definitions of 'whiteness' and 'nonwhiteness' are part of the fuel of this social phenomenon" (p. vii). They suggested that the "key to understanding these changing and powerful cultural dynamics is the role that communication plays in the construction of whiteness." (p. vii). Kincheloe and Steinberg (2000) further stated:

> As with any racial category, whiteness is a social construction in that it can be invented, lived, analyzed, modified, and discarded. While Western reason is a crucial dynamic associated with whiteness over the last three centuries, there are many other social forces that sometimes work to construct its meaning. Whiteness, thus, is not an unchanging, fixed, biological category impervious to its cultural, economic, political, and psychological context. There are many ways to be white, as whiteness interacts with class, gender, and a range of other race-related and cultural dynamics. (p. 180)

The tenets listed above fuel the meanings of whiteness addressed in this study. I used whiteness as an overarching term with multiple layers. I examined the complexity of terminology throughout this study as participants shared their own definitions.

Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003) stated that "the emergence of 'whiteness studies' is grounded in social change, particularly changes in the social relations reflected in the idea of 'race'" (p.6). "Whiteness is the location from which others are defined and judged, since it is white people who hold the power to do so" (p. 24). These researchers further suggested that many whites don't "even think of themselves as raced subjects" (p. 26). At the root of this body of literature is a focus on social justice and responsibility. Articulated by Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003), "whiteness studies scholars see their work in contrast to reactionary movements to establish white student centers, to reassert white supremacy, and to restrict the academic canon primarily to works by and about white scholars" (p. 23).

Criticism regarding the study of whiteness exists. For example, Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003) argued that scholars in this field do not examine white privilege or white racism to the extent necessary (p. 26). "Although there is debate within this literature on whether we should 'abandon whiteness' or become fully cognizant of whiteness, the literature shares a conclusion that only by becoming fully conscious of whiteness can we develop progressive action toward the goal of racial justice" (p. 33).

Maher and Tetrealt (2000) analyzed how the construction of whiteness shapes a college classroom. They contended that these structures are enforced and largely accepted. The example they used included groups of students who assigned "race" to minorities, especially blacks, while they stayed "oblivious to their own position as whites" (p. 159). This example illustrated the ease with which we marginalize those who are non-majority. Blum (2008) suggested "from a moral point of view, a focus on Whiteness can be a powerful force for encouraging White students to recognize their complicity in racial injustice" (p. 107). Similarly, encouraging white student affairs educators to reflect upon their own identity development provides an opportunity for continued and progressive movement toward inclusive action-oriented practice.

Identity Development

In order to fully understand how privilege impacts the work administrators do in the college setting, an understanding of identity is essential. Individuals can be more intentional about positively impacting their environments if they understand how their identity forms a sense of self and influences their interactions with others. Important to the study is how participants identify, how they describe the development of their

identities, and specifically, how their racial identity is socially constructed and experienced.

McIntyre (1997) developed categories and subcategories around her interviews with white teacher education students in order to address and differentiate between "white talk," the construction of whiteness, and image. McIntyre's research included the opportunity for participants to analyze their interviews and provide an in-depth analysis of the content. What we learned from McIntyre is that the difficult exploration of racial identity is essential to being able to recognize racism and work toward practices aimed at having a different and more positive impact.

There has been an increase in research on white identity and white identity development over the past twenty years. This increase in theoretical discovery underscores the importance of the topic with regard to educating students and the need for understanding self-identity (Ponterotto and Pedersen, 1993). Goldberg and Levin (2009) acknowledged the process of understanding self identity is ongoing.

> It is important to be continuously engaged in a process of uncovering how white skin privilege shapes who we are and how we related to the world around us. We also need to explore how we can use privilege to undermine the larger white supremacist system. In our work we have found that for many white people the process of uncovering our privilege is a challenging and transformative process. For many this is the beginning of a journey to awareness and fundamental change. (pg. 5)

To provide a foundation for understanding how white administrators make meaning of privilege, it is first essential to examine white identity development. In *Making Meaning of Whiteness*, McIntyre (1997) used Helms's (1990) definition and referred to racial identity as a "collective identity based on one's *perceptions* that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3). White racial

consciousness was "described as a typology of the attitudes held by white people about the significance of being white and the related attitudes toward people of color" (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004, p. 172). White racial identity models are presented to provide a context through which to examine the participants in this study.

White Racial Identity Models

White racial identity models are described below in order to provide a context and backdrop for both participant and researcher reflection. The models introduced here are relevant to the study as the participants themselves have moved, and continue to move through intentional processes with regard to their development of identity, specifically white identity.

Hardiman (1982) developed the first White Racial Identity model, which included five stages. Hardiman's model was developed after a study of six different authors and their experiences as white Americans. Helms' model (1984; 1990; 1994) is perhaps the most widely referenced and researched in the literature on white identity development. Helms (1990) introduced a model by stating that "the abandonment of racism phase involves the recognition of racism and the evolution of self-protective strategies to contend with it" (p. 24). Helms' model of white racial identity development addressed linear stages, which she referred to later as statuses of development. The movement from stages to statuses reflected the notion that stages implied a static place which a person reached rather than "the dynamic interplay between cognitive and emotional process that racial identity models purport to address" (p.183). The model framework included six statuses. Contact, the first status, addressed a lack of knowledge about or denial of racially sensitive information. The second status, titled Disintegration, dealt with

confusion about and a questioning of racial stereotypical beliefs. An individual in this status consciously recognizes whiteness for the first time. The third status was Reintegration, during which the individuals resolve to displace or blame others for their plight and assume white racial superiority. This led into the second phase of the model in which an individual begins to develop a non-racist identity. The fourth status, Pseudo-Independence, addressed individuals who recognize ways that racist attitudes are maintained by white people and correlate that awareness to the self. This was an important stage as there will likely be positive reinforcement from both whites and non-whites. The fifth status, Immersion-Emersion, included an intense and active personal search for definition of racial standards and explained how those apply to the self. In this status, the person begins to accept personal responsibility for racism and works toward educating others. Finally, the sixth status, Autonomy, identified the individual as a confronting humanitarian, yet "safe and secure within oneself when he or she engages in experiences to nurture her or his Whiteness as personally defined" (p. 34).

Ponterotto (1993) developed a White Racial Consciousness Development Model that sought to move beyond black-white interactions to include all minority group interactions. Although developed for white graduate students in counseling, the model has wider applications. The four stages are Pre-Exposure, Exposure, Zealot-Defensive, and Integration. Students in the Pre-Exposure stage did not have an understanding or comprehension of racism. The students had little to no exposure to multicultural issues or people from other backgrounds. They tended to think about the world in a manner consistent with white social norms in the United States; to feel that racism does not exist, and that privilege was inherited and not examined or acknowledged.

When students in Ponterotto's study were confronted with the reality of multicultural issues, they entered the Exposure stage. They started to understand how racism had manifested itself in society and what that meant today. They began to develop empathy for the challenges and barriers that non-whites face. As students began to think critically about what they learned, how they were immersed in cultures of institutional and cultural racism, anger and guilt emerged. In this model, Ponterotto noted that students tended to react to their anger and guilt in one of two ways. Some students delved into more research and information in order to educate themselves to a higher degree about minority issues. Philosophical shifts occurred, and the students were able to deal better with their personal and collective white guilt. Some students began to withdraw from the multicultural topics and participated defensively in further discussions. This stage was categorized as Zealot-Defensive. These students were eventually encouraged to process their feelings and, in time, expressed a renewed interest in multicultural topics. This stage, titled Integration, was achieved by developing a balanced perspective about multicultural issues. Students began to understand racism at both the individual and the systemic level. They analyzed their own biases and worked toward ending racism in themselves and society at large. This stage often ignited an interest and exploration in other areas of identity.

Goldberg and Levin (2002) developed a Radical White Identity model that aimed to offer

> white people a way to resist the white supremacist system by having a positive racial identity. This radical racial identity can lead to the creation of an alternative white culture. Culture is an integral part of racial identity. It is our culture(s) that allow us to define who we are, our values, and what makes us distinct and unique from one another. Some elements of an alternative white culture include

redefining social relationships, the creation of art that embraces a new vision of whiteness, and the participation in rituals of celebration and community. (p. 5)

Their model included five components: understanding white privilege; examination of ethnic, religious and cultural roots; intersections of multiple identities; historical context of multiracial struggle and white anti-racists resistance; and anti-racist practice. They posited that by dissecting the "cultural norms" of white privilege individuals engaged in this process can work to change their behaviors so we "are not acting out our ignorant racism, cultural racism, or institutional white supremacy" (p. 5). The ethnic, religious, and cultural roots component provided an historical context regarding whites in America. Understanding who we were when we came to this country and how we were encouraged to assimilate into this new and dominant white culture provided an important historical context from which to understand the evolution of a people who largely acknowledged "having no real culture" (p. 6). The next component, multiple identities, focused on the intersectional connections between our many identities. Whether race, sexual orientation, gender, or class, examining how these are related and connected provide a deeper understanding of the self. The fourth segment examined the history of the multiracial struggle and the resistance to white supremacy in the US. Goldberg and Levin (2002) stated that this story has been lost over time and is important to learn and know. Finally, the core component of their model addressed anti-racist practice. What does it look like and how does an individual engage in this practice? This element helped practitioners find ways to stand against systemic racism and taught how to contribute to a diverse society without perpetuating forms of oppression. This particular model provides a context in which to examine the participants' life histories, critical moments, and experiences.

White Anti-Racism: Identity Development

There is a debate within the literature about whether whites can discard their whiteness and create a positive or *good* white identity (Kolchin, 2005; Eichstedt, 2001; Hartman, 2009; Goldberg and Levin, 2007; Jackson, 2006; Manglitz et al., 2005). To summarize the inquiry, if one develops a *good* white identity, does that imply that a nonwhite identity is less than good? If it is possible to develop a good white identity, does that mean that white identity itself is based on misunderstandings or lack of knowledge in general? Because the historical context includes a tumultuous and oppressive collective identity, whether assigned or inadvertently absorbed, white student affairs educators must be clear about characterizing their development of and reach for a white anti-racism identity.

Eichstedt's (2001) research explored how white anti-racism activists navigated between "white racism" and the possibilities for white activism. Eichstedt used the term *anti-racism* instead of *anti-racist* to assert that the study is "not about individual racists but about racism as a system of power" (p. 446). In this study, I will use the same terminology because I believe it is nearly impossible to be anti-racist as a white individual in this society. Yet, I believe there is space to develop anti-racism practices, methods, and perspectives, and this development is a continual process. Kolchin (2002) argued that neither embracing a good white identity nor abolishing whiteness as a whole is an acceptable solution. Eichstedt (2001) asserted that whites who want to be accepted as social justice advocates must: acknowledge their whiteness; acknowledge the unearned associated privileges; live with the conflict between white as racial power and multiple layers of white identity; and work to "deconstruct a singular, monolithic whiteness" (p.

447). Because this study addressed white student affairs educators who are committed to infusing social justice and anti-racism tenets into their practice, Eichstedt's research provides a lens to analyze participants' stories.

The idea that a white individual can develop a radical white identity was introduced by Goldberg and Levin (2007). The racial identity development model was designed to help white people "have an honest sense of themselves without hiding, dismissing or subjugating any of their realities" (p. 4). Goldberg and Levin (2007) ascertained that those white people who have developed this identity "have the ability to sustain the struggle against racism, to challenge, connect and bring more white people into the struggle and to create and maintain honest relationships with people of color" (p. 4). Components of the model include understanding white privilege; knowing one's cultural roots; acknowledging multiple and intersecting identities; understanding the historical context of racial strife; and engaging in practice as a white anti-racist. The components of this model offered a framework that informed many of the questions asked of participants.

Research conducted with anti-racism educators (Jackson, 2006; Manglitz et al., 2005; Eichstedt, 2001) filled a gap in the literature and underscored the possibility of whites participating in social and racial justice initiatives. Many of the white anti-racism educators found a way to participate that did not re-center or reify their whiteness. A key component was being able to recognize the benefits received as whites but also reflexively work against being immobilized by an essentialist definition of whiteness (Eichstedt, 2001). In other words, whiteness cannot be considered in a dualistic manner. The salient theme was participants' ability to acknowledge that whiteness contributes to a

mostly negative understanding of white identity and the struggle to balance and manage this problematic identity is imperative.

Similarly, Linder (2001) conducted a study with six anti-racist feminist activists who explored their understanding of identity development, the influences that informed their identity development, and experiences as anti-racists practitioners. The themes that emerged from this study included the importance of community; the need to engage in daily activism, internal dialogue and awareness; and the fear of being perceived as racist. Linder identified implications for social justice educators that are relevant to this study. Integrated learning and self-awareness were identified as important to those interested in contributing to a more just environment through their everyday actions. Participants in this study struggled with personal and workplace isolation and sought ways to find and develop supportive communities. Linder's study highlights the necessity for personal exploration and self-awareness, as well as a required critical consciousness, in order to be present and active in the daily work.

Owen (2009) examined the argument of whether or not individuals with privileged social identities should or should not hold positions of leadership in functional areas related to diversity. He cautioned white diversity leaders against making assumptions about knowing what it means to be oppressed. Owen concluded that, when diversity leaders with privileged social identities lead, they must do so with, "modesty, understanding, nuance, and courage" (p. 205). Further, it is crucial that those diversity leaders "demonstrate strong, public, antiracist, feminist, social justice leadership that is grounded in working actively and collaboratively with those who are marginalized and excluded at every level of the organization" (p. 205). The relevant literature

acknowledged the opportunity white student affairs educators have in anti-racism and social justice work and underscored the need for significant personal development to accompany that work.

Multiple Dimensions and Intersections of Identity

Given that identity development is explored in this study, I thought it would be useful to provide some additional literature surround the complexities of identity. Jones and McEwen (2000) developed the Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. This model was based on an earlier study by Jones (1997) that identified ten key categories impacting and influencing an individual's core sense of self. Core identity is comprised of personal variables, such as attributes and characteristics of self, as well as contextual influences, such as family background, current experiences, and future life planning (Jones and McEwen, 2000). This model is particularly useful for practitioners as it can be applied to any and all students. The model underscores the importance of allowing students to self identify and articulate their own perception of self in comparison to the identities assigned by society, institutions, and external groups. Additionally, various identity dimensions can be "understood and experienced differently at different points in time" (Jones and McEwen, 2000). Relevant to this study is the core premise that individuals experience identity in various ways. Participants' identity will be explored further in this study, and this model provides a context that informs the interview questions around identity and identity development.

Multicultural Competence and Critical Consciousness

Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller (2004) provided a broad overview of the development of studies on multicultural competence in the field of counseling and simply defined it as

"the awareness, knowledge and skills needed to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant and productive ways" (p. 13). Watt (2007) added to this definition by reminding us that "one will never reach an ultimate level of knowledge and awareness about self and cultural groups" (p. 115). This simplistic definition was utilized in the context of the professional work of the student affairs educators who were participants in this study.

Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) developed a framework that sought to advance a more holistic view and perspective of multicultural understanding and education. Their approach was supported by four assumptions: culture is key for helping students confront their own racism; white students have a hard time identifying personal cultural connections; cultural diversity is a "fact of life"; efforts aimed at common culture tend to privilege the majority population; and multiculturalism is essential for students to develop (p. 86). Their framework included five steps which aimed to (a) understand culture, (b) learn about other cultures, (c) understand and deconstruct white culture, (d) understand and recognize the validity of other cultures, and (e) develop a multicultural outlook. The steps were designed to be used singularly or incorporated into a larger holistic multicultural curriculum. The framework was created to contribute to a more holistic view of and participation within multicultural education. At the center was a focus on the deconstruction of whiteness in order to increase a multicultural perspective. The authors supported the notion that, in order to be multiculturally competent, an educator must undergo a

> …developmental journey where a multicultural outlook is created by guiding students through a process where they are confronted with more difficult challenges as they accomplish those which are less challenging. This framework also promotes attitudes that encourage cultural learning and intercultural

competence….These attitudes include: a high regard for culture, an eagerness to learn, a desire to make connections, and a readiness to give as well as receive (p. 93).

It is this journey I desired to explore with the participants in this study. I sought to uncover the challenges they faced in their growth and development, in addition to the ways they understand their privileged selves in the context of their practice.

In order for multicultural competence to be demonstrated by student affairs practitioners in effective ways, it must be accompanied by a critical consciousness. Freire (1970) introduced the concept by exposing the educational system and calling for reform in how we educate students. He criticized the educational system's inability to help students develop an acute awareness of social, political, and economic oppression and become able to take action against it. "Regardless of the route, critical consciousness does not come without one engaging in difficult conversations and facing what it means to be privileged" (Watt, 2007, p. 115). This underscores the importance of being present, active, and reflexive in and about the way in which we show up and engage in our work. Coupled with the ability to be actively engaged is the need to address self-bias, assumptions and values.

Acknowledging Privilege

Rothenberg (2000) posited that racism is a white problem and that whites have a responsibility to address, confront, and analyze race and to accept the responsibility of power and privilege in today's society. She shared frustration with "well-intentioned white liberals" and their need to understand "why those who continually draw on their privileges (at the expense of others) so often fail to recognize them—consistently confusing what they have come to expect with what they have a right to demand" (p. 3). I

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share the perspective that whites have a responsibility and must be accountable for our privilege, its manifestation in our practice, and its impact on others in the communities in which we learn. Acknowledging privilege is one component that was addressed in this study. McIntosh (1988) began to define the multitude of ways that whites experience privilege, whether realized or not. She acknowledged why others see whites as oppressors and described the importance of understanding and recognizing privilege. "I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence" (p. 4). This acknowledgement has potential to turn into action oriented practice and will be uncovered in this study.

Because making meaning of whiteness and white identity was at the core of this study, white privilege was also addressed. McIntosh (1988) broadly defined privilege as something of value that one group has and another doesn't, simply based on their association, rather than something they've done to deserve (or not deserve) it. Johnson (2001) discussed privilege as a "feature of social systems" and noted it depends "on the system they're in and the social categories other people put them in" (p. 138). Johnson stated that privilege "generally allows people to assume a certain level of acceptance, inclusion, and respect in the world, to operate within a relatively wide comfort zone" (p. 33). Johnson provided examples of privilege, including the ability to have things go the way we'd like, to decide on rules and how they are applied to situations, to make judgments about others, to analyze reality and develop definitions to fit what we believe is the norm, and to decide who is accountable for what.

McIntyre (1997) worked with white teacher education students to help them understand how teachers might develop strategies to positively impact and deconstruct an

education system influenced by white privilege. She encouraged acknowledgement of responsibility for race relations in the education system and called for a reshaping of society. These strategies for taking responsibility are relevant and have implications for student affairs educators and other practitioners in institutions of higher education.

Frankenberg (1993) interviewed 30 white women about their lives, with race infused throughout the context of their experiences. She sought to examine the significance race plays in women's lives and the relationships among class, culture, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Frankenberg concluded that whiteness is a "complexly constructed product of local, regional, national and global relations, past and present" (p. 236). This type of inquiry brings to light the intricacy around the complexities of identity that were uncovered in this study.

Willey (2002) sought to explore how white college administrators understood and acknowledged whiteness and racism. Three themes emerged from her study: participants increased their awareness of privilege and racial consciousness during graduate school, participants were able to identify specific privileges associated with their skin color, and participants were unable to explain how they benefitted from being white even though they could articulate examples of privilege. This study suggested that an intention and purpose must be associated with the desire to engage in transformative self-actualization. Educators must actively seek the experiences rather than receive and grow from them haphazardly.

Wise (2002) called for moving beyond the acknowledgment of whiteness and privilege and issued a call to challenge his participants as well. "If we intuit discrimination, yet fail to speak against it, what have we done to rectify the injustice?"

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(p.108) He suggested that a massive movement of whites involving themselves in the ending of racism will dramatically and positively impact society beyond imagine. This movement is desirable, and my hope is that this study prompts others to see themselves as responsible for increasing their understanding of and engagement in anti-racism and social justice practices.

Putting Privilege to Work

Because they recognized the influence faculty have on the students in their classrooms, Pope-Davis and Ottavi (1992) measured the cultural identity and racial attitudes of faculty and their relationship to racism. Participants completed the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Helms & Carter, 1990), the New Racism Scale (Jacobsen, 1985), and a demographic questionnaire designed for this study. They found that faculty attitudes toward racial identity predicted levels of racism. They also found that gender differences were significant and suggested that college educators examine racial attitudes differently with each gender group, "taking into consideration the awareness, knowledge and experiences of the individuals" (p. 394). The research study also supported the premise that racial tensions on college campuses need to be addressed and reduced, and one way that could happen is an evident commitment to the infrastructures of our campuses. Student affairs educators, given their positions within these infrastructures and their relationships with students, are uniquely positioned to work toward positive change.

Mercer and Cunningham (2003) discussed the importance of understanding the relationship between white racial identity and the effect upon teaching and services for college students. They suggested that

> examining the nature of the development of negative and positive white identity
> and the factors that contribute to that development may help college

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administrators and educators promote both individual development, through the adaptive resolution of stress related to encountering diversity, and institutional development, through creating an environment that encourages such individual exploration. (p. 228)

Self-examination is relevant and necessary due to the nature of interaction between white student affairs educators and their students. Often these interactions take place outside the classroom in a multitude of teaching and learning environments. As mentioned earlier, student affairs educators are positioned advantageously to have influence on institutional practice and campus climate. These educators must be prepared to understand their own identity and how it manifests itself in their work environments, thereby impacting students, staff, faculty and others in the various communities through which they move.

Adams et al. (1997) encouraged faculty to know themselves as instructors. This included developing an awareness of social identity, confronting one's own biases, responding to bias in the classroom, and analyzing personal competencies. They suggested that avoiding feelings that are typically brought out by oppressive behavior or statements that perpetuate oppression be confronted and addressed (p. 306). This information parallels the need for white student affairs educators to be knowledgeable about their own identities in order to positively impact work environments, student groups, and others in their communities.

Katz (1978) provided a pioneering handbook for anti-racist training that was designed to change attitudes and behaviors. The handbook includes a staged training program that addresses definitions, confronts racism, deals with individuals' feelings, addresses cultural differences, and examines individual racism. Action strategies are incorporated into the training program as well.

The task that confronts educators, counselors, facilitators and change agents is developing a way of identifying the issues of racism as they exist in the White community and helping White people grow and learn about themselves as Whites in this society. How can we help White people come out from behind the myths that have sheltered them for so long and begin focusing on the difficult realities and discrepancies that are present in American society. (Katz, 1978, p. 5)

This work provides a resource for white educators and others interested in challenging themselves to explore the biases that prevent them from contributing to more inclusive practices. Useful as a tool designed specifically for individuals who work in educational systems, this could be particularly helpful to white student affairs educators in building communities of committed practitioners.

Lechuga et al. (2009) stated that administrators who wish to address oppression and inequality should be able to understand the realities of privilege, oppression, and power within society (p. 230). There is an additional need to search within ourselves and know our own roles within society. One cannot be isolated from the other. Student affairs professionals can assist students in understanding and promoting social justice through encountered situations or experiential activities (Lechuga et al, 2009). They believed this approach "requires that knowledge is transferred to the learner, is applied in practice, and holds significance in the learner's value system" (Bloland, 1967). Again, criteria must exist in the facilitators; they must have an understanding of self in order to transfer knowledge and its subsequent meaning to the learner.

Latino (2010) conducted a narrative inquiry with 11 white inclusive leaders (WILs) at a predominantly white institution of higher education nationally recognized for inclusive practice with regard to diversity. Latino's findings outlined a developmental framework on inclusive leadership model that included the following: three overarching categories of (a) four developmental phases, (b) four processes that contributed to the

transition between the phases, and (c) transformative life experiences that influenced the personal growth between phases. Sub-phases on the construction of Whiteness and racial privilege emerged as part of each phase. Findings suggested that purposeful commitment to examining personal identities contributed to professional roles as inclusive leaders at a PWI (p. ii.). Latino's work underscores the notion that more research is need to understanding how these inclusive leaders come to understand their responsibility in this work and how they make meaning as members of the dominant population.

Social Justice in Higher Education: Perspective and Practice

Racial unrest among various constituents is alive and present at American colleges and universities. Incidents appear in news headlines on a regular basis requiring campuses to react and respond in a variety of ways. As students become more aligned with racial and ethnic self-identification, an undercurrent of racial hostility festers (Smith et al., 2002). This hostility can be fueled by intolerant incidents that occur out of ignorance or a perceived threat to the position whites hold (Smith et al., 2002). Tension can become political when white students perceive they are losing something of value with the increase of initiatives focusing on social justice, such as resource allocation, support for clubs or organization, imbalance in events that celebrate the underrepresented, and lectures and panels focusing on inclusion and diversity.

Because *diversity* is a term used in many different ways with a wide variety of meanings, it is appropriate to define the word for the purposes of this article. Using the University of Maryland's (2008) operational definition, diversity "is *otherness*, or those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups" (www.inform.umd.edu).

Goodman (2001) connected the term *social justice* to *diversity* as a means to move from dialogue toward action. She defined social justice as a movement that addresses inequities and power distribution, as well as institutionalized oppression. Further, social justice links us to the humanity of resource allocation in an attempt to restore dignity and safety in underrepresented and marginalized populations. Goodman's work captures the intricacies of dominant group identities and explains their effects on the multi-faceted experience of privilege.

Watt (2007) developed the Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE) model in order to encourage student affairs professionals and other individuals to reflect upon the behaviors presented in difficult discussions. The model was a result of research that looked at participant responses to difficult discussions about racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism (Watt, 2007). The PIE model provides practitioners with a common language in order to engage in the necessary discussions to address issues of privilege, power, and oppression. Watt concluded that engaging in discussions about these issues increases awareness of social identity and ultimately contributes to enlightened citizens. Watt defined difficult dialogues as "a verbal or written exchange of ideas or opinions between citizens within a community that centers on awakening potentially conflicting views of beliefs or values about social justice issues (such as racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism/homophobia)" (p. 116). The use of *difficult dialogues* is a common approach for many social justice and anti-racism educators. Often facilitated as intergroup dialogue programs, the approach transparently frames discussions and lets the participants know in advance that discomfort might accompany their experience.

Important to this study is the motivation behind why participants engage in this

work. Little research exists on how and why folks from dominant groups become committed to engaging in social justice efforts. Motivations for individuals with privileged identities to become engaged in social justice efforts vary. Howard (2011) found three main sources of motivation in college students: responding to guilt, recognizing the self as a resource, and reward for involvement in social justice work (p. 12). Howard's findings are relevant to this study, which explored motivations for engagement in social justice and anti-racism work. Further, Goodman (2001) summarized the possible benefits of social justice: emotional and psychological well being could be strengthened; fear within oppressed groups could be diminished; cross-cultural relationships could be established; moral and spiritual liberation could occur; economic insecurity could diminish if wealth were more equally distributed; and worldviews could be expanded and more inclusive. These benefits have been examined through the stories of the participants in this study.

Institutions of higher education are organizations that serve multiple functions for a variety of constituents. Kezar (2011) summarized the dark side of organizations and explored how oppression can exist within the organizational structure: normalization of oppression, resistance to change, and competing interests that result in power dynamics. Kezar's research focused on grassroots leaders in higher education and the barriers they encounter, the effects of those barriers on leadership initiatives, and the ways educators can navigate these challenges. A broad-based study of the experiences of faculty and staff, the research provided a lens from which to analyze the experiences and perspectives of the study's participants.

More recent research efforts have focused on how systems of oppression have impacted the underrepresented or disadvantaged, but there is also research that discusses how privileged groups are negatively affected as well (Spanierman and Heppner, 2004; Goodman, 2001). This research is particularly insightful in helping to understand how racism and oppression have an adverse impact on majority populations who typically do not see racism and oppression as issues that affect them.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on critical white studies, identity development models, multicultural competence, and social justice. The concept of critical white studies was outlined as a part of the conceptual framework guiding this study. Its primary tenet seeks to not only understand the social context in which we live and work, but to also instigate some form of positive change. Supporting the tenets of CRT and bringing suppressed stories or counter narratives to light adds to our understanding of the racialized world around us. Identity development models (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1984, 1990, 1994; Ponterotto, 1993; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Goldberg & Levin, 2002; Jones & McEwen, 2000) were presented and summarized in order to provide some context applicable to the study. Multicultural competence and social justice in student affairs practice was explored because of its relevance to the study framework.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The exploration of literature in chapter two provided a foundation and context to support this research. The development of identities and a worldview occurs naturally as individuals experience life. Making meaning of these various identities was best understood through the use of a qualitative paradigm. Specifically, narrative inquiry was the chosen approach because it allowed for in-depth inquiry into the experiences of white social justice or anti-racism educators. While four participants met the criteria established and were drawn to the study based on the information I provided, I found out that the language and terminology I used did not resonate with the participants. In general, they do not refer to themselves as social justice or anti-racism educators. After you read their stories, I will unpack the issue of language use and identity in Chapter Five. With the exception of the revised research questions, I will remain true to these terms throughout this chapter. In the end, I will explain the findings and their relationship to the literature.

Understanding how these individuals assigned meaning to privilege and power dynamics, social justice, and cultural competence was important for educators who are interested in developing inclusive practice. Further, the results contribute to the body of literature surrounding white identity, whiteness studies, social justice, and cultural consciousness in higher education. This chapter addresses the methodology for the study, including: research design and rationale, research questions, participant selection, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry was the qualitative approach used to engage the participants in discussion and to develop the story as the end product of this project. Narrative inquiry was chosen as the approach for several reasons: (1) personal narratives capture a truth about lived experiences (Riessman, 2008); (2) participants presented segments of their life which provides an opportunity to reflect upon transition and self-empowerment (Nash, 2004); (3) narrative provides the possibility of discovering a more developed perspective to normative beliefs about white student affairs educators, privilege, and power; and, (4) "stories can mobilize others into action for progressive social change" (Riessman, 2008, p. 9). Kim (2011) acknowledged "there are more and more researchers, including practitioners, who employ narrative not only as a research methodology but also as a pedagogical tool in teaching and learning" (p. 82). For a practitioner, narrative inquiry allows for a fluid way of strengthening, through this research partnership, a community of educators with similar goals. Both researcher and participants discovered and uncovered salient meanings through a willingness to share perspective and reflect on life experiences. Participants were encouraged to pose questions that resonated more deeply than those developed in the interview process. This was a co-constructed, dialogic approach between researcher and participant. Co-construction of meaning occurred between the research and participants. "While being involved in…the conversations, researchers take in what is being said and compare it with their personal understandings…inquiring about how pieces of the stories make sense together" (Etherington, p. 31).

The process of narrative inquiry and analysis required attention. The interview process itself demands a listener who can remain in tune to multiple voices: the narrators; the conceptual framework; and the intuitive and reflexive process of working through the data (Lieblich, et al., 1998, p. 10). This was the chosen approach because I embedded my own background, search for identity, and understanding of my own privilege and subsequent power in this study. It was impossible to remove myself from this topic. I found it imperative to establish a trusting foundation from which the interviews progressed. Disclosure and maintaining an active presence throughout the various stages of the study contributed to the research process as will be further developed in Chapter Five.

Research Questions

The primary research questions that guided this study were as follows: How do white student affairs educators describe and make meaning of their roles in higher education? What influences, experiences, and critical incidents contribute to their journey toward becoming culturally conscious leaders?

Participants

Although there are white student affairs educators in various segments of the U.S education system, this study focused on white student affairs educators who have embedded methods of inclusive practice into their work. However, functional areas in higher education are inconsistent in reporting lines. Sometimes a department will report through academic affairs and other times student affairs. I was interested in participants who work at predominantly white institutions because I wanted to uncover how they saw their role and relationship as a dominant member of the university community. Chosen

participants fit the following profile: participants identified as white, currently worked in a predominantly white institution of higher education as student affairs practitioners, acknowledged privilege and power dynamics, and, were able to articulate a basic understanding of cultural competence. Although each participant's formal higher education position did not need to focus solely on social justice as a functional area, it existed as a component in how they addressed areas of responsibility in their work. This was subjective, as self-disclosure was the initial marker for being a candidate in the study.

Purposeful sampling was employed because of the need to understand the lived experiences and paths of individuals who identify and practice as white social justice or anti-racism educators. The ideal participant profile was outlined in the recruitment materials. Participants were nominated, invited, or self-nominated into the study and were recruited through the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators regional advisory board. I also employed direct outreach to professionals who work in multicultural student service functional areas at predominantly white colleges and universities. The geographic focus for this study was the western and northwestern United States, with a focus on Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Utah for convenience.

An initial recruitment email and survey went out to members of the NASPA regional advisory board in January 2012 to share the purpose of the study and outline the profile of research participants. Regional board members were encouraged to share the invitation with colleagues they believed might fit the profile. The recruitment email was also sent to colleagues in the western and northwestern regions who were working in

multicultural student service functional areas, and they were encouraged to share the invitation or to nominate potential participants who fit the profile. Nominations and interested individuals contacted me by phone and email. In total 49 individuals were nominated or self-nominated for the study. Of those, 25 were located out of the desired region and not selected; thus, 24 potential participants were emailed interest surveys (See Appendix D). I followed up on every nomination, referral, and interested individual by phone and email. Seven interested potential participants submitted one-page responses and emailed the information back to me. In addition to basic contact information, survey questions were designed to get enough information to determine if criteria were met and candidates were viable.

Questions included the following:

1. Describe the progression of your professional experiences and how you were led to your current position.

2. Why did you become engaged in social justice or anti-racism education? What makes this a reality for you?

3. Share your perspective (briefly) on power and privilege dynamics in the communities in which you work.

4. How does cultural competence play a role in your work?

5. Are you willing to share your thoughts and perspectives through three in-depth interviews during January and February 2012?

Survey responses were collected via email and reviewed throughout the month of February 2012. While this approach was purposeful in obtaining a viable sample for this study, snowball sampling occurred as well. I continued to invite and collect potential

participant information until I four candidates agreed to participate in this study. Of the seven who returned interest surveys, four were selected, one was not selected, and two potential candidates were communicated with as possible back ups should a participant choose to withdraw from the study. In a narrative study, a smaller number of participants is used in comparison to other research methods due to the quantity and quality of data gathered from each individual (Lieblich, et al., 1998).

Participants were selected based on their alignment and fit with the outlined profile. Gender was also considered because it added an element of diversity within the participant pool. Selected participants were called on the phone and personally invited to participate, then emailed an informed consent form that detailed the study, outlined the parameters, discussed time considerations, and promised confidentiality. Interested individuals who were not selected were notified by email and thanked for their interest after the selected educators agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Three separate interviews were conducted with each participant during March and April, 2012, lasting 90 to120 minutes each. Interviews were scheduled by email and phone in advance to allow for travel preparations. Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recording device and then transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted after each interview in order for subsequent interviews to build upon the previous interview.

Initial interviews were face to face in order to establish the necessary trust and relationship between participant and researcher. Interviews took place at the participant's place of work, at a regional NASPA conference, and on the phone. Because I traveled to participants' campuses, observation of the office environment was imperative. In addition

to spending some time in the participant's office environment, I also toured some of the campus spaces important to the participant. This tour gave me additional insight into the participant's ideas and allowed me to observe possible dissonance and congruencies between the spaces and the participant's stories. During the initial interview, I reviewed and collected consent forms.

The initial interview focused on the backgrounds and life histories of the participants. I first asked about their background growing up and influential experiences and people in their formative years. Early educational experiences were explored. I asked them to share their journey into higher education and followed up with specific questions about their memorable experiences and critical incidents that shaped their perspectives over the years. Interview questions were open ended and allowed for an organic exchange of information, which led to a more in-depth discovery. Desired outcomes for the first interview were to continue to establish a mutual and trusting foundation and to learn the life history and background of each participant. The template for the first interview used a chapter and memory recall format to uncover the life story (McAdams, 1995). A sampling of interview questions included the following: Describe for me your life story, breaking it into three or four chapters. How would you title these chapters? If we were to look at these chapters and focus on events, share a critical incident. Who was involved? What took place? How did it impact you?

Identification of critical incidents and memorable experiences that shaped participants' world-views and perspectives provided the basis from which the second interviews were constructed. Secondary interview questions were derived from the initial interview and subsequent data analysis and interpretation. Second interview questions

delved more deeply into the descriptions and meanings of privilege, cultural competence, and social justice. The goal of the second interview was to dig into actual examples of how privilege, cultural competence and social justice activism manifested in practice. How participants were actively participating in anti-racism or social justice work was explored more thoroughly. Unresolved questions or clarifications from the initial interview were also addressed.

A sample of questions for the second interview included the following: What do the terms *social justice* or *anti- racism* educator mean to you? How do you define your role in this context? What do you do day in and day out that constitutes your role as a social justice or anti-racism educator? When did you first identify in this manner? What are some of the challenges you face?

The third interview focused on emerging themes from the first two interviews. In advance of the third interview, I provided via email segments of the manually coded transcriptions, analyses, and interpretations for participant reflection, input, and verification. Follow-up on areas that warrant expansion in thought or clarification in content also took place. Finally, we spent time during the third interview discussing emerging themes, as well as analyzing the meaning derived from the themes and key issues. It was imperative throughout the interview process to move beyond a fixed identity and thoroughly explore how these participants were actively engaged. Examples of lived experiences and current practice were as important as the perspectives and world-views the participant's held.

Sample interview questions for the third interview included the following: You shared an example of a time when you felt as if you failed? How did this impact you and

what was the outcome? How do you define success and what makes you feel successful? What are some personal examples of areas upon which you'd like to continue working? What meanings do you find in the context of our discussions? What resonates with you and what doesn't?

During the data collection process, I recorded my thoughts and observations in a research journal. As I interacted with participants and developed relationships through various modes of communication, I reflected upon these interactions using the research journal. As I spent face-to-face time with the participants, I also kept field notes in the research journal. The research journal became a useful tool of reflection for me throughout the process as several unanticipated personal situations challenged me during this research study. Throughout the process, participants shared or identified documents relevant to this study. These were papers, articles, teaching and presentation materials, and journal articles salient to the participants, which provided insight into their experiences. The settings provided opportunity for observation that contributed to the richness of data, especially the participant's work environment. Observation collection occurred more frequently than anticipated as two of the three interviews with each participant took place in person.

Data Analysis

Holistic content analysis as well as thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Because the study revolved around the collected stories of individuals and their experiences, holistic content was used to ensure the individual stories remained intact. Thematic analysis examines the content of *what* is being said (versus how) and was an ideal approach to analyzing narrative data (Riessman, 2008). The conceptual framework

surrounding the review of literature provided a lens through which to analyze the collected data. Eighteen total themes were developed in this study throughout the participant's stories. The most emergent themes developed in the study included (1) Contextualized Identity, (2) Individual Story, (3) Action and Presence, (4) Core Values and Beliefs, (5) Responsibility and Accountability, (6) Transformational Practice, (7) Campus Ecology, (8) Justice, (9) Assessment, (10) Spirituality, (11) Progressive and Continual Development, (12) Self-reflexivity, and (13) Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness. Themes are explored and analyzed in depth in chapters four and five.

     A thematic analysis approach was "suited to a wide range of narrative texts; thematic analysis can be applied to stories that develop in interview conversations and group meetings, and those found in written documents" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54). Because I focused on what was being said—the content of the narrative—thematic analysis was most applicable. Each transcript was fluidly analyzed by pulling out and coding meaningful units that informed resonant themes. Although some units were discarded eventually, the process of reviewing these data was an important part of this research. As I worked through the transcripts, I sought markers to help inform possible themes. These markers varied with each participant and included indicators of identity development, recognition of significant events, acknowledgment of privilege, examination of injustice, and engagement in practice. Beyond the thematic makers, I looked for repetition in stories and experiences. In addition to analyzing each transcript, the story was kept intact, and the themes developed and adapted to reflect not only the units of analysis, but the whole story. Several themes were similar amongst participants, thereby producing a composite story in chapter four.

Collecting data through observation, interaction, and historical or current documents (including my own field notes and research journal) provided additional opportunity for analysis. Observations, interactions, and field notes were compiled and contained in the research journal and were rich data sources. Documents acquired through the interactions and interviews with participants were kept with the research journal as well. A creative and active approach was required to reflect upon, think with, and think about the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Using holistic content analysis allowed me to take a step back from the transcribed narratives, reviewing them in their entirety multiple times. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) suggested fluidly capturing "special foci" based on the amount of text and the repetition of topics (p. 63). After reading the transcriptions several times, I was able to pull out "special foci of content or themes…in the story as it evolves from beginning to end" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 63). Foci were coded on the transcripts, reviewed repeatedly, and tracked throughout the analysis process. Part of my process included taking a step back from the data and sitting with the participant's story separately and individually. This part of the process was time intensive and created a heightened awareness in my ability to look at the stories through a different lens. This exercise was the impetus for the creation of the poem that introduced each story. Holistic content analysis includes the interpretation of early memories. Using McAdams (1995) chapter and memory recall template for the gathering of the life story, I collected a series of memories, whether general impressions or specific episodes from each participant. This segment of the interviewing process allowed me to make

inferences about how these episodes, critical incidents, and memories contributed to their development and interpretation of self.

Trustworthiness

Execution of the research process was an important facet in creating trustworthiness in the study (Riessman, 2008; Creswell, 2009). In addition, trustworthiness in interpretation of data was essential (Glesne, 2006). To ensure authenticity and accuracy in the findings, multiple strategies were employed (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002). First, each interview was recorded, manually transcribed, and double-checked for transcription accuracy. Second, direct quotes were used to appropriately convey participants' experiences and highlight the richness of data. Third, observations were included to give the reader insight into the participant's environment. Fourth, member checking was extensive. In addition to reviewing notes from the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy or provide clarifications of their words and meanings conveyed. This allowed expansion of thought and led to additional reflections on topics that were salient to the participants in subsequent interviews. I also shared my analyses and interpretation with the participants and invited their feedback throughout the research process. Participants were also invited to review an early draft of the findings to ensure accuracy. Fifth, peer review and debriefing was constant throughout the research process. Finally, researcher perspective and bias was explored and articulated providing the reader an "open and honest narrative" (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). The research journal proved useful in tracking and auditing the research process. I was able to "describe in detail how the data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the

inquiry" (Merriam, 2002, p. 27). The journal was an integral part of the research process, as I recorded my "reflections, questions, and decisions on the problems, issues, and ideas encountered throughout the process" (Merriam, 2002, p. 27). Numerous reflexive memos were captured in the research journal and detailed the external factors that were impeding or supporting the research process. I recorded my struggles, my barricades, my personal challenges, and my a-ha moments. Data in the form of interviews, field notes, participant observation, and document collection was integrated to ensure credibility (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006).

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the overall design, approach, and rationale for the study. Population selection was addressed and included a purposeful sampling method using a regional professional association network and its relevant knowledge communities to recruit participants. Participants were also recruited through direct contact with multicultural services departments at universities in the northwest and western region. Snowball sampling occurred as well. Sites varied with participants. Data was gathered through a series of three interviews with each of the four participants. Thematic analysis and holistic content analysis approaches were used to analyze the data (Lieblich, et al., 1998; Riessman, 2008). Trustworthiness was addressed and mechanisms were in place to ensure the study was sound in design.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE STORIES

In this chapter, I present four individual stories: Elizabeth, Jay, Hannah and Ferd. After several weeks of examination and processing how to honor and share their stories, it became clear to me that I must deliver their stories in the way that they were given. This presentation allows me to stay true to the principles of narrative analysis and "keep the story intact" (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). Further, while I acknowledge the "intertextuality" of these stories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.120), I present them as individual stories. There are, undoubtedly influenced by the interviewing method I employed, similarities and commonalities across stories. I will conclude this chapter with a composite story designed to address the commonalities. Identity, privilege, social justice, and cultural competence weave together the threads of their stories.

As I began the writing process, I went back and forth on how to retell these stories. Ultimately, I chose to use present tense. My rationale was simple. I want you, the reader, to join me as the stories unfold. Although the interviews were conducted in a similar manner, as outlined in chapter three, the data informed how the stories were written. At the end of each individual story, a co-constructed analysis of themes is presented. Embed within the analysis are stories of challenges, methods and experiences of the participants that underscore the salient themes. The analysis segments, with the exception of Ferd's, are reflective and therefore written in past tense.

Each story is introduced with a poem. The poems were written after sitting quietly, reflecting on my time with each participant. Each poem illuminates a part of the participant's story that resounded time and again during my period of reflection. I was

unable to "let it go," thereby creating a poem from the participant's words and my own thoughts. Not necessarily related to the research questions that informed this study, the poems are simply an insight into one facet of the individual. Please join me in hearing the stories of white student affairs educators, Elizabeth, Jay, Hannah and Ferd who continue to strive to become culturally competent social justice and anti-racism practitioners.

Elizabeth's Story

> Who thinks about race every day?"
> Regret - the moment it exits my mouth.
> Too late. Eyes wide, tears brewing.
> I know better, I am better –
> Than that. Than this. Yet….
> It opens me, again, still.
> Regrowth accompanies renewal.
> It's time to Listen, again.

Introduction: Identities Explored

Elizabeth responds to my call for participants and attaches an article she wrote for a regional publication. The article details a time in which she was confronted with privilege and describes what she does as a result of that incident. I am intrigued by this admission. Elizabeth acknowledges she comes into her understanding of privilege, power, and oppression later in her life. I am interested in her story because I suspect some readers may identify with her pathway to understanding and locating herself in privilege contexts.

Elizabeth and I have spent time together in professional circles. I have witnessed in person how she advocates for others, with particular focus on underrepresented voices and populations. Elizabeth's story begins with an exploration of identity.

Elizabeth has multi-faceted identities. I ask how she defines her identities and how she first becomes aware of the various identities she holds. Beyond the salient

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identities of wife and mother, she discusses her gender, recognizing that she "tends to be more assertive than most women." She says:

> I have always been aware of being a female. I can remember it was in either junior high or high school, I was going to play a tennis game and my mother said, "Don't always beat the boys." I would never have said that, but she did. I can't remember who I was going to play with but she said, "Let [him] at least win a set." (Laughing) And I was like, "Why would I possibly do that"?, and she said, "You don't always need to win." It was partly about my competitiveness but was actually couched as a gender term. In fact, I have never felt being female has been a deficit to me. When people talk about glass ceilings-it's probably because of the fields I have chosen.

Elizabeth has personally "benefitted from being female." Flashing forward momentarily, she gives me another example of how she has used her gender to get what she needs:

> There was one time when I was working for the state department when I was about twenty three. I had a run in with an older boss but I thought the issue was more about being young than being female. He wasn't giving me something that I really needed to do my job and so I started to cry and he gave it to me which wasn't a very good thing but I couldn't help myself.

Her examples are stereotypical gender constructs and do not delve into other dimensions. She does not deepen her thoughts on her gender, and I am left wondering if she will share further as we continue our process together. She identifies as a white woman, and talks about her early recollections of racial differences and how those played out around her:

> I remember, and this was never thought about all through high school. In fact, I had a graduating class of 1,000 so it was a big school…we had several people who were Asian American and I had a friend who was Hispanic and I remember when she said, "You know I could apply for a scholarship, I could apply for a special scholarship." And we thought that was so silly. But when we were going through the yearbook the summer after graduation, my friend said, "Did you know we had a Black person who went to our school"? We didn't know because she was in - whatever it is called when in the morning you take classes and in the afternoon you go work. We didn't even know there was someone who was Black in our class, and so it was very white.

Elizabeth lacks an understanding of race and racial differences as a high school student. She and her friend, who is Hispanic, poke fun at the friend's access to scholarships based

on race. She acknowledges her lack of awareness matter-of-factly. Race was present in

her social life, though in a superficial way:

> After [graduation] I worked for about a year and half at a travel agency. There
> was a friend there named [Samantha] who was African American and she felt
> younger than me, she hadn't been to college, she had been to travel school. She
> thought that was very funny, she said, "You know what, I'm not college
> educated." She was laughing at herself, but I was very aware. I remember going
> out and we went shopping but I was constantly aware. I almost felt like I was,
> 'Hey look, I'm with my Black friend." And it was a sense of other but also sort of
> it was about me. It was like, "Look how [cultured] I am." It didn't matter that it
> was the first African American I had sat down and had conversations with.

Elizabeth is acutely aware of her own perceptions about accepting someone unlike herself

and is proud to be seen with this new friend, as if acquiring a badge of merit. She wants

to be seen as inclusive, but she recognizes this is new for her. She continues to have

experiences with those who are from different backgrounds, but does not connect that

difference to her own whiteness. She acknowledges that this progression and

understanding develops much later:

> And in grad school I had a good friend and it was more diverse in grad school -
> not hugely diverse. My roommate in college, her parents were both from China. It
> was also, maybe I was bringing with me from high school not the sense of that
> *being other,* but that didn't feel like a race or ethnic difference. It felt like my
> ancestry is Norwegian and hers is Chinese and that just felt sort of fun to learn to
> eat with chopsticks. She was clearly American but we lived with - we were
> roommates, we lived across the hall, and then first, second and fourth year we
> lived together, and the third year I was in England. But that never seemed like a
> different race to me and it still doesn't and I don't know why - it could be because
> she was my friend above anything else. And probably owning my whiteness as a
> privilege probably has been over the last ten years. Before it was just different.

As her awareness increases, she progresses in her own development with regard to

identifying how racial differences help to inform others' experiences as well as her own.

She is unable to see racial difference when it comes to her friendships. Color blindness is

present as Elizabeth focuses on core friendship. Elizabeth shares the time "it clicked":

I remember [Mark] saying something about someone wanting a license plate that said Redskins and the DMV wouldn't give it to them. I was like, "You know, I don't get that." I remember saying that it didn't upset me that Minnesota was the Vikings but then all of a sudden I remember the click going, well the Vikings haven't been oppressed. I can clearly remember this instance when I thought, Hmm, that is an identity - being white is an identity that carries a lot with it.

This moment of realization strikes Elizabeth. She has new understanding of the connections between privilege, history and oppression. She makes the connection between the Vikings and the Redskins and names the historical significance between the two peoples. Seemingly simple, it opens other areas of exploration for Elizabeth.

East coast - when you live out here that is an identity that is very clear people if they like you, they sort of take it as something you bring to the table. If they don't like you, that is an explanation. I can't tell you how many times I have heard people go, "They are so east coast," and I am like, "So am I"! And they go, "Yeah, but we can take you."

Elizabeth is aware of the fluidity surrounding various identities. Nuances and variations exist and are received in different ways by different individuals. Here she recounts the time she was confronted with sexual orientation and the associated privileges:

…my roommate in grad school - we were such good friends and I was the first person he came out to, and that was the first time I ever thought of…He had started out in the doctorate program and was seeing someone in the master's program and I said, "You know, I think he is really cute." And she said, "You are barking up the wrong tree." I didn't even get what she was talking about. I mean, it never even occurred to me and now I think, of course he is gay, how could I not have known this? We spent so much time together and I could remember driving down to the beach and he told me and I thought, how hard that was for him to tell me. I was like, "what, I didn't even…" I was blown away, shows how stupid I was. But that was the first time I thought about being straight because that was such a - especially in the early eighties if you were straight and lived in a very straight culture and a lot of people who were not straight were still trying to be straight and they still are I know. It wasn't anything in my consciousness but it was something. Bill and I were roommates for four years but I felt that incorporated very easily into my sense of privilege and where I placed myself in the world. Once I got over the 'I want you to be my boyfriend', I was fine…

Elizabeth personalizes her friend's coming out. She sees herself as the individual who experiences loss with her roommate's admission of identity. Although it registers how difficult it must be to share this very private information, she focuses more on her heterosexist mentality, as that is at the forefront of her ability to understand the situation. She is able to look back now, confronting her own ignorance, albeit somewhat harshly.

She continues reflecting on the various identities she holds. Here she discusses socioeconomic status and the incongruence over her own class status:

> [I] grew up with everyone that was middle class, my cousins were middle class, and so was everybody around me was middle class, whatever that means. I think you place yourself in contexts with the people you were with and there were some people who had a little less money and some people who had a little more money but there was nobody that I would consider poor or rich. My aunt and uncle had a pool and we thought they were doing well, so it always seems odd to me now when we check off the highest [box]. Why do we have the highest? We should have more money, but that part is something that I become particularly aware of every time someone calls and asks for donations. It's like, we have to give because we do have more than others, but I never think about that very much.

Elizabeth is comfortable. Her privileges allow her this comfort. She is aware of the fact that she does not have to spend time thinking about these privileges. She works consciously toward inclusion in her personal and professional lives. Recently, she attends a humanitarian banquet in the community. She describes how she introduces Mark to various folks at the banquet:

> …and I became very aware when I was introducing [Mark] to people…If the people were LGBT I would say, "my partner," or I would say, "my husband," and that I have always wondered about because when I say, "my partner," I feel like I'm discounting the fact we have a privilege that they don't have and I am acting like we don't when we actually do so…am I pretending to be the same even though we are not? But I am very aware when I introduced him to a student who was an intern at the LGBT center and I introduced [Mark] and was like, "He is my partner," and turned around and introduced him to [another woman], saying, "This is my husband." But if I would have said partner she would not quite know what I am talking about. [This is] something I would not have thought about fifteen years ago, probably even ten years ago.

Elizabeth struggles with authenticity. She wants to be inclusive in her language, and

recognizes her use of terminology shifts depending on her audience. Her attempts at

inclusion are well received by some, although she wonders whether she is simultaneously

discarding privilege. She is well intended in her actions, and is also able to recognize

participation in possibly marginalizing others in the process. Further, she reflects:

> We are pretending we are all the same, and we are not, and the truth is we have
> the privilege of getting married and so by me saying, "He is my partner," am I
> being inclusive or am I pretending? And I probably should ask, but I would
> probably get a different response every single time.

This is a situation Elizabeth has faced time and again. She has not reconciled how to deal

with this, but the admission of confusion around the simple notion of introductions is an

indication of processing to come.

Youth

Elizabeth is born in Syracuse. The oldest of four, her parents move the family to

Philadelphia when she is a baby. Both parents are from Philadelphia, and both graduate

from Penn State. Elizabeth's siblings include a sister, two years younger, and two

brothers, four and seven years younger. Elizabeth describes her early years as "pretty

classic, middle class, white, baby boomer upbringing." I ask her to share her earliest

memory from childhood. She says:

> I was probably two or three and in Philadelphia there used to be - so the river runs
> along through the city and underneath the art museum. It sits up here on these
> steps and then down there right along the river is this thing called the water
> works. There are these buildings that are built above the waterworks - built in
> maybe the 1850s, 60s, and I don't even know what they did but they were the
> waterworks. Underneath the waterworks there was an aquarium - it was, by the
> time I was a cognizant person it wasn't really there anymore. And I remember
> being in this aquarium with my dad and it was kind of smelly and damp but I was
> holding his hand and we were looking at the sea turtle in the class and just feeling
> very safe and, isn't that nice story?

Elizabeth doesn't talk much about her parents in our conversations. I infer a comfort and appreciation for her youth. This story is a pure and simple memory.

> I can just remember this, and my dad is a big guy - very gruff, but it was just like we were watching a sea turtle, was there a sea turtle? Who knows? I can just remember that holding his hand, the smell, and going, this is an old place…I don't think I had ever been there. Afterwards I asked my Mom, "Was there an aquarium by waterworks"? She said, "Yeah." So that was it, just standing there holding his hand and looking at the sea turtle.

When I ask her to talk more about her childhood, she shares a story that is insignificant, yet easy to recall:

> …being at Valley Forge and we used to go for picnics there with the cousins. Having a picnic there and there was this big hill and we would roll down this hill and then my cousin [Remi] rolls so far down she rolled into the creek. And she was in waist high; you know it's not a very big creek but she was muddy and everything like that. I don't know why that came into my mind.

Elizabeth laughs and we banter about the purpose of talking about her childhood years. Not meant to focus on issues of privilege and power constructs, I encourage Elizabeth to think freely about the growing up years. Valley Forge is a place of memories for Elizabeth. During this same visit, she climbs a tree, falls, and gets her first scar, "the biggest scar."

Although she has friends from the neighborhood in grade school, a move in the fifth grade is when Elizabeth "really came into my own more." Elizabeth is a good student, placed in advanced sections in the junior high. Pegged smart at an early age, Elizabeth also plays a lot of sports. She is captain of the tennis team, and plays hockey and basketball. A traumatic experience happens when she is around fifteen years old:

> [I] had this group of friends - there was probably eight of us, five on the inside and the other three were friends and sat at our table, which was eight, but, you know, a clique and we called it a clique. One of them was Cindy and she was a twin, her brother was Gunner, and Gunner was goofy now in retrospect, and he

had five friends. So we were going up to - their parents had a place in...and I thought, 'this was so cool', because these were really the five coolest guys in ninth grade. So we get up there and the very first day we are going to go out sledding, I remember. My friend Graham was on the bottom, we were double decking and we slide down this hill - she hit a snow bank, I go into the snow bank, I get up and am laughing and someone comes over and starts screaming and blood is dripping from my face. It was an ice bank and my face had gone into the ice bank…

Elizabeth doesn't realize she is injured. She continues:

I didn't know, my face was so cold, it was frozen, and I didn't even know till I looked down and saw blood. But, what happened was, they should have taken me back but I said I was fine. I don't know why they didn't take me back. My face swelled up so much that they gave me these sunglasses and I attached a little handkerchief here so you couldn't look at me. They must have called, so it was two days later and I didn't get to do any of the fun stuff, you know you play cards, and all I know is I looked really ugly. I hadn't seen any mirrors. There wasn't many mirrors back then. They must have called [my little brother], because I get home and I walk in and [he] opens the door and says, "Gee, don't you look pretty." And he burst into tears.

This is supposed to be the highlight weekend of the year. What a disappointment for

Elizabeth. She is so hurt she can't do anything include show her face to her friends.

Reality hits her when she gets home and her appearance scares her little brother. The next

week, while Elizabeth recovers, she is filled with worry about her immediate future as an

athlete. She continues:

I looked like some monster - my eyes were tiny slits and my face was so puffed up, my hair was really short, but my faced was so puffed up that you could hardly see I had hair. I got one picture of it and it was so awful. There were three things that were terrible about that. One, that I had this whole weekend where I thought Gunner and his friends were going to fall in love with me, and of course he didn't. The other was that I looked so bad and the scars are only showing now because I am getting older and I have lots of wrinkles. The third was that the next week I had basketball tryouts and I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to do that and basketball was my life. And I couldn't go to school because I would have frightened little children like my brother. We had a terrible basketball team but I could score, so we lost every game, but I scored all the points. We had a bad basketball team because we didn't play together and people wouldn't play together they would just throw me the ball and I would score. But the coach called

and said, "Don't worry, you don't have to try out." Which was the only saving grace in the whole thing. Yeah, that was a bad experience.

Despite the injuries and the recovery time, Elizabeth finds a silver lining. She is allowed on the team without having to try out. Likely has a result of her demonstrated skill in the game, it still proves to be a relief to Elizabeth.

College Years

Despite her parents wish that Elizabeth attend Penn State, she chooses the University of Virginia. She wants a place that is "just my own." Her father tells her she can go anywhere no more than five hours from Philadelphia and within $500.00 of the cost of Penn State's tuition. She shares a little about her undergraduate experience:

> I got to college and really didn't want to do anything. I was not one of the active people who got involved in every student affairs thing, I did nothing. I decided I wanted to study abroad my 3rd year. We didn't have a study abroad office, so they told me there was some professor who can tell ya, "ok." But it was '75. So I wrote to the British Council of Colleges and Universities and they sent me a list of all their schools. So I wrote to four different schools, they wrote back and accepted me, so I decided I wanted to go to University of Exeter, and then I went and talked to this guy. I was an English and History major. And he told me, "No, we will accept your credit back." So that was great, went over, and spent the year in England.

Elizabeth gets a phone call before she departs for England.

> …a friend of mine from high school who went to Sweet Briar, a women's college about an hour down the road. She called and said, "Hey guess what?, We have a study abroad program, so I am going to the University of Exeter." [I said,] "I'm going to the University of Exeter." It was so odd. So I did have a friend that was going there at the same time and we flew over together.

This year is critical for Elizabeth. As she travels throughout Europe, she gains a sense of independence. She elaborates on this "experience that fundamentally changed who I am."

> It just made me more confident. It made me try things I would not have tried before. Because you kind of have a pass when people don't know who you are - not that I was ever afraid of a lot of things. But frankly if someone thought it was kind of crazy, they could just say, "She is American." (Laughter). So, a sense the

world was smaller. Oh, my gosh, I can do all this. I can get on a train, I can go to Greece. And I can get on a train and I can get off here. And even though we do not speak the same language at all, I can find a place to stay. And you can meet people, and if you are with these people and if that does not do it for you, sit in the house train and meet someone else and start traveling with them. Great sense of freedom. And a sense [of] confidence and competence as well as a sense of not only [the] world being smaller but the world basically being a place where people would help you.

Her time abroad is liberating. Anonymity plays a role in her ability to feel free.

Her friend flies home for Christmas, and Elizabeth stays in England and travels. She recalls:

…you learn a lot even if you are in a English speaking country. The English are not much like the Americans. I learned to be in a different place. I learned that most people are friendly. And most people want to help you, even if they don't understand what you are talking about - that you can make your way in strange places, and do very well.

Upon her return, she works through the credit transfer process, which does not go as she was promised by the professor a year earlier. She ends up graduating as an English major. That summer Elizabeth and her college friends work for awhile then decide to travel to Europe to go on a bike riding tour for two months.

Travel Agent

Returning from Europe, Elizabeth knows it's time to face real life. Unsure of what to pursue, she turns to the thing most familiar: travel. Hopeful, she applies to a number of different travel agencies, and is hired by a company as a travel agent. Although Elizabeth can describe in detail hotel rooms in Orlando and other places, she doesn't get to travel for the company. This travel agent experience is a very short chapter in Elizabeth's history. The course of her life changes with another phone call:

So after about eight months a friend, my friend, my friend in fact that had been at Sweet Briar when I went to Exeter, called and she had been living in D.C. and she was getting a master at Georgetown...and she called and said, "One of my

roommates is leaving and I don't know what I am going to do." I told her to give me two weeks and I would be down.

Although a short chapter in Elizabeth's life, it proves enlightening. Elizabeth realizes that just because the job she holds s related to her passion for travel, it does not include travel as part of the responsibilities. She is eager to move on.

Federal Government

Elizabeth signs up with Kelly Girl, a job placement agency, where she works a few days as a receptionist before landing a position with an international development company. She describes the company and her position:

> And this was a program - it began only with Nigeria, it was oil rich countries that had a lot of their native people all laborers... But all of the people that were making money were foreigners. So they were training their country people in the middle of technical fields. So this program was sending 2000 Nigerian students, eighteen year olds, to get associate degrees all over the country. And they had hired me, they came, and there were like ten three-day trainings in D.C. before they sent them out to; Garden City, Kansas; Astoria, Oregon; Price, Utah. They hired me to be a gopher for the first three days at Ford Center where they stayed. And they hired me for another couple of days, and then they bought my contract. So I was working as a program assistant. That was a very interesting time, it was really interesting in that was actually the very first time I really thought about differences.

Elizabeth acknowledges her late exposure to diversity and differences. She progresses through higher education, including a year abroad in another country, yet this is the first time she considers diversity in the context of societal norms and expectations. She observes the agency's work with great interest:

> …the training we would do…. not the southern Nigerian's as much, they were from Lagos and big cities but the Northern Nigerians were really from small villages that had tribal markings. And they would get off the plane, men holding hands, we would have to say "This is how this is going to be interpreted here." I was a gopher - the people doing the training. They would have to explain "Just because you have checks, doesn't mean you have money." So, explain banking systems - explain a lot of things. Explain what typical U.S. hygiene is - and that

we, as a culture, tend to interpret the smell of sweat as meaning that someone is not clean.

Elizabeth is offered a position with the company as a program assistant for one of the four regions. Writing and correcting reports for her project and associate project officer, she feels belittled by her role:

> So they would give me these reports and I would correct them and give them back to them. Then they would go into staff meetings, program assistants, because we were basically the secretaries. I would be so mad-"We are important. We should be able to go to the staff meetings." So I went into my first staff meeting and I thought (snore sound), Why did I want to go here?

Elizabeth's skills are realized by upper management a mere four months after starting with the company. They invite her to plan a district conference. She is young and her energy and attitude pay off:

> So then I started to travel and I needed permission slip from my boss so I could rent a car - because I was too young to rent a car. So I planned that conference. Then I got promoted to associate project officer for the west, after about six months… I visited all these countries...it was a great job. Then I became project officer to the west…I wasn't paid much money, because I was a kid. So I became project manager of the west at 25. But I flew over Mount St. Helen's when it was erupting.

Elizabeth travels to community colleges as part of her job responsibilities. Raised in a homogenous high school, the position she holds at this agency gives her a real sense of the diversity of peoples. She relays a time she was exposed to cultural differences:

> I remember I would tell all my students, we would have fifteen students, we would meet at 9:00 o'clock and I would be there at 9:00 o'clock and I would be like, 'Where are they?' And usually at one school I would have one student who would feel sorry for me and she would show up and say, "They will be here. They will be here." The appointed one, who was there for the stupid American. After a while I would say, "Get there at 9:00 am," and I would get there at 9:30. If anyone was there they wouldn't mind, they would just be waiting. And what they said to me was, when they would throw a party, "We would say nine o'clock, the Americans were there at 9:00 o'clock." And then they said, "You know the people from South America, they would get there at 10:00-10:30, the Saudi's

would get there..." They would tell me what time everyone would get there, but it wasn't late it was just - it happens when you get there.

Elizabeth learns from her students. Timeliness has different meanings for different people from various cultures. She appreciates the courtesy shown by appointing a student to be there to meet her and explain when the others would arrive. She is able to joke about her own expectations. She has no notions of trying to get the students to change their norms around timeliness. Her role with the agency exposes her to situations with which she never dreamed she'd be dealing. Here, she struggles to advocate for a student suffering from mental illness:

> [Terrence] was one of the students who was crazy; I had another student who I really liked. And I thought, Why are these different? And I thought, because [Terrence] was psychotic and this other guy isn't. The other guy had said to me, "I have to go home because I have had a hex put on me." He would talk about things like that, and I would say, "Yeah, you have to go home." I don't believe in hexes, but he did, and it mattered. And that was not psychotic. It was something real.

Elizabeth tries not to make judgment about her students' issues. She works to understand her own perspective. Trying to determine whether cultural norms or mental health issues are presenting is something that Elizabeth has to deal with at every institution to which she provides support as the project officer. Terrence struggles to be successful. Elizabeth details how the situation plays out:

> [Terrence]…was in…Oklahoma, at a HBCU and a community college. They said, "You have to get him out of here. He's, he's crazy." We brought into D.C., and he saw a psychologist, Dr. [Johnson] at University of District of Columbia. She said, "No, it's a cultural thing." I mean I wasn't a psychologist. But I thought, this is not a cultural thing-he is nuts. She said, "No, it's a cultural thing." They didn't understand him at Oklahoma and they told me I had to put him somewhere else in my region. "I am not taking him into my region, he is crazy." "No," the professional said, "He is not." So I did my best, and at each school we had somebody at the school, at the time in retrospect, it was probably the dean of students. My best - probably the most caring person was at [Kentwood] Community College. I explained the situation to him. He said, "Yeah, I will take

him." Every day [Terrence] will call and he would say, "Send me back to the village, I am on the edge." And I would say, "Yeah you are on the edge." [Terrence says,] "I am on the edge out here. I don't want to see the water. I might fall off."

Elizabeth knows he literally means the edge of the world. The community college is located on a western point near the Pacific Ocean. Terrence desperately calls out to get back to his village, and Elizabeth is his primary lifeline.

> So finally Jim, the coordinator said, "You've got to bring him back." So we brought him back into D.C. And Dr. [Johnson] said, "He is fine." And I said, "There is no way I am taking him. I am not taking him in my region yet. So we will watch him. We will put him in the University of District Columbia." Before he started classes, they put him back in the 4S Center, waiting for him to be placed. And the last time we see him he was running across the lawn at the 4S Center wrapped in nothing but a shower curtain. And that was the last time I saw him. Who knows what happened to him. I thought, there are cultural differences and then there are things that [are] mental health issues across cultures.

Elizabeth knows Terrence is not well and will not be successful. She is untrained, has no expertise, and yet is able to recognize this despite the professional assessments that have taken place. Despite having "absolutely no qualifications," she has a high level of responsibility, empowered to make decisions that impact others. Her intuition gives her more competence in decision-making than her education suggests. She stays in this position for almost four years and determines that she needs to go to graduate school.

Elizabeth applies for several masters programs in Counseling and, in addition to other schools, is invited to attend a school in the Carolina's with two days notice.

> And I said, "I can be there in four days." He said, "Okay." So I get there, they had this summer course that was all year round - your intro to counseling skills. I realize this is a master's in school counseling. And I had gone to it, thinking that if I wait until these other courses begin in the fall, I will be side tracked, and I will be interested in something else. So, I don't want to do school counseling. He said, "What do you want to do?" "I want to do community colleges," [Elizabeth responds]. I had really gotten into the mission of community colleges-there is something you can do. So, it turned out very well. But by December, I thought, I need my doctorate. I can't do this. I want to be a psychologist. So I applied at a

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couple of schools but stayed [in the Carolinas]. Chose a chair that no one had chosen in four years, they said he was mean. But I knew I needed someone to keep on my tail. He was very good to me.

I am intrigued by the pathway Elizabeth chooses, and the lack of information she has about the college in the Carolinas but chooses to attend anyway. I ask her to share more about her graduate school experience:

> My Masters was a one-year program. Even though I liked them quite a bit, they were all school counselors. So it was a little different than who I am. But, in our pre-practicum courses we doing it with the doctorates, so I got to know them pretty well too. And I didn't want to leave. I had my friends, too. I did have a faculty member there, who knew I had been accepted to Maryland and she was appalled that I chose this program. I said, "This is your program." She was appalled that I chose [the Carolina program] over Maryland. You know and I don't care. I thought it was a school counseling program. (Laughing) You think I think ahead? So I went through the program. Found out I really liked college counseling centers. I was a grad assistant for three years at the counseling center… had done a practicum in community mental health but, I really liked college counseling centers because even though people have awful problems I like the sense of, that we are moving forward that there is something better ahead. So I stayed and finished my course work and took my comps and probably took another year. At one time I was doing a grad assistant in counseling, I was racking up sixty hours a week, I had a grad assistant in the counseling center, grad assistant in the career services and then I was doing some work with psychiatry for research.

Elizabeth immerses herself during her graduate school years. She balances multiple assistantships, practicum, and internships. Having worked immediately after college in a position with a lot of responsibility, the intensity and pace of graduate school is natural for Elizabeth. She is drawn to college counseling centers and seeks a position at an "APA approved" center. Only 27 were approved at that time and Elizabeth knows she wants to work at a "macro center that did lots…" She is interested in teaching, supervising, and a wide array of experiences. So she accepts a position at a large research institution in the west, which I'll name Big Sky University.

Big Sky University: The Professional Years

This move changes Elizabeth's path:

> So I moved out there in '87 and loved the counseling center. [I] met [Mark] who went on to become my partner. He was doing his internship there and he was actually doing his counseling psych degree…but he was doing a two year half term internship at the counseling center while he was still taking courses-met there, I might as well stay here. Pretty soon we thought we are probably going to be together and that was a little drawn out. He was raised LDS and he had already starting to moving away as we were there, but that is a big thing and marrying me was saying definitely I'm not going to be doing that.

Elizabeth meets Mark at the University. With similar career paths, they find camaraderie with each other and begin to plan a future together. She acknowledges the importance of her partner's move away from an organized religion. It's clear she is not interested in adopting Mark's religious background. Already in the process of abandoning his religion, Elizabeth knows this is essential for their future together. She summarizes her family life over two decades and projects what is to come:

> So [Mark] and I met in '87 – in '90 we did our dissertations. Then, in '91 we got married. Bought a house. For a while I thought things were changing all the time. [Darin] was born in '92; [Heather] was born in '94 and our life was pretty much just work and family. We kind of worry now…We are coming to post-kids and house phase when [Heather] goes off. And we think the kids have kept us from total work all the time, because we both have a tendency to overdo. [Mark], because he just is very conscious and slow. He is really-he could take an hour to craft an email, he crafts it, I am, 'just send it off.' And he is really, really serious about things. So, we are about to begin that phase. The empty nest…

When I ask her about a significant event during this time, she highlights, in more detail, the birth of her first child, Darin:

> …it kind of stands out because we - he was going to be induced because the doctor thought he was going to be too big. Turns out it's the practice - if they can induce, they do. She broke the water and it didn't happen so she didn't induce him. It's funny because you wake up and you say, "Alright lets go have a baby." And you call in at 6:30 and they said, "Give us another hour because we are going to clean your room." So, [we] went in and they started the Pitocin at 8:30 and he was born at four o'clock, it was pretty straightforward. But it's such a singular

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experience where I can remember being in hideous pain - I was getting an epidural but only half of it worked. So for some reason there was this line where only half worked and the other didn't work so they thought that gravity would take it down and it didn't so I was just miserable. Then you see the videos of right after he is being born and I am going, 'that wasn't so bad'. And [Mark] is like, "Why don't you breathe?" I'm like, "Shut up, I'm having a baby!" And you forget about it until your second one is being born and you're like, oh right this hurts and I forgot how much this hurts. You know that moment when they put the baby in your arms? When it's born you are like, this is just what I wanted. You are exactly who I wanted.

Fast forwarding to the present, Elizabeth alludes to her concerns about what is to come next with her children leaving home for college. She and Mark are dedicated to their work and how this manifests itself in a work life balance will be challenged when the children move out. Elizabeth pauses, then continues discussing her career progression. She outlines her early experiences at Big Sky University:

> I did my internship and working in outpatient drug and alcohol treatment then came back to head up the alcohol drug education center at [Big Sky] which is under the counseling center. I did that for a while and a new director came in, [Joe], who decided he wanted me to take over the career area. I was still kind of the figure head - who would think you needed a figure head to coordinate the drug and alcohol center but a lot of people knew me so we hired an associate coordinator who did all the work and I was the name. My name doesn't carry that much glory in drug and alcohol education and I wasn't published and didn't know why I had to do this but I was the figure head! And then I was coordinator in the career area than we had a new VP come in and kind of stirred things up. She made [Joe] - Joe was both Assistant VP and director of counseling center, and he said, "I need someone to run day to day operations." So he promoted me to Associate Director of Administration over the two long-term Associate Directors that was kind of awkward.

A tumultuous time at Big Sky, Elizabeth assumes various roles. She recognizes her role as a generalist, not an expert. She is flexible and works through the various responsibilities assigned to her, whether in title or in practice. After the departure of a Vice President who was at Big Sky for only a year and a half, Elizabeth receives a new request:

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> [Joe] was made the interim Vice President. And he said to me, "I would like you to take my place as interim AVP and counseling center director. Do you think you can do it?" I was like, "I don't know if I can."

She has concerns about her ability to move into this position. Shortly, the new Vice President is hired. Her mentor, Joe, "just wasn't functioning that well," and was demoted. The new Vice President asks Elizabeth to take on the AVP position. She struggles with this:

> [It] was really awkward. That is why I was kicking and screaming. Because I was like, "This is my mentor. And you are going to rise me above? Do not do this please, please do not do this." And then she said, "Look. You can either take the AVP position and put him down to Counseling Center or you can go back down to line staff at counseling. [Joe] is not going to be AVP." So I said, "Sold, I will take it." I eventually had to tell him, "It's time to retire," which was also very difficult.

These are hard times for Elizabeth. She navigates the push that propels her upward into the organization, taking on more and more responsibility, but it is not without challenge. In the end, she puts her professional status first and does what needs to be done for the division and the University. She shifts the subject to the progression of her responsibilities:

> I started out with eight offices, now I have thirteen. Assessment got added to orientation, leadership development, international center we split. The LGBT resource center had been reporting to equity and diversity, and when that AVP left, I said to [the Vice President], "Can you get me LGBT, because it is not being run well." They don't have budget. At the end of the year they have to go with a hat in their hand and I said, "I could do it well." [She] basically said, it's mine. I got the budget, so we are good on that. And the darn direct report never shows up for the meetings - the person that she is supposed to report to. So she basically reports to me. Then we just added a Veteran's Center, wrote a proposal. That was funded in May. So that got added. I have too many right now.

Elizabeth advocates for underrepresented students by vying to supervise the center for LGBT services. An indication of her support, she challenges her supervisor to dedicate the needed time and resources so the center can do its best work. Despite the cross

divisional politics, she pushes to provide much-needed support for the center and its

programmatic initiatives. Further, she proposes and is successful in the creation of

Veteran's services at Big Sky University.

I ask Elizabeth to share a pivotal moment where she undergoes significant

change. She tells me about an incident that has seared itself into her memory, and is often

a point from which she draws reflection on her responsibility as an educator:

> I wasn't somebody who was uneducated on social justice and privilege. You
> know, unpacking your backpack. I kind of had a sense of things and I have taken
> cross-cultural courses where it was like - you do this with Asian Americans…it
> was very unsophisticated. But in that moment when [Dana], who had been my
> director maybe a year, said something about something…and I said, "Who thinks
> about race every day?" - recognizing almost as soon as it came out of my
> mouth…that was stupid. And then [Dana] was real quiet and she said, "I do."

Elizabeth wishes she could recall her words as soon as they are out of her mouth. She

acknowledges her formal training, albeit rather shallow, on issues of multicultural

competence. Despite her educational background, her training as an educator, she gives

an honest response to her colleague's statement. This moment shifts the nature of how

Elizabeth engages in issues of justice and privilege for the years that follow. This is a

significant and pivotal moment in her development.

> …here we were six or seven years later writing… we wrote independently about
> it and then our stories were so similar from different perspectives and we spent a
> long time talking about it, and talking about how her and her sons and how she
> has to think about race every day and has since she was little. My kids have truly
> had the privilege and even though they have more interaction with a much wider
> diverse student population in their schools, they are still white and never have to
> think about it. That was turning point because I thought, This is important, I have
> to do something about this.

Elizabeth owns her discomfort and embarrassment with her response and chooses to use

it to educate others. She writes about it publically in professional development

publications. She and her colleague, Dana, have taken the incident and turned it into a

learning opportunity for other educators, illustrating the positive that has come of such an

oblivious comment from a person of privilege. This incident changes Elizabeth's

perspective, propelling her toward a purposeful and renewed action-oriented practice.

Elizabeth is content with her work and the upward trajectory in her career thus

far, yet she aspires to be a vice president. Her own Vice President pushes her to reach for

that goal. The timing is great as her children are eight and ten. She begins the preparation

process, attending institutes designed to assist in the preparation of senior student affairs

officers. However, her path does not go as she anticipates. She details a significant

setback derailing her plan:

> …so I went to Manicur [Institute] in January and I was thinking that jobs would
> start coming out in October. In September, when I went in for my mammogram
> and lucky for me that I was under fifty…and I had had it a year before but I forgot
> so I went in and got it. Which was really lucky, because, I was really lucky…so
> you get your mammogram and then they come in and say, "Looks good, see you
> in a couple years." And so she comes back with this guy who is Dr. So and So.
> And I was like, "I don't want to see Dr. So and So. I don't want you here. This is
> not a good thing that you came back with her." And they said, "Yeah, that's the
> problem." He puts up the x-rays, and says, "See all this stuff"?

Elizabeth knows the news is not good. She braces herself for what comes next:

> He said, "Here is last years, and here is this years." And there are all these white
> dots on the whole bottom third of the breast and I'm like, "Yeah, that doesn't look
> good. What do I do? I don't know what I'm supposed to do." And he said, "Well
> call…" It wasn't great, he didn't tell me exactly what I was supposed to do but,
> "Call your doctor and see if they have a recommendation for where you can go to
> get a biopsy." He said, "We don't know what this means. It could be bad and it
> could be nothing, it could be fine."

Left with the uncertainty over a diagnosis, Elizabeth's mind spins.

> …the hardest part was the moment when the radiologist came in because after
> that people are just telling you what they think you should do…when something
> normal becomes abnormal – after that it is all abnormal…and the hardest thing is
> having kids because…what happens if I don't see them grow up? Even though I
> never really thought I was going to die. I mean, it was like, I have cancer oh my
> gosh. I don't get cancer.

This crushes Elizabeth's notions of invincibility. She can't go back to the office yet she

has a meeting she does not want to cancel. Her professional commitments are not

forgotten amidst the worst news she's ever received. Elizabeth recounts the story with

preciseness:

> …by the time I got home, I had a call from my OBGYN, and she gave me a recommendation of a doctor I should go to who I really liked but she was very young…she did the biopsy October 1st. I remember she was going out of town to a conference and they have a tumor board where they get the radiologist and oncologist together and all the people to decide what to do…it was about two weeks before I got it back [and it] was cancerous-most of it… most was stage zero… it's not out of the duct, but there is some stage one stuff, maybe we can do a lumpectomy. So [Mark] said, "We need a second opinion."

Elizabeth and Mark consult friends who work in medicine. They resolve to meet with a

specialist in breast and melanoma. She recalls:

> I had him do my melanoma and so went in and saw him…he said, "It's the whole bottom third." So I said, "It sounds to me like you think a mastectomy is a no brainer?" He said, "Would be for me." So even though it ultimately ended up being as good as it could possibly be which sounds kind of odd because as good as it could possibly be is not having cancer but given the cancer was there. I had a mastectomy-I had a reconstructive surgery and it was a long and hard surgery. It was eight hours.

Following the surgery, Elizabeth develops a "terrible infection" during her recovery

period. She has the mastectomy and reconstructive surgery back to back to avoid going

back into the hospital. Frustrated, she details the return visit:

> …so I was back in and I thought I was going to lose my mind, but the hardest part about that was having it spread to the lymph nodes. The only time [Mark] and I had a disagreement about it, because the first was when it was diagnosed. I said, "What can I do to make this easier for you?" And he said, "Let me make every decision." And I said [sarcastically], "Yeah, that's going to happen." And he was only half joking but there was a study where generally they would take out some lymph nodes - now it's just standard practice. But with this study, before the surgery, they would shoot iodine in your system and follow it to see where it could go figuring that the cancer would follow where the dye went, so they only took out the nodes where the dye showed up. For me they only took out two and half nodes instead of fifteen. There was nothing in them and obviously there were

no more germs and it wasn't in my nodes so I didn't have to have chemo [and] I didn't have to have radiation.

As if this weren't enough of an emotional and physical burden for Elizabeth and her family, she receives more bad news:

> …I made an appointment with the endocrinologist which took about six weeks to get in. So the appointment ended up being a week before my mastectomy and I got in and he said, "We are going to have to do something with the thyroid. We are going to have to take it out." I said, "Well, get in line because I have a mastectomy next week." I had that in October then in March they go to do a biopsy on my thyroid and they go, "This is totally cancerous." I said, "Is it really?" And it was cancerous. And they had to take it out and so it was pretty pitiful for someone whose only hospitalizations were having two kids.

Despite these events being characterized as low points in Elizabeth's life, she recounts, fondly, her daughter's response to these hospitalizations:

> They had just got all these new beds in the hospital and [Heather] would say, "I am just so happy you have such a good bed"! All sorts of things and she almost sung and danced...and she just kept saying I'm so happy your bed is good…She is sweet.

Despite these physical setbacks in her health, Elizabeth continues to persevere. Her pragmatism around her health issues helps her to address them one at a time. These experiences change her perspective about upward mobility for the time being.

Today: Ongoing Practice and Reflection

Elizabeth provides direction and oversight to multiple units at Big Sky University. Her role requires flexibility and openness as emerging issues play out in the university setting and the departments for which she is responsible. She has frequent opportunities to challenge her perspective and ways of thinking. She shares how much she has grown in her role but that it has not been easy. She explains why:

> Because I show up with a lot of entitlement, I try not to, but when I talk, I expect people to listen. Now is that part of my identity? Not just entitlement, I expect to be listened to which is a form of entitlement. I show up bringing all my privilege

with me. I also show up with my personality, which tends to be a little more out there.

She examines this a little more thoroughly using a focus group program she is running to unpack her thoughts about intergroup dynamics:

> …if it is a racial diverse group, the whites tend to talk first. White men tend to talk first. I do too, is that just because I am fond of my opinions? Or because I have some sense that it's my right to go first? Or is it because women tend to hold back a little bit? Or non-whites tend to hold back a little bit? Is it more of a personality thing as well as a sense of privilege?

Elizabeth is conscious of her own presence and how privilege influences and shapes her. She has the ability to step outside the situation and examine how she is interacting with others. She identifies a quality that she sees as a strength:

> I think being a psychologist is also a big part of my identity. I think I am pretty good at listening. I was better at listening when I was actually doing therapy. I think I bring that identity with me, meaning, I am really interested in what people say which may offset my sense of need to be in the midst of the conversation.

The position she holds, and the power associated with that position is something she uses to her advantage. Yet, over the years, she has become very aware of how her identities impact how others perceive her.

> How my identities influence how I show up I think, is so mixed. What I do know that is different is, [I am a] more aware person of how those identities impact me. So I think what I have that I didn't have before is, not only showing up with my privilege, my personality, my identities, but also showing up and paying more attention to what other people identities [are] and how that impacts the way they show up, too.

One area in which she is currently working is resolving the tension between supporting another individual's preference and her own need to use language that is precise and accurate. Elizabeth works closely with an individual who is in the process of exploring gender identity. This individual prefers Elizabeth and others use the pronoun "they." Elizabeth addresses this:

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I said, "I have a really hard time with they or them because it is really imprecise." I am not a we….someone went into the office and said, "Is [Cam] in?" [The administrative support person] said, "They are in the office," and I said, "Who is she with?" And they were like, "No, no, [Cam] is in her office." So I said that and she called me out and said, "I don't know why you can't get that." I said, "I just can't get my mind around using a plural when you are a singular." She has called me out on my inability, and I can try, but not only does it not come naturally it feels wrong to me. I said, "I will try that. It's just very hard."

Despite her own discomfort, Elizabeth prioritizes the needs of another over her own desire to use language she believes appropriate and accurate. I ask her to share more about the tension between doing what another individual desires and adhering to her own principles. During a conference planning process, she is called out for not advocating for a gender neutral bathroom at an event:

…it was the right thing to do….what's more important is not that I understand it but whether the group that feels strongly about it feels strongly about it. Because it is not really about me and whether I get it – it's helpful for me if I get it. I may not understand the behind of it and maybe I never will, and it helps if I can understand it at least a little bit because then I may see it from the bigger picture but what is more important is that this group feels this way, they are a group that has traditionally been oppressed, so whether I get it is less important than if I do it…unless it's something that oppresses someone else.

Elizabeth lands in the place that makes the most sense: if the decision marginalizes another, it is not sound. If the decision hurts no one and provides additional access and support to an already marginalized group, it is likely a sound decision. I tell Elizabeth I think this is difficult especially when it is the dominant group suggesting oppression based on a lack of attention. For example, institutions of higher education do not typically host a White Awareness Week. She is quick to respond: "Right, that's an easier one for me. (laughing) It's fifty one weeks of a year."

Elizabeth is not afraid to make mistakes. Her concern about offending or marginalizing

someone does not prevent her from continuing to try to understand. She relies on the

honesty and blunt feedback from others:

> And so much of the impact depends on the individual, and so you can moderate
> your own verbalization based on what you think the impact might be, but you
> can't really know the impact unless the person is willing to tell you. That is
> probably the biggest impact on my identities is people who are willing to tell me.

With a background as an English major, and an affinity for accuracy in the use of

language, Elizabeth and I enter into a discussion about the use of terminology in our

work. Recognizing a desire to not be perceived as the Political Correctness Police, we

discuss the challenges and sensitivities around our use of language in Student Affairs and

Higher Education. She finds it much easier to navigate these issues when they occur at

work in comparison with her private life. I ask her to share a time when she was put in

> [Darin] was in high school and I was driving he and a friend home. I was driving
> them home and [Nelvin] said something like, "That's so gay." Ahhhhhh! I pulled
> over to the side, and I said, "What did you just say?" [Darin] turned to [his friend]
> and he said, "You are on your own, Bud." But that was easy because it was my
> son's friend, ya know? And I said, "Unless you meant that as a really good
> compliment, and it was someone who is gay," I said, "I don't even know what
> that means, but it sounded [derogatory] to me." And he said, "well...well...well."
> He probably hasn't said it since.

Levels of ease exist depending on who the recipient is of the lesson. Further, the role in

which Elizabeth finds herself is a factor. The role changes the way in which she addresses

challenges and responds to scenarios. Her role influences heavily how loud she will

exercise her voice. The possible impacts of her actions are felt very differently. She

elaborates:

> But when you are a parent - I mean, that is why it was easy for me because my
> role was parent… and at that point I was the mom and [Darin]'s like, "You

brought this on yourself." With your peers, with your relatives, you have too much to lose. [At work, if] someone doesn't like what I do - I am still your boss.

Despite these situations involving microaggressions that Elizabeth is generally comfortable confronting, she is still "floored" when others tell her they often hear racist statements. She recognizes that many in her environment have become accustomed to "keep that under" in a more covert way. Here, Elizabeth shares another situation at Christmastime:

> But this one, this one was a tough one. We were downstairs in my basement and my mother-in-law and sister-in-law were there. Really, very nice women. And I am folding laundry, and I can totally picture it. We were talking about something, I can't even remember what the stimulus was, but my sister-in-law said, "It's like that old joke." And I said, "What joke?" And she said, "Never mind, it's not a good joke." And I said, "No, what's the joke?" She said, "I don't want to tell the joke, it's not a nice joke." And I said, "Tell me the joke." She rolled her eyes and said, "OK, there was this white baby and Black baby." And I said, "I can't hear this joke."

Elizabeth encourages her sister-in-law until she realizes what she's done. Her encouragement prompts the sharing of a racist joke. She abruptly curbs the conversation.

> There was that moment of, "Oh, my gosh, she's right"! This is a bad joke, and she didn't want to tell it and I forced her to tell it. And I said, "I can't, I can't hear that joke." And she said, "I shouldn't have begun the joke." It was really awkward, because my mother-in-law's there; my sister-in-law is there. And she thinks I am going to stop her, that I think she is a racist. And I said, "I don't mean to make you uncomfortable, but that is a racist joke." And she said, "Yeah." And I said, "I can't hear that joke." And it was ok, I thought, this could be really bad.

Elizabeth is torn. Her prodding results in a very uncomfortable situation with her family members. She chose to speak out and stop the joke before it's said. She knows she has increased the level of discomfort in the room, yet she is also aware that silence would have led to an even more uncomfortable situation. Elizabeth continues:

> She knew that and she didn't want to say the joke, she knew it. But you could tell she was so embarrassed that she had even started it. And then I am the one to push her into it. Then I am the one who said, "You can't tell me that joke." That's one

of those things that you say, there is that split second I am going to, I am glad I did not think about it longer because then it would have been really hard. There are all the times that you think back and you let that go.

Elizabeth walks a difficult line between her personal and professional lives. She wants to support her sister-in-law but not at the expense of the standards she has personally adopted. She continues and illustrates a time when her work was called into question by a family member:

> My dad died back in 2006. I remember one time saying, "That is racist." And he just looked at me. And he said something like, "You have been in education too long." There was really a sense of what makes you better than other people? He was pretty racist.

Criticized by her father for being in the education field too long, Elizabeth recognizes her responsibility in teaching others. Elizabeth pauses and returns to the comment made earlier about how it's easier to confront microaggressions at work. She says:

> …most of the people are not at my level. I feel like that is part of my job. So if I say something, people are going to expect that. And I think I tend to be pretty good. One of the assistants said Totem Pole. And I thought I was really doing good…And she said something [like], "I am low man on the totem pole." And I said, "Let me say something about that." And I said, "Someone called me out on this not too long ago… and I appreciated it. The totem pole is actually a very spiritual symbol." And I said, "That is something that really can be offensive." And she kind of said, "Oh." And two days later, she called me to tell me how much I had hurt her feelings.

Even though her staff member had said the comment, she was offended by Elizabeth's calling out. Elizabeth tries her best to couch it as a shared learning moment and the message is still taken in a manner not intended. Elizabeth continues:

> She was the one who made the statement. And I said, "I am really glad you called. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. But I thought I had done it relatively tactfully? I just know how much I don't want to offend other people by my language. And I thought I would share that with you. Because I had done the same thing." And I said, "The last thing I want to do is hurt your feelings. I was just hoping to be tactfully educative." And she said, "Oh ok. I have been just been thinking about it." And I said, "Well, the intent wasn't to hurt you."

It's in Elizabeth's responsibility to challenge inequity and marginalization in the workplace, however, she is cognizant of how her position of authority impacts others. She attempts to do the right thing by inviting another to understand the possible impact of unintentional, yet derogatory, statements. She believes her reproach is "tactful." Although her point hits home at the end, she is conscious of the unintended consequences her challenging words have on the front line staff member. Elizabeth reflects and resolves to continue engaging in this educational work. She tells me about a colleague who uses the phrase, "holding down the fort." I've heard this phrase before but hadn't thought about it in terms of being offensive to the American Indian population. I cannot conceal my surprise, and Elizabeth and I share the perspective that growth, understanding and learning are continuous. I ask her if she shows up differently in her work life versus her personal life. Which environment prompts more of a struggle? Elizabeth shares with me that confronting individuals on what they say, or their micro-aggressions, is easier at work:

> Personal is harder. Work is easy, personal is harder. Because my job is about me, ya know? And your home life, your friend life, and your things like that, you're with people to relax and have fun. Then, all of a sudden, you are doing something they could perceive…At work you can say things and people think, oh they are trying to make me a better employee. At work it is like correcting someone's grammar.

It is difficult for Elizabeth to articulate why the personal is such a struggle. Much easier is explaining the responsibility associated with her work. The role of authoritarian is present in Elizabeth's work. Elizabeth's place of employment becomes the safer environment for her to engage:

> But it is harder. Because, with work, I have certain responsibilities by nature of my position. And when I exert those responsibilities, people may interpret them different. But my responsibilities are the same - to ensure that our environment is

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as inclusive and as welcoming and safe as possible. And I don't have that out there in the real world. You have no - except for being human, you don't have the authority.

She finds comfort in her work knowing the freedom she feels directly correlates to the expectations of the composition of the learning environment. Elizabeth finds herself often in situations where she is the recipient of continued learning. At a conference in San Francisco, she was standing with her colleagues and a student in the lobby of the hotel, and is approached:

> …and this white woman came up to me, or she came up to us, and said, "What conference is this?" And I go, "Well, it is the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity." And she goes, "Well, that explains it," and walks away. I turned to [my colleague] and said, "That was interesting." Were people wondering why so many people of color were in this lobby of this nice hotel? And he said to me, "Did you notice that she just asked you? She didn't even look at me." And I said, "I didn't even notice that." So I thought, how many microaggressions do I not even see?

Elizabeth responds to this incident differently than her colleague. While Elizabeth is able to see the curiosity around an unusually large number of people of color, her colleague feels the impact of the interaction as a slight. She grapples with this situation and how much of the issue is around microaggressions or the notion of comfort and familiarity. She shares a parallel example:

> In some ways I even think if I had gone up I probably would have addressed the white women because to me there is also the question of there is racism and there is bias and prejudices, but there is also the comfort in similarity. Summer before last when we were up visiting the University of Washington, we were looking for - the union had just closed for the first time in two years, there was no place to eat, we could not find a place to eat anywhere so we are walking around the campus and there's all these people wandering around the woman I stopped to ask was a middle aged African American woman and…she said, "Right across the street is the hospital, they have pretty good food and it is cheap." And I thought, of all the people why did I stop her there and then I thought, because out of all the people she was the most similar to me. She is more similar to me than all of these students walking around, she was African American, but she was similar to me. So I asked the person who I thought would have the most in common with me.

There is also that similarity factor where the safest person is the person most like you. So, with the women who came up and asked us at NCORE… How much is racism and sexism and how much is it I am going to ask the person who I think is most like me?

Elizabeth and I talk about the ongoing nature of addressing issues of oppression. For years she participates in an on campus dialogue group focused on white women. The purpose of the group is to discuss issues related to personal bias and how those biases might impact others. She tells me it is a "tough" experience and I ask her to expound. She tells me about a follow up conversation with the student, during the dialogue group, who was with her at NCORE and witnessed her interaction with the curious white woman.

…it started out with, "Who in the group intimidates you the most and why?" Or, "When are you most afraid?" I said, "Here, because in that moment my inadequacies, that moment at NCORE, my inadequacies were very prevalent and you saw it." But that hurt his feelings and he thought we had a moment of connection there and I never followed up with him and asked him to breakfast or anything like that...but that really tough because there was people crying and people I had intimidated because of my position. It was very - it was intense.

Although Elizabeth recognizes the power associated with her position, it is new for her to hear that she intimidates others based solely on the position. This group gives her small, yet significant, opportunity to level the playing field with regard to the hierarchy and perceptions surrounding position and power. Here she is simply an individual interested in talking and connecting with others. She acknowledges publicly the inadequacy she feels as she navigates complexities with regard to talking about layers of oppression. She learns far more about herself and those around her than she anticipates. Admitting mistakes and being able to read others assist Elizabeth in developing relationships within the group. She suspends and even discards her defense mechanisms in these discussions so she can truly open herself up to the other perspectives being shared.

> You see how easily I cry and you know it is part of me. I really had a struggle to just come here because I didn't want to suppress conversation because of my position. But at the same time I think it is important to say administrators are really invested in this but I am also really aware in how vulnerable I am given my position with this group of people and not wanting to look like I just showed up yesterday. When I am one of the people who is supposed to be leading this, you know, so sometimes I can and sometimes I can't.

Elizabeth acknowledges that this is not easy. Conscious of her role and position and the expectations associated, she struggles to balance allowing her vulnerability to be fully present in the workplace. Although required in this particular setting, she recognized the risks associated with completely discarding her role as an upper level administrator.

I share with Elizabeth this notion that when we allow vulnerabilities to be seen by others, they can often be mistaken for something they are not. When white women show emotion, for example, cry, in the context of discussing difficult issues of privilege and power, often the focus shifts to console the white woman and help her to feel better about her guilt (Accapadi, 2007). Elizabeth provides her thoughts on this:

> The inclusion center does this, diversity camp. We went up for a week…we were in bunk beds and there was fifty people all over the community but I will tell you what, if we hadn't taken a bus up there, half the people would have been gone by Wednesday - Thursday morning for sure. It was so intense. It was really intense but with that there was a lot of people saying, "Don't take care of the white woman." I mean, not just me, but other people too. That is as oppressive as what you are saying is happening.

Hitting a sore spot, Elizabeth calls this reaction "oppressive." She sees it as disrespectful and as a way to discard an individual's commitment toward working through the issues in dialog groups. I wonder if there is an assumption that the tears exhibited in these difficult dialogue groups are a call for help or support versus a simple release of emotion. For Elizabeth, it's a simple answer, and a source of contention:

> The [tears] are just an expression of an emotion. How about I say, "You aren't allowed to get angry because that oppresses me." It's just, "Don't take care of me

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but also don't tell me how to feel." Because reactions are reactions, so that to me is when it gets beyond…I feel like it's not when white women cry it's when people react to white women crying. So, don't blame the white woman crying, blame the people who then try to care of the white women who is crying. That is just a reaction, you do not have to do a single thing about it, and for me guilt is - I am not much of a guilty person.

This is the second time during our discussion that I sense something unresolved in Elizabeth. She reveals dissonance as we discuss this. She recognizes a possible dominant norm in a natural tendency to inadvertently shift the focus of attention off the oppressed to the oppressor, yet she sees this as unnecessary and, in her case, uninvited. We shift our discussion to explore the notion of guilt. She tells me more about where she thinks this disregard for guilt comes from:

I don't know whether I got enough religion as a child. I was Methodist and protestant 'til ninth grade when, Misses Pretty, my Sunday school teacher, asked me a question. I asked her a question, and I guess I had asked one too many questions and she said, "You are just going to have to pray about that." And I said, "Mom, I am not going back again." You have to pray about that? What kind of answer is that? But guilt has never been a thing for me…Guilt is something that says, change it. And if it is something I can change then I don't feel guilty about it - if it is something about me, then I can change it.

Guilt does not affect her in a way that immobilizes her from continuing to engage in the discussions. She uses it to challenge herself to change. I wonder if this is a unique characteristic to Elizabeth. She continues, her thoughts expanding and shifting:

I don't know whether it is a character flaw - this floating guilt about being white and being in a privileged class doesn't - doesn't motivate me much. It's more anger because it is just not the way it should be. It's sadness - it's the sense that if I have privilege then it's my responsibility to use it.

She recognizes her discard of guilt as a motivating factor for engaging in this work might be problematic, but she is quick to replace guilt with anger and sadness. Those emotions fuel her responsibility. I am interested in hearing more about Elizabeth's thoughts on this sense of responsibility. She says:

> I am not going to take responsibility for the oppression of the world that happened, that is happening. I am not going to feel guilty for what happened but it is my responsibility to try and change it…I can only feel guilty about the things that I have control over. But I can feel like it is my responsibility to make a difference.

She alludes to a consciousness about the peoples and the world around her. I ask her to describe this cultural consciousness or competence, however she chooses to name it. She compares her earliest understanding as a breakdown of cultural norms and stereotypes, an "unspecific toolkit," to a more developed perspective:

> To me, cultural competence is understanding cultures, understanding the history. Not only understanding the history of the people, but the history of the oppression. So there is the knowledge piece, which is pretty critical. Never forgetting the individuals in the culture.

Elizabeth places a focus on the population and emphasizes the individuals within population. This distinction contrasts to the perspective developed in courses taken earlier in college. Her understanding has progressed and expanded over the years. Being immersed in practice, beyond coursework, has given Elizabeth a broader worldview:

> …context is really important. But also being aware of both the otherness and the similarity of the person I am working with. And also the cultural competence -- both the external that is happening out there, but the internal is like what you asked earlier, "What do I bring when I am meeting with somebody?" And what is my intention before I open my mouth and what is my impact? And you cannot know that, if you are not listening with your wholeness.

This wholeness Elizabeth speaks of includes the aspects she has already discussed: power and privilege in context, openness to other perspectives, and the willingness to fail. Part of this wholeness includes the vulnerability needed to be able to own when mistakes are made. This is an area with which Elizabeth is operationally comfortable, however an expectation accompanies this admission:

> Cultural competence is the willingness to admit mistakes, to recognize when you make mistakes, the willingness to admit them, the willingness to know who's

willing to educate you. But not expecting that people will. It makes me a little mad when people say, "My job is not to educate you." But, it actually kind of is. But if you choose not to, that is ok, too. Because I am not expecting you to be my teacher - about all things Latino. But you are the only person who can educate me about you.

Complaints are often made from individuals from underrepresented populations who feel as if they are being asked to represent their entire culture. This happens in the classroom, in social settings, and many other environments. Elizabeth is not requesting an individual take on this responsibility. She is simply requesting individual insight. How Elizabeth articulates to her potential teachers is important and likely makes the difference in the responses she receives. Her honesty and transparency is important in this process as she has received resistance to this request in the past. She desires the education – about the individual, not the population. She does not expect herself to be all knowing about groups of peoples. She delineates learned knowledge from firsthand experience, but recognizes there has to be a willingness to participate as a teacher. She knows she cannot grow her knowledge base solely on her own:

> There is only so much I can learn. What I can learn is about myself and the knowledge. But to learn what it's like to be you, no one can tell me that. And there are some people you get close to that you meet that are totally willing to tell you what it is like to be them and live in their world. And other people who never will, and that's ok too. Because you learn from the people who are willing to teach you. So it's kind of recognizing, who will let you in and [who] won't. Just like there are some people I will let in and there are some people who I won't. And I have less to protect. Making myself vulnerable is less costly than someone less privileged making themselves vulnerable.

The individual relationships are the core of this learning. Trust must be present. I ask Elizabeth if she thinks there is a shift in the way we are talking about peoples and populations in higher education. In addition to the way we've modified how we track

U.S. population through the national census (through the ability to check multiple racial identifiers), Elizabeth says:

> We're shifting, not as quickly as you might think, but were shifting. But I think, while I am meeting with people, to take all identities in. You cannot assume what their main identity is. Somebody who is LGBT, for some, it is their defining identity. For other people it is part of their identity. It may change.

Elizabeth and I talk briefly how our own identities have shifted over time. She reflects on our discussion about this shift in the way we talk about students in higher education. She continues, "I think we still like to put them in boxes because it is easier to provide services." Although in higher education we tend to sort students by demographics and talk about them as populations, Elizabeth makes a valiant attempt to break this down and focus on the individual, recognizing that a population cannot share a singular identity. Yet, she has to disassociate this individualistic practice when working on institutional projects because demographic data are often required to justify requests.

Before Elizabeth and I conclude our second interview, I ask her about what she is consciously addressing right now in her practice. Beyond departmental priorities and initiatives, she is concerned with and recognizes the staff need for diversity education and training. She uses the following example to illustrate her concern. Recently she called Human Resources and requested the "breakdown of staff." At first glance, she was surprised and nearly pleased with the diversity, specifically with regard to Hispanics, within the staffing hierarchy until she realized that many of the staff of color were entry level in cleaning crew type positions. She says:

> …so we need more diverse representation at the professional levels and we need staff to consciously think about [this]...If you do a search the way you always do a search and advertise the way you always advertise, you are going to get what you got. So what kind of language can we include in the advertisements that say we welcome diversity without having them feel like we are trying to run their

searchers for them. Making sure they are aware. We are really doing a lot of efforts to make sure staff is educated.

Elizabeth recognizes the delicacy surrounding her position and the influence she feels the need to provide with regard to diversifying the staff. The education that needs to occur is broad based and multi leveled. She facilitates and participates with other staff in ongoing monthly sessions that are aimed at training, development and reflection. One session she highlights is a "fishbowl dialogue" session, in which staff members come in and out of the center and discuss topics posed by the facilitator. Of a recent session, she says "nobody was coming in, and I thought, this is bad, we have another hour and a half, but then a director came in, and it was a great dialogue." I ask her what types of topics are posed in these dialogue sessions. She tells me they pose questions, such as "Why is it so hard to talk about diversity?" I find this a wonderful and simple place to begin difficult conversation. Elizabeth responds, "that's an easy one and we had other questions and it just kind of flowed from there. Afterwards we have everyone say, or make one commitment."

In addition to new employee orientation in the student affairs division, the division also has its diversity council. She says

> Each office has a representative. And we ask the office to let the person who wanted to be the representative, be the representative. So we have a wide variety of backgrounds and knowledge. Some people are really knowledgeable and some people are just really well-intentioned but are ready to learn.

Effective fall 2012, staff will have the opportunity to obtain a student affairs diversity certificate. The program is new and Elizabeth is excited to tell me about another way the division in which she works, and for which she has responsibility, is attempting to infuse diversity into practice.

…so people will have to go through the first training, have come to seven of the nine monthly seminars, written an article for the [divisional] newsletter, which we do each month…And it can either be that or they can write on something they have been to. Then they have to go to two other diversity seminars throughout the university...if they do that by the end of the year they will get our student affairs [certificate].

Elizabeth continues, "what we are trying to do is change the division which I think is the one thing we have control over." She continues this thread by talking about her desire to encourage students to think more deeply about social justice. She illustrates this point by taking about listening to the requests of the student government and how she responds:

…this administration said, "We want more dialogues. We want more focus on social justice - on privilege, on identity." They said their main platform is about dialogue and understanding. So [Dana] and I were saying, "We really have a place right now where we can get these dialogues [going]."

With a new "inclusion center coming up and being on campus," Elizabeth plans to invite them to help "set the stage with some of these dialogues," so that it "won't look like student affairs is coming in and trying to be the voice of diversity." She is alluding to the tension with functional areas that report to academic affairs. I ask her to talk more about this animosity. She says, "We are walking a fine line…it is really bad and we can't figure out why this keeps breaking down. No matter who is in, it keeps breaking down. But if the inclusion center is a part of this…"

Elizabeth has responsibility for students, not certain populations or groups of students. The cross-divisional distrust creates a politic that is difficult to navigate. She doesn't want to finger point yet struggles to find solutions to the chasm that divides the focus on the students. However, she stresses the systemic problem with this example:

We have a diversity requirement on campus. Everyone has to have a three-hour diversity course, but the big problem is the syllabus. The syllabi get approved but the skills of the professor don't. Some of the… particularly the students of color and any of the oppressed students come out feeling worse because they go into it

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and something comes up and the professor doesn't know how to deal with it and they end up feeling worse about it.

She recognizes that she can do her part in the division, but in order to truly have a more inclusive campus environment, shifts and changes are needed at every level and in every part of the institution. She wrestles with her perceptions, and figures out ways to heal the existing divide between divisions around issues of diversity and advocacy for students. She resolves, for now, to focus on the areas in which she has oversight and responsibility. As our time comes to a close, Elizabeth pauses for a moment, and contemplates the unknown:

> What oppressions are happening now that are overt, that we don't even see? What population that we don't even include in any of our identities and are oppressed that we don't even think about? And what am I doing that sustains that? But, you know, you kind of can't move past where you are…I mean, you can, but if you don't see it, you can't change it.

An indication that Elizabeth desires to stay connected and in tune to the challenges facing others around her, she ponders what she does not yet know. She wants to be able to make positive change but is aware that she must first be knowledgeable about the inequities around her. Elizabeth's inquisitiveness suggest that she will continue to delve into issues in her campus and community lives, looking for ways to continue her personal growth and commitment to social justice.

Thematic Exploration and Analysis: Elizabeth

The following section provides an overview of the themes developed during the interview and analysis process. Elizabeth joined me in this endeavor, and I will present it in a reflective manner. Three primary themes developed throughout the interviews conducted with Elizabeth: Progressive and Continual Development, Contextualizing Identity and Role Differentiation, and Self Reflexivity. The final theme developed during the analysis process: Knowing the Individual Stories.

Progressive and Continual Development

When Elizabeth and I met to discuss the themes developed during our interviews,

she inquired about a notation I made on the notes I sent in preparation of our discussion. I

wrote that 'doing the work for Elizabeth is different than the others…' She asked me to

tell her more about that notation. Embarrassed to have provided a comparative note, I

quickly explained:

> You talked far more about reflexivity in your work – about awareness – maybe
> it's the counseling background, but your perceptiveness was the context [of that
> notation]. There was such a strong focus on reflexivity in the work. I didn't want
> to lose sight of that.

Elizabeth found my analysis "interesting" and disclosed:

> When I read that, I thought, I wonder what that means? It might be the counseling
> background. It's interesting because the Keeling Institute was just on campus and
> each of the directors just did a SWOT…Only the counseling staff said "We might
> be slightly resistant to change." (laughing).

I explained that my notation was more about the emphasis on her ability to reflect

inwardly how she shows up in her work. Our discussions were less about doing the actual

work, the content of programming and training, and more about how she made meaning

of her own presence amidst the work. She continued reflecting:

> I wonder if it's also because I came into this work later? It wasn't something I've
> been doing since I was twenty years old. I mean, I really have kind of come to a
> realization of my impact in the work more as an adult, 40, 45. The older you get
> there have to be some benefits and one of those benefits is that you get to be a
> little more introspective. So part of it was I came to the realization about what
> privilege was in a very interpersonal way. I got it in my coursework but I didn't
> get it when I got it in my coursework. I got it as a result of relationships.

Elizabeth's admission underscored the theme of development, personal and professional,

as progressive and continual. Despite the attainment of several degrees, Elizabeth came

into a more comprehensive understanding of herself as a person with privilege through

her relationships with others. This did not take place during her years as a traditional college student, rather it occurred as she was immersed as a practitioner.

Elizabeth's later entry into a more developed understanding of self and privilege prompted her and I to discuss how she is received by her colleagues and students. Do they know she is dedicated to continual growth? Do they understand her commitment to working toward a more inclusive campus environment at Big Sky? She answered, "Within Student Affairs people probably see me as genuine…it's so relatively recent that maybe a little bit-I feel like a fraud." Recognizing this as an emotion fueled admission, I asked Elizabeth why she feels this way.

> Because I couldn't come into this more quickly. But you only get where you get when you get there. I take things as they come to me. So with the social justice work, I sometimes wonder how deep it is for me. It kind of comes back to that point of, what I don't know. There's a – my feeling of -- the people who are doing this for a living, or who do tons of research or as their main professional identity? They would see me as, this is a piece of what I do. Do I infuse it every time I think about a program or do a presentation? So it's a little bit of the imposter syndrome. I am not thinking about this all the time and there are people who are.

Conscious of the amount of time she spent addressing issues of injustice, Elizabeth's critical self-analysis produced some doubt about her commitment. How others perceive her, in this isolated context, was important to consider. Although privileged guilt had been a topic in our conversations, Elizabeth had consistently discarded it. Yet, a sliver of guilt snuck in as comparisons were made between those who infuse this work into their jobs and those for whom this work is their job.

Contextualizing Identity and Role Differentiation

As she reviewed the notes from our interviews, Elizabeth chuckled and told me that one of her top five strengths, using the Clifton Strengths Finder assessment, is

Context. The definition of context is "one who is able to use the past to make better decisions in the present (Rath, 2007)." This was important to Elizabeth. She elaborated:

> For me and it's one of the reasons history is important to me. You can't understand where you are now if you don't understand the context in which [something] happened. When you talk about something and then they talk about something that happened 15 years ago, "We tried it and it didn't work." I get frustrated. You can work with a wide range of definitions of diversity but to say one size fits all doesn't work. You've always got to take the context of the person. The context is kind of everything. The context matters. And the history matters.

Elizabeth's conscientiousness about all the variables to take into consideration in a given situation were apparent: audience, location, history, content of discussion. She shared a time she made a choice about her use of inclusive language based on the situational context:

> So last week, we had all the donors–these are the people who are handled very carefully and you look out and they are almost all Mormon men. When I was talking about studying abroad, I said, "We have to look at other options, like married couples. We have to make it plausible for married students to take a study abroad trip together." Part of me felt very guilty, using married students versus partnered students.

Elizabeth provided numerous examples where the context of the situation prompted her to choose her language carefully. She had to resolve her internal struggle around not being inclusive in order to be heard by those on the receiving end of the message. This was not easy and Elizabeth was confronted with it on a seemingly regular basis.

Elizabeth's identities encompass the various roles she plays in her professional and personal lives. Throughout our discussions, Elizabeth differentiated between her professional and personal selves. Intertwined identities existed, yet the way Elizabeth navigated the complexities of engaging in social justice work manifested itself differently depending upon the environment in which she found herself. Elizabeth and I revisited what initially drew her to this study.

What resonates with me about your study is that there are so many of us in PWI's and it's going to be that way for a while. Even though we try to diversify our staff, it's critical for us to not assume…that's the answer. You can still have racist policies and practices with a diverse administration…It's that we have to take a personal and global approach to how we have our staff educated about these issues…So what resonated with me is that I feel incredibly passionate about this and the topic – it's the way it is and we have to make changes within the system. Even at a PWI, it's still our responsibility to make it a safe experience for the non-white students.

Elizabeth understood the expectations that accompany her formal job. A high level position of authority required certain behaviors, actions and approaches with regard to personnel decisions. She worked hard to balance these expectations while bringing authenticity to her role as a learner. She said:

…you need to be a credible person, but there are times that you have to say in front of a large group, "I don't know. I've made that mistake." Or you have to turn to someone whose at a lower level of authority, and say, "How would you respond to that because I don't know how to?" When you're doing the work as a professional, you carry your title with you and people who are working with you know you have that title, but at the same time you have to be vulnerable to what you don't know. You have to be willing to be the learner in front of others. Which is good role modeling. At the same time you know there are going to be people in that group who are going, wait, aren't you supposed to know these things? So, even at work, there [are] the risks of not knowing. There's the risk of having your humanness be more front and center than your title. And for most people, they appreciate that, but there people who may think less of you because of that. But again, there are other things that I've done that have decreased my credibility that has nothing to do with social justice work (laughing).

Elizabeth's comfort in her professional role did not exempt her from feelings of discord in the required balance between knowledge deliverer and knowledge gatherer, or administrator and learner. Her awareness of this balance allowed her to be more present and make deliberate choices when called for in various situations. She was also cognizant of how her positional power plays a role in her ability to influence staff.

In work, I can use my power and title to make things happen. I can't change the way somebody thinks and feels but because I've got the power, I can provide the opportunity that everybody has to go to the training. And some people, because of

that opportunity, may change how they think or feel or might get beginning glimmers.

As an administrator, Elizabeth sought opportunities to engage in the activities that were important to her. Social justice work, in a formal sense, was not her core job responsibility, yet it was very much a part of her work. "The higher you go in administration work, the easier it is to not hear anybody's stories. Because you're so busy trying to do the damn paperwork, and answer your emails, it's easy to lose touch with the things you really learn from."

She found ways to ensure her job could accommodate this work. With her colleague, she developed opportunities to challenge staff to strengthen their multicultural competencies:

> …Its been fun to start this Diversity Council…There was no money and we decided to do it anyhow, and I so glad it happened like this because then it was a shared responsibility. There are times when I think, oh I wish I didn't have to do these other things and I could just do this because we could really do some great things. Sometimes you just have to find it in the cracks, and it's not always easy.

I asked her to elaborate on the challenges of ensuring she can embed her chosen work into her job. She shared her methods:

> I think that's why the self reflection is so important to me. The more I hear about people's stories, the more I hear about how social justice operates in the context in the work, the more I incorporate it into the other things I do. It has nothing to do with what is poppin' up in my email but on the other hand maybe someone is being impacted on the other end. It's really critical to me. I believe that we always have to look at the individual in front of us.

Elizabeth's personal life was a bit trickier. The same expectations did not exist with her family, friends and other community circles in which Elizabeth moves. In her role as mother, she couldn't address issues of inequity or social justice the way she did in the workplace.

You can't sit them down and say let's learn about social justice. That's the best way to turn them off, and yet you still carry those responsibilities. The title mom, is just mom. You got that because of your kids and yet you can't really hide from your kids. They learn best by seeing what you do and [by knowing] what matters to you.

Elizabeth took full responsibility for participating in the education of her children. She did not hesitate to challenge them to think differently. In contrast to the later development of her own awareness and understanding, her children have likely incorporated this much earlier than Elizabeth, by very nature of being exposed to discussions and situations. She gave an example that underscored this premise:

I think with the generation of my kids and probably yours, I see the sexual orientation issue beginning to not be seen as an issue. In 20-30 years it will be with a few pockets, but the majority will be, "So what?" We have a queer prom here next Saturday. It's a [city] wide thing. [Heather] and all her friends are going. It will be nice to be able to see that happen with all areas of discrimination.

Elizabeth was more reluctant to contribute to creating dissonance in her personal friendship circles. The stakes were higher. Elizabeth said:

You're risking a lot when you stand up for important things in your personal life that you don't risk so much at work. If you do this with friends, you don't have true authority over them like you do at work. And if a friend doesn't like what you have to say, they could end that friendship but to me the scarier thing with that is, they may become uncomfortable being around me. And to me, making people in my circle uncomfortable, is a hard thing to think about.

However, as illustrated earlier, Elizabeth was willing to interrupt racism and heterosexism in her personal life by challenging those around her to think about what they said and how it might impact another. Her role as educator did not end as she left the office. She brought it with her into her family and friend circles. Her reflection on the difficulty around "standing up for important things" in her personal life indicated that she has much more to work through.

Self-Reflexivity

In addition to the emotion connected to Elizabeth's reflection about her work and how she made meaning of it, the level of awareness that permeated her presence was what helped self-reflexivity develop into a theme. Self-reflexivity is "having an ongoing conversation with your whole self about what you are experiencing as you are experiencing it (Nagata, 2004, p. 139)." Further, developing the skill of self-reflexivity required an acute awareness of self and surroundings and the ability to analyze its layers in the moment. She was incredibly in tune to how she contributes and how she is received in various situations.

Elizabeth taught in the higher education and leadership master's program at Big Sky. In the Introduction to Counseling course that she instructed, she had her students look at positive and negative biases and has them discuss how it interfered with their work as student affairs professionals. She told me how many of her students identified the bias, then "instead of talking about why it was unreasoned they would go on to explain why the bias was accurate." She spent a great deal of time working with the students on dualistic viewpoints, helping them to understand the multiple layers to issues of discrimination and power differentials.

> My goal in that class is trying to help them develop what you're saying I've got-[reflexivity]. Watch yourself to see how you act in certain situations and then monitor what you may be doing. Very few people at [Big Sky] are overtly racist, but inadvertently we are. If you don't recognize it, you can't do anything about it. This isn't saying you're horrible or that you're in the KKK, but it's saying we all have to fight against-we all have to frame it and live with this. My job is with those students – helping them to identify this self-reflexivity.

No easy task, Elizabeth's natural and recently honed ability to look at herself in the moment while simultaneously being in the moment assisted her instruction of this important skill. I was interested in her practice and development of this skill. She

continued, "If you really pay attention to your impact on others and their reaction to impact you get a better sense of what works and what doesn't. Then admit your mistakes, apologize, and move on."

Part of this awareness included a topic that we've discussed quite a bit: the use of language. Elizabeth desired to help her students and staff develop a common language from which to work, but she also acknowledged the inability to share definitions should not be a barrier:

> We can't get hung up on the language. These are loaded words-topics. It's ok. We don't all have to have the exact same understanding of it as long as we know where we're going. Making it ok to talk and think about these things is essential.

Elizabeth acknowledged that a difficulty for her lies in another's willingness to teach her if she does or says something offensive. She was heavily reliant upon others to continue to challenge her about areas and issues of which she knows little or nothing. She had, however, increased her capacity to learn from others.

> The hard part for me, I often get my frame of learning from other people. Some don't want to be the teacher. Which is true. It's not someone's responsibility to be my teacher but it's so helpful if they are willing. So much of what I learn is between me and other people. It's also being aware of when someone is willing to help me learn and not having it be an expectation on them.

While Elizabeth was confident in her approach, she was aware of her own confidence and how it might be received, especially if there were power dynamics involved. I asked Elizabeth if she was comfortable reaching out for help of whether she senses and intuits an openness for her to approach and ask for more.

> I think I sense and intuit it…sometimes you can tell when someone is angry at you with your lack of awareness or your lack of knowledge. If someone is angry I am not going to ask them to help me learn at that point–that is really rude.

Elizabeth was keenly aware that her approach to this request for education or awareness must be individual in nature. She recognized that her responsiveness to being educated must be accompanied by an ownership of learning. She was aware of her own challenge in this area, and said, "It takes me awhile to incorporate things into my own ownership of them, but you know people get there in their own time. There is no arrival time." She was forthcoming with recognition that her own development was ongoing, had only recently begun and had much further to go.

Knowing the Individual Stories

As Elizabeth and I were discussing the themes we had developed, it occurred to me that much of her approach focused on the individual. While she recognized the institutional needs surrounding the categorization of student populations, her focus was on the person in front of her. She was interested in knowing "what it's about to be like you." I asked her if this was a possible theme? This story knowing was the impetus for her entrance into this field.

> That does tie into…why I became a psychologist– people endlessly fascinate me. Once you start talking to them, their stories are interesting. So for me, it's knowing their stories. I don't think, even at a particular time, I would ask someone to speak for a group.

This type of listening gave Elizabeth an opportunity to slow down in her work. It took time and an investment to hear someone's story. Elizabeth said it was important to "make space in the room" in order to hear the individual stories.

> How does the individuals within that group experience discrimination or unsafeness or discomfort. For me, that's it. It's the interesting and hard things people go through. I think that, and, as I've said, I come to this progressively. If you live a fairly sheltered and privileged life, it has to be about the individuals. If someone had just said, "It's not safe to be ____," fill in the blank. Unless I'd heard that again and again – if I'd just read it in a book, I'd think, that doesn't make any sense. You hear it from enough individuals, you begin to get a picture.

Reading it versus knowing the individual who is telling the story and experiencing the story is more of an impact.

While Elizabeth acknowledged the possibility of making generalizations about a population if the stories have similar themes, she was cautious.

I do find if you hear enough students talk about a similar experiences – ie: Latinos walking into stores you begin to get the sense that it may not feel very safe – you can get a sense of what it might be like but I would not assume it's like that for everyone within group. For me, it's the individual, one on one, so you can get a sense of what it may be like for people in that group.

Elizabeth's commitment to understanding her staff, her students, and others in a singular manner was apparent in the examples she gave. She was also forthright in her acknowledgement of the progressive nature of her own development.

Concluding Thoughts

Elizabeth's story unfolded transparently. We dug into areas that were important for her to talk about. She was grappling with language use and this became a focal point of our discussions. Her examples tended to focus on how she interacted with these microaggressions and how she chose to challenge the words and the people who spoke them. Her acute focus on language content and use indicated to me that she was confronted with this time and again. Her later-in-life attention to issues around privilege, power and difference made her attuned to these subtle inequities.

Elizabeth's desire to positively impact the areas for which she has influence, including staffing demographics and staff knowledge and skill building, was seen in the development of a division-wide diversity council. She believed this initiative could ultimately change the way staff in student affairs perceive their role with regard to creating inclusive environments for students. Elizabeth's work, only recently begun, has

much potential to shift the climate for staff and students at her predominantly white institution.

Jay's Story

Sitting in the darkness
A cancer ridden body – too young.
Conquered. Hope rising.
Sitting in the darkness
No way to help the
Mental illness around
Me.
Answers at last. New beginnings.
A return to the pit. Again, the ride.
Sitting in the darkness, glimpsing light
Recurring.

Introduction

When I read Jay's response to the interest survey, I am excited to invite him to participate in this study. He eloquently shares vulnerabilities that I anticipate being present in our interview time together. Jay presents his career progression in his interest survey and his use of metaphor instantly strikes me:

> Throughout my career, I have engaged the dual tributaries of academic and student development in promoting student success. Whether developing Living Learning Communities, coordinating faculty communities of practice to apply inclusive pedagogies to the classroom, or building a curriculum foundation for the [Leadership Center], I have remained enthused by and committed to the symbiosis of academic and student development. My current position, with the Student Achievement area, drinks from these two tributaries.

I am interested in the connections between academic and student affairs and specifically Jay's experiences linking these often separate worlds. Although I asked all participants to summarize their life, thus far, in chapters, assigning each chapter a title, Jay is the only one who does it explicitly. He does this easily with little thought required and I've utilized his self-assigned chapters to tell his story below.

Chapter One: Growing Up (1-15)

Jay is born in the Midwest and moves to the Northwest at the age of three where he spends the rest of his childhood. He does not share much about the earliest years of his life, but tells me there were difficult times:

> I had always been a very nervous and worry prone child – was definitely anxious about all things medical. And we have no idea where that came from. I almost died a couple times as a baby, had more multiple trips to the ER for stitches than was probably average….for whatever reason I was really nervous of – I mean going to the doctor for a checkup was terrible.

Although the family moves around a couple of times, it is never more than about five blocks each time. Jay attends school with a number of individuals from Kindergarten through the high school years. He conjoins his childhood and early teen years into one chapter and identifies key memories associated with friendships, neighbors, and school experiences. I ask him to share his earliest memory. He struggles for a few moments with recall, ultimately admitting, "You know, we construct different versions as we get older." He lands on the annual summertime visit to Grandma and Grandpa's farm in Montana:

> I adore those times. It was kind of the stereotypical time – suburban kid gets to go spend summer with grandma and grandpa on the farm. So we would take a couple of weeks and we'd always take - this was hard to do because it was the middle of summer, and grandpa and my uncle were farming and it was hard to get 'em away. But we'd take three days and go up into [Cascade] National Park and backpack. My grandpa was this frugal farmer and so we'd – I remember the first time that I had come of age to be able to do the Glacier backpack trip. I was six so it was the following summer and I had to pack my own sleeping bag and my change of clothes and that's what I had to pack in. And we all had our fishing poles and with my grandpa you'd never take too much food because you had to fish for it. I remember being gathered around in the gravel driveway outside the farmhouse getting ready - I remember getting ready to take off and just feeling like I was walking on sunshine. I felt ten feet tall. It was great.

A boy's childhood dream, fulfilled. Jay relishes this early memory of his family's rite of

passage. Spending time in the outdoors is a theme for Jay. His memories revolve around

experiences in the wilderness, be it the woods, the mountains or the desert.

When I ask him to share another childhood memory, he stays with the theme of

the great outdoors. At the age of ten, Jay's dad decides he is ready for yet another

milestone: a hike in the Grand Canyon.

> …my dad and uncle just were really grossly underprepared. We went in July first
> of all, which is ridiculously hot. We never really had enough water. One day we
> had gone down to base camp and then the second day we were doing this
> exploratory day hike and had hiked down on this mesa and were doing some
> caving, and while they were in the caves we had finished what we had for water.
> And we had a several mile hike back to base camp with no water. And [Uncle
> Scott] knew the area well enough to know that there was water on the other side
> of base camp but nothing between here and the camp. And so I remember
> honestly thinking, I am probably going to die right here in the Grand Canyon
> because I have never been so thirsty in my whole life before or since and I never
> hope to be this thirsty again. [My brother] and I got back to the tents and we had
> some water there and they let us go first and we guzzled. And then we laid down
> on the sleeping bags and even though it was 115 degrees, we just fell asleep. We
> have these pictures of my brother from that trip and he just looks like he'd rather
> be dead. I would always try to be tough but my brother looks like he'd rather be
> dead. There were lots of times that dad drug us out on these adventures when we
> probably weren't ready but that one takes the cake (laughing).

He shares these memories with me with a sparkle in his eye, animation in his voice,

recalling with fondness the trials and tribulations. The outdoors are important to Jay, he

has a connection to wilderness. He and his dad backpack together a lot during these

years. Here he details a life-changing experience when he was thirteen years old:

> …my scout troop was doing a 50 mile hike in the…wilderness. We'd been out for
> almost a week. So, each night we'd have a campfire and each was devoted to
> some kind of metaphysical or spiritual discussion. I learned a lot from [the
> scoutmaster] on those camp outs. And I kind of ate that stuff up. I always liked
> thinking about the universe broader and humans as part of a family and what does
> it all mean, how are we connected? So on the 50 miler, I'd have these thoughts.
> Some of my friends and I started to have these discussions. Our parents always
> said, "There is a god." But, is there a God? I think during that timeframe my

closest friend and I had broached this subject, and we're at the last mile of this 50 miler and we're outdoors in the blues and it's gorgeous and so my scoutmaster just asks what we believe to be true. And he opens it up to these twelve and thirteen year olds – it was a life changing experience for me. We just started sharing things that were in the deepest part of our hearts. And guys were crying and there was this feeling that all of us in the group were wrapped in a warm blanket or something. We'd been transported to a different place.

Significant to Jay is the brotherhood he experiences as well as the leadership from his scoutmaster amidst the intense discussion. A profound imprint this incident makes on his thoughts about spirituality:

I was just absolutely touched in the deepest part of my soul that there is a God and He loves us and every member of the human family matters to Him. And that was an indelible type of searing truth that was written on my heart. That I hadn't experienced before. And there was a collective kind of spiritual experience. On one hand it was a very personal thing, on the other it [had] a collective component to it. From that point on I never doubted the existence of God.

Chapter one is filled with wonderful memories of his family. Jay and his family's love of the outdoors is a focal point during these years. He grows as a young boy, influenced by the trials and tribulations that take place during his adventures. This experience, during the 50 mile hike, grounds Jay spiritually. It proves to be a critical for what is to come next.

Chapter Two: Growing Into my Own Skin (15-21)

Jay has cancer. He is diagnosed at fifteen years old. Tempted to isolate the year of cancer based on its singular significance and make it its own chapter, he decides to group together ages fifteen through twenty-one as chapter two.

All of a sudden I wake up one morning to get ready for high school and I fall down in the shower because paralysis had set into my lower extremities because of a tumor on my spine. So, thus begins this year of where I basically lived in the medical institution. And I changed – And I really believe God changed my brain, or helped me though that experience to where I wasn't nervous and worry prone – It was like I became this different human being. I had to grapple with things like

friends I met during my treatment and a whole chunk of 'em died. And some didn't.

Jay needs strength to face his prognosis, as well of those he meets during his time in and out of hospitals and treatment clinics. Mortality a central focus of this year, Jay finds the will to look at Death directly, and pose a challenge. He discards his childhood idiosyncrasies and embraces this newfound force and confidence.

He spends this year out of commission, missing most of his sophomore year in school. He attends a few classes and does homework when he can. Much of his time is spent in clinics, receiving bouts of chemotherapy, following by periods of extreme sickness. This is a time period of change for Jay. He becomes vulnerable to situations he would not allow in before he became ill. He recalls the first time he was exposed to the arts:

> My dad had been in San Francisco for two weeks and he went to Les Mis[erables], and my dad is where I get my emotional flamboyance I guess. My mom is entirely grounded in analytical and dad is weeping on the phone and my mom couldn't care less. He came home and got tickets for my brother and I. He should have just got tickets for me because my brother is like my mom. I was 16, sitting in the Schnitzer Concert Hall in Portland, watching Les Mis. In a kind of overly dramatic way, It changed my life. I was captivated by the theatre-by the music. The story line had my attention and I just sobbed through that whole darn show. Later that week I bought the disk soundtrack and I've been a Les Mis junkie [ever since]. Even now, I've been to the show three times, I own multiple versions of the soundtrack and I can listen to the music now and it still is - brings up those raw emotions of the time I was sitting in Portland when I was 16. I love the arts and that was kind of a defining moment for me to realize that could be part of my identity. I wasn't open to that being part of my identity and I realized that released the flood gates and that I love this stuff – and I don't care if my friends think I am weird for going to Les Mis and talking about it for the next month then, so be it. Cause I love it. And that was pretty big for me.

The connection with his father is reinforced with this shared love of the arts. Although he struggles with welcoming this new medium and outlet into his world, he ultimately embraces it freely and publicly with no regard for peer reaction. This newfound love for

art, through music and theatre, provides an emotional release during this difficult period.

A bond is strengthened with his father that doesn't exist elsewhere in his immediate

family. Jay acknowledges, "music and the arts have wound their way through a lot of our

experiences together." The outdoors and now the arts connect Jay and his father, giving

them a medium through which to feel and experience their emotions.

He regains his health his senior year, and is able to graduate high school with the

minimum amount of credits. His teenage years aren't as he anticipated. Yet they are

gratifying in many ways. He highlights the spiritual fulfillment during this time period:

> I guess I'd always been maybe spiritually inclined but my depth of spiritual yearnings and thought process and interpretation of the world really deepened during the cancer year. I knew from then on that I wanted to serve a…mission for my church. So when I was nineteen, I left for Dallas and did a… mission for the church. And that was an incredible developmental learning experience in my life.

Uncertain of how the cancer will play a role in his future, Jay becomes alive with a hope

and determination that is unparalleled to anything he experiences before the cancer year.

His worldview is influenced heavily by the exposure to the arts, the emotional

perspectives gained as he fights for his health, and the immersion into communities of

which he is not part. He continues to shed the nervousness he had as a younger boy and

embraces this new way of thinking and being. He continues:

> So when I look back on my life, that whole 15-21 when I returned from the mission is lumped together because I underwent a fairly substantial evolution in who I was. I felt incredibly grounded in who I was and my place in the world. And I would say that my level of empathy for others increased I dunno however many folds – a lot – during that time frame. Just because of the illness and living in the inner city in Dallas and working with all sorts of people – diversity that was incredibly rich and gratifying.

This is the first time during our face-to-face time together that I get a peak at influences that pave his path for engagement in social justice work. His dad plays a role in his formative years:

> I have always felt a depth of empathy for all members of the human family. I was profoundly affected by my dad's commitment to social justice and enjoyed his accounts of participating in civil rights marches and his insights into social inequities (these often provided the grist for dinner table conversations).

Jay briefly touches on the influence of his father's commitment to social justice. A missed opportunity, I did not inquire further about these rich dinner conversations and fail to learn more about this important influence. His spiritual evolution is not without conflict. While he receives great benefit from his connection to the role God plays in his life, especially during this time period, it is not without turmoil:

> As a young adult, I grappled internally with the dual realities of being…devout… and a progressive liberal. I've experienced significant stereotyping, misunderstanding, and prejudice as a result (from both directions). Perhaps more than any of these life experiences is the simple fact that I am emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually affected by indignities and inequities to other human beings. I believe life is about learning to love and serve others and understanding the reality of injustice and privilege is critical to being able to truly love.

Jay underscores the focal point for him. To truly love transcends all the structural and organizational constructs about right and wrong and what is accepted and not accepted in the rules of the church. Here, he extracts the most important tenet of life: love. He concludes the high and low lights of this chapter reflecting on his happiness during this time period, despite the prognosis he was facing.

Chapter Three: Early Married Years/Early Family Life (ages 21-30)

Jay becomes engaged to the love of his young life during his sophomore year of college. He attends a private, Christian affiliated, college in the west. After his undergraduate education, they move to the northwest so Jay can begin his masters degree.

He finishes the degree in one year and accepts his first position in higher education at a college in the west. The first four years of their marriage are difficult times. There are some health issues with which his wife, Mary, and he are dealing. At first, "young and naïve," Jay and Mary didn't realize these were mental health problems. Undiagnosed and untreated, Jay pleads with Mary to get some help:

> Something wasn't right. She was kind of resistant so I set up an appointment and drug her to a psychiatrist. For the next five years we went through a number of different therapists and psychiatrists and it wasn't until I was 30 that we ended up with a therapist in [the Midwest] who said we needed to consider bipolar disorder which was in the realm of depression and anxiety. So that was huge. The five years were still important because we'd make progress but it would always be short lived.

Mental health remains a theme for Jay during this time period. His dedication to seeing Mary through these difficult times is realized in the consistency with which he attempts to get help and resolve for her instability. During the later part of this chapter, they adopt their first son, Alex, although they still "didn't have a grip" on Mary's medical issues. A year after Alex joins the family, Jay and Mary move to the Midwest and Jay enrolls in a doctoral program. It isn't until they adopted their second son, four years later, that they begin to adequately handle Mary's mental health challenges. When their second son, Henry, is adopted, Jay is in the middle of his doctoral program. He completes his coursework in two years. While these are significant events during this chapter, it is summarized efficiently without more elaboration.

Chapter Four: Foundational Professional Years (30-36)

Jay seeks a position in higher education that will allow him to continue to write his dissertation while working full time. He accepts a position doing faculty development work at a large, urban university in the Midwest. This proves to be ideal:

> [I] worked in such a great, *great* office and department, working for a great
> associate provost/dean of faculty – he is really one of my professional mentors
> now – and we really were blessed because we landed in such a tremendous spot
> for me to finish the dissertation and to get such wonderful professional training. I
> was surrounded by talented peers, but also, my supervisors were great models and
> mentoring was part of the culture. Professional development and leadership focus,
> and diversity were really part of the core fabric of the dept. That was a
> phenomenal experience professionally even though the pay was horrible.

Jay is immersed in his post-doctoral position for three years. It is an experience

rich with observation and professional exploration. The facets that contribute to Jay's

positive experience help inform and develop methods of which he is proud: mentorship;

service; understanding and embracing diversity and, the development of self and others.

Although he pokes fun at the fact that his office was in the basement of the campus

library, he identifies this time period as influential as a young professional.

Jay and Mary decide it's time to get back to the west where their families live. Jay

accepts a position as the director of a small center at a regional college in the west. He is

excited to put into practice the concepts he observes for three years doing faculty

development in the Midwest. His professional life, however, does not receive the focus

he intends. Being near family is important in this period, because Jay and Mary discover

that Alex has a developmental disorder:

> In the early days we thought it was a classic case of Asperger's but over the years
> it kinda progressed. By the time we hit the summer of 2008, we ended up in the
> Children's Hospital because he was presenting really psychotic and highly
> paranoid behaviors and so in addition to the Asperger's he now as an early onset
> bi-polar, oppositional defiant and an ADHD diagnosis which some people think is
> over diagnosed but for [Alex] these are all reasonable labels which attempt to
> describe what is going on in his brain. There were huge periods of time during
> this professional foundations time span that really my career growth was the least
> of my worries. It was far more about surviving with [Alex] and trying to figure
> out a way for him to have a life. That was interesting and what I am grateful for is
> that I can't imagine if we'd still been trying to figure out [Mary's] situation at the
> same time we're trying to figure out [Alex's] situation.

At this point in our conversation, we are interrupted by Jay's son. He overhears Jay

sharing their life story and I am privy to a special moment where Jay gently explains to

Alex that telling their shared story, the great times and the hard times, is a wonderful gift.

Alex is satisfied and heads into another room. Jay and I share a moment of laughter and

talk about the challenges of interviewing locations. Jay shares two critical stories with me

that take place during this chapter. To preserve confidentiality, I've omitted both. The

incidents that occur within these stories take their toll on Jay, helping him to grow and

reflect on his role as father. He cuts this chapter short and shares a pivotal incident that

shakes his core, both personally and professionally.

Chapter Five: The Winter

Jay contracts e-coli and begins to hemorrhage internally. He says, "That first day,

everyone thought, including me, that there was a massive tumor in my intestines." The

diagnosis is a relief. In addition to the internal hemorrhaging, he was not allowed to "eat

or drink for five days" while he battled this disease. He was home from work for two

weeks, then spends a year gradually rebuilding his GI tract and returning to health.

> …it was like all the demons I'd ever had in my whole life and then a whole bunch
> of new ones came rushing back at me. I basically experienced my own emotional
> breakdown. I was absolutely incarcerated with fear and anxiety. And it was the
> darkest thing because I could rationally tell myself it was e-coli and it was in my
> system and my system healed and I am good to go – nothing more to worry about.
> It's really possible that it triggered a PTSD thing with my cancer experience, but
> whatever it was, it basically required me to go through another stretching and
> evolution period.

Questions of mortality are inevitable. Jay does not immediately experience the grounded

calm he found when he has cancer years prior. He finds himself in an emotional prison.

When he had cancer, he was alone, without responsibility for a partner or children. This

time, his plight is compounded with a realization that more are affected by the outcome

of this disease. Jay uses meditation to help him cope with this new medical situation. He

spends time "sitting in the dark" and "working out who I am and what my life is." Jay

chooses to share with me the positive:

> This period of time has been really great in terms of our family growth, in terms of my professional growth. I had opportunities to professionally grow which has been wonderful. But maybe more than anything mostly this was about getting me to a better place – my empathy has been expanded and I am more capable to serve others…

Jay finds light during periods of darkness. He is optimistic despite the continuous

setbacks faced by him and his family. This is a pattern uncovered as he shares incident

after incident that challenges he and those he loves most to grapple with the string of

physical and mental health upsets. He articulates something learned from each lesson

he's assigned, reveling in the growth that occurs each and every time. Another positive is

found. He begins to make connections between his response to contracting e-coli and his

wife and son's struggles with mental health:

> …so much has come full circle – so now all of a sudden it's me able to ask [Mary], "When you're in this dark cloud –what do you do? How did you deal with it? What's your relationship to it? What does it mean?" My profound appreciation for this perspective for [Mary] has grown innumerably. I don't know how she went nine years without really having support – I went one and it was about all I could take. I can't believe people go through this longer. My relationship with [Alex] has strengthened as well. I can ask him, "When you're anxious, what do you do?" And for him to be able to talk is not only therapeutic for him but also great for our relationship.

Jay is grateful. He appreciates what has come from another bout with illness: a renewed

perspective on life. He revels in what he learns and how it can influence his future:

> …if I can remain open to being stretched in this way, it will fundamentally change the rest of my life for the better. Instead of being worried about what's my next job or are we going to be able to help [Mary] or [Alex]? Instead of being consumed with planning to make sure that nothing is going to go awry. Because with both [Mary] and [Alex's] challenges, I'd become a control freak. I wanted

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[Henry's] life to be as normal as possible. I wanted for us to be able to have as much fun as possible.

The worry and concern that plagues Jay as a young child has re-entered his life in full force. It sneaks up on him amidst the daily trials and tribulations of his family's health issues. In the middle of his own illness, he sees the connection to his wife and son's mental illnesses and desires only normality for the littlest family member, Henry. I am intrigued by what Jay shares and how he chooses to frame each challenge. Although he acknowledges the periods of "darkness" that he enters in each chapter, his framework for the stories holds an optimistic focus. He does not talk about what he thinks while he "sits in darkness" He does not talk about the role faith or spirituality plays in these moments. Instead, he shares his perspective on coming out into the light. Jay reflects on the last couple of years:

> I would say that talk about life challenges and the fire – the fire has never been hotter than it has been in the past couple of years. The cancer experience was easier to manage than this emotional and mental sickness. What's been interesting for me - the mental challenge - it robbed a person of hope -- but when I had cancer – sure, physically I was in a terrible world of hurt, but I had hope. And I did what I needed and you can't underestimate what that means to the human psyche. And so, I was - probably the hardest challenge of my life thus far. But it's profoundly beneficial too because it strengthens me and puts me in a position to be more of a help to those around me.

Jay identifies the hardest challenge of his life, and feels hopeless. The mental situation that arises as a result of the battle with e-coli is contrasted with the physical manifestation of cancer. But, again, Jay chooses to focus on the positive outcomes. I am interested in the fire to which Jay refers, but it's clear that Jay intends for me to take away how he makes meaning of the obstacles placed before him. It is important for me to know that he shifts the focus from the obstacle to the positive effects. I infer there is a correlation between this methodology in his personal and professional worlds.

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When I ask him about a turning point in his life, he shares an experience that helps him to "come out of the darkness" after this bout with e-coli and the aftermath of mental and emotional strife. About a year after the initial diagnosis, Jay decides to attend a summer institute that brings together people from a multitude of professions and industries. Billed as a leadership retreat, the marketing materials outline that the institute is "contextualized in kind of an eastern understanding of life, philosophy and spirituality…" Jay has been interested in this institute for years and determines the time to attend is now:

> So it was over a year ago that the whole e-coli and panic and anxiety stuff hit me. I had this feeling that I needed to sign up for it – I'd wanted to for years – even though the last thing I wanted to do with my anxiety would be to go three hours away with a group of people I didn't know and be trapped at a camp with them. That sounded like a panic attack in the making. But I forced myself to sign up and that year my cohort of 25 -- was hugely life changing. Because I was with people that were kind of like minded with me. I mean, you kind of self select to go to something like that. But their way of interpreting life was different than my own family culture or the communities with whom I normally am associated – whether church or the higher education community. But the common thread was this kind of spiritual component and personal growth. So there were ties to the parts of me that had been salient but it was a whole new way of looking at those parts. It was the greatest thing I've done in ten years, if not longer. It was phenomenal. It gave me the language, patience and understanding and skill to come out of the darkness and be a better human being. And, it was the best professional development money I'd ever spent.

This pivotal experience provides Jay with the needed motivation to move beyond the depths of despair in which he stayed for much of a year. With fresh perspective, renewal and a shaped view on his spiritual self, Jay is ready to move forward. This anecdote brings us to a chapter close, and opens the door to an in depth view of Jay's involvement as a practicing educator.

Jay: Educator in Practice

Jay identifies as an educator. He is part of a teaching and learning environment, wrestling with difficult challenges, exploring issues in meaningful ways as part of a community. In addition, he identities as a father, husband, and a spiritual and religious man "who comes from a privileged background." After a thoughtful pause, he continues:

> I do think that there's this kind of constant ebb and flow and evolution with the salient identities in our lives. There's always this little bit of me, and this is - I haven't really spent a lot of time processing this, but, there's always a little bit of me, even when I check the box that says "white" on forms, that doesn't really feel like me. But, at the same time, I know that it's the category that is the closest fit, but for some reason I don't - I recognize I come from a privileged background, but I've always kind of viewed myself and others - I view human beings as kind of complex, in their makeup. And so, that simple stratification always gives me pause.

Jay describes identity broadly connected to the various roles he plays. I ask him to share more about this notion of the evolution of his identity. He continues:

> I think it's - my experience in aging, has been that while there are parts of me that may go dormant, while other pieces are becoming more alive, generally speaking, I'm not shedding portions of me. I'm only adding onto. And so, at this point in my life, there are so many demands that basically the list I just gave, represents, if I had to say, what's me at the core right now. So, what do I endeavor to give the most energy and attention to, it's family, it's my professional role as an educator, my spiritual and church community. So those things, then, probably are my salient identities now, because I can't handle much more than that.

Jay highlights the identities that are most prominent based on his personal and professional roles. I am curious to know what other aspects of his identity exist but are not on the forefront due to the inability to make time. I ask Jay about how his identities emerge in the workplace.

> The question makes me go down this path of, what's integrity? And does integrity in life mean that there's a common thread that ties these elements of identity together, that even though there's differences in them, there's also unity in the various identity forms. I think for me, I really am conscious about trying to be a similar person here, as I am in my church community, as I am at home. When I'm

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in my church community, I still am advocating for things similar to the things I advocate for here at work. I'm advocating for those who are traditionally marginalized, or advocating for taking the position of the other or often putting service before self, so there are these commonalities that are who I am, and I think they're, for me, my sense of integrity is saying, I don't want to lose any of those, even as I'm shifting roles.

It is important to Jay that he presents himself consistently in his various communities and roles. Jay's father was intentional and influences him at an early age "trying to teach us, and hammering into us that this perspective was the moralistic perspective that, as human beings, we needed to have." Jay integrates this perspective and it becomes his practice.

What motivates him has been a source of recent reflection:

> I've spent time, kind of intentionally thinking through, to what degree is my involvement in issues of advocacy, multi-cultural education, social justice. Is it to feel good about myself, like is that this kind of like white guilt manifest, and I think it's important for those of us who come from privileged backgrounds to at least ask ourselves that question and to do it more than once. Just because I think that they're pretty complex issues, but for me, I don't know, some of it could be white guilt. I mean that was part of Dad's lesson on Martin Luther King. I had Black History Month from as little as I could remember from my dad, up until now. There was guilt attached to that. And so I'm not saying that I'm totally free of that being a motivating factor, but I really think it's more, it's much deeper than that, and I don't know how to name it either except for that it's a part of me that feels nourished when I'm engaged, and I feel more me. I feel more whole, I feel more comfortable in my own skin, even, when I'm engaged.

Jay analyzes the underlying reasons he seeks out opportunities for involvement in advocacy issues. White guilt may consciously and subconsciously play a motivating factor. But Jay's involvement in advocacy issues is necessary. He is called to action inwardly and participates in advocacy efforts as they fulfill a core part of who he has become. I ask him if he's ever been immobilized or stuck in white guilt. He says:

> I don't think I've had to, I mean I've never felt immobilized, by white guilt, ever. And I can't remember even feeling close to that. So, I think some of it is an education thing, because I think that there's, my sense is that there are a lot of people in the world, that inherently have an open and humanitarian heart, where they do want to move beyond the atrocities of the past and the present, but they

haven't ever had a guide, to help them know how to think about it or even how to talk about it. I think that's when white guilt becomes kind of paralyzing and maybe does more harm than good because people feel like they just have to be-if they don't feel weighed down by guilt, then others would judge them as being not for the cause.

I am curious how he has been able to avoid the paralysis he describes above. Jay is intentional about staying immersed in initiatives that focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. He is not willing to participate only in talking about the issues. Active engagement is imperative:

I think you have to be, as a person coming from privilege, you have to put yourself, I think, in uncomfortable situations that require you to risk take, and so to go to experience other communities, other ways of being, other cultures, because it has to come, the whole, it has to come out of the head. It has to be, it has to, almost in some ways, not be totally an intellectual experience…

Jay is alluding to being engaged in action-oriented practice as opposed to just discussing relevant topics. Jay pauses then gets more specific about how active and interpersonal connections contribute to an individual's level of understanding.

So, the white kid from suburbia, who reads about the civil rights movement, and reads about the injustices, and feels like, man that wasn't right. And feels that, in here. But never comes to know an African American, or a fellow black student, then I think that's damming to their growth. I mean, I think that there's something in the person-to-person interaction…

Establishing personal relationships with individuals and communities of which he's not part is important to Jay. He talks about a nurturing feeling he gets when engaged at a higher level, and I am interested in knowing more about how he perceives his acceptance by communities or individuals. How does he know he's accepted in doing this work? Jay struggles to pin it down:

I think there's an emotional intelligence portion of this, where, with other faculty and staff, I, my feeling throughout my career has been, I can tell that there's a change, that there's a, when I'm actually viewed as an ally, when that happens, when that switch flips, I'm able to perceive that, with the other person. And so, I

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don't know that I can be more descriptive than that, except to say that I've always been able to just tell.

We discuss the challenges of being able to describe and make meaning of how we show up in our work, and how difficult it is to really know that impact is being made. Jay talks about being intentional in the work and knowing his limitations in understanding the student experience. He is uncomfortable with the label of expert and seeks out multiple perspectives. Here he gives an example of his own active engagement:

> I will seek out faculty and staff of color…I'll ask questions, like, how do you think the experience is going right now for our Latino students on campus? It's not different than other relationships we have, if somebody is sincere in their interests, then that starts to form bonds of trust, and so I think it's kind of the same thing. But I definitely don't want to come to the table like a know-it-all, I want to come open to learn and to value the knowledge, certainly that others are bringing to the table too, but especially those who are within some of these communities.

This leads Jay and I to discuss failure. Has he experienced moments of failure as he navigates the complexities of this kind of work? What happens and how does he reconcile it? He tells a story that opens my eyes to a part of Jay that has not come up before.

> I went to…a Midwestern…diversity conference. Myself and a colleague were both kind of leading diversity and multi-cultural learning efforts at our institution, so we show up at this meeting, and I meet the woman who directs the Native American House [at a midwestern University], and who happens to be Lakota Sioux. I'm Lakota Sioux, my grandmother was raised on one of the Lakota reservations, so I got kind of excited and engaged, started this conversation with her. And my friend, who is Black/Latino…He's there with me the whole time, so he and I were able to talk about this after the fact, but I am telling you, she thought I was the biggest fraud you can possibly imagine, and was not at all about to engage me in conversation, and actually appeared to be offended that I would even attempt to act like there was a connection between us. So this initial interaction happened, it was really terrible, and I felt like, oh my gosh, what, did I approach it wrong, is she just being stuck up, I mean-I was going through all the possible scenarios. And my colleague, as soon as we were done with that initial interaction, he said, "Wow, that was really awkward and uncomfortable, pretty nasty stuff." So I sat there thinking about it for a minute, or for a little bit of time

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until the next break, and I thought, I've got to go talk to her again, or I'm going to feel cruddy this entire conference.

This experience is unsettling for Jay. He doesn't want to make more of his heritage than is present in his life, yet he desires to make this important connection. He seeks feedback from his colleague, and determines to have another go at a conversation with the Lakota Sioux colleague. He realizes his initial attempt at establishing rapport did not have the outcome he desires. Important to Jay is rectifying this situation. He continues:

> I went up and talked to her again, and decided to take the approach of, I would pretend I was oblivious to the fact that she was being crazy on me, offensive on me, earlier on, and so I just started having another conversation again. It came out, so it became appropriate in the conversation for me to share my family, who my family is that still lives on the reservation. And so, at that point, when I gave a family name, it was, she changed night and day, and she knows my family, and all of a sudden, I became legitimate, is what I'm guessing. And it was her demeanor changed, her tone changed, everything changed in a heartbeat. On one hand, the ego in me, says, that's not right because I was the same person before she knew who my family was. There was this little part of me, and it was the minority part of me, that was a little taken aback, and maybe a bit upset, but the bigger picture is, I think that those of us who are coming from privilege who do this work, have to be cognizant of the fact that to some, it would be appropriate to feel, there go the privileged again, hijacking the cause, hijacking the movement, hijacking the conversation, and so here's this young white guy out of PhD school, trying to hijack the conversation about Indians, and what does he really know? And he's going to claim that, oh yeah, my great grandma lived on a reservation. Well the narrative becomes probably all too familiar in some respects, and it's not a happy narrative, about white people trying to say, "Oh, I've got a gay friend." But the reality is, my grandmother spoke Sioux before she spoke English, and we all went through Indian ceremonies, naming ceremonies, but how was she to know that culture was a part of my upbringing and who I am? And so, I thought, so really, I'm okay with her reaction.

This brings up the notion of passing. Jay passes as a white person, despite his roots as part of the Lakota Sioux. The personal story becomes the impetus for Jay to be able to resurrect this situation and attempt to reconcile the hostility and fraudulence he has created through his introduction with this colleague. He seeks legitimacy. Understanding and knowing one's story allows an authentic connection to be made between Jay and this

woman. Jay identifies as part of the Lakota Sioux Tribe yet he does not mention this in

our first interview or earlier when we discuss identities. Yet, here it is. This helps me

understand the dissonance Jay mentions early when he discusses the awkwardness of

checking the demographic box "white." Jay tells me more about the dissonance:

> I think there has to be, well for me, there's, and I'm not trying to overstate this, or
> make it sound like I've gone through some amazing journey to arrive at this place,
> because that's not how I see it at all, but for me, there is kind of this - I've had to
> come to grips with it, and have a deep comfort in who I am, whether other people
> get it or not, and so I know, well I don't know, my perception is that I present
> myself as a pretty clean cut, conservative looking, upper middle class white guy. I
> think that's probably the first reaction, because I don't wear a braid, I don't have
> other cultural artifacts on me, I'm kind of, I don't like a lot of attention, and so I
> tend to present myself as pretty vanilla, maybe that's the way to say it. You know,
> which I tend to think is not me. So why do I present myself that way? I don't
> know. Except that I'm comfortable with that outward, because I'm comfortable
> with what I am inside.

There is discord between what Jay presents physically and how he feels internally about

who he is and from where he comes. There is also confusion and uncertainty. If Jay

presents externally with the Lakota roots with which he identifies, what kind of attention

would be drawn? He would be forced to tell his personal story likely far more often than

he ever has. He finds safety in his outward physical presentation. I ask how the rest of his

family deals with their heritage. Jay says:

> …we have my Dad's influence. And Dad has always had this perspective of, he
> couldn't be more proud and grateful to have a Lakota heritage, and he honors that
> in his way, he respects it immensely. But he's always felt it would be a dishonor
> to claim more than he rightfully ought to claim… He's 1/8, which…

I interject, "Which translates to you being 1/16?" Jay confirms and continues:

> So under 1/8 he could be registered with the tribe. But because he never grew up
> on the reservation, and he was given privilege, from his first days, he feels like
> it's not fair for him to claim that. I think probably some of that has passed on to
> me.

Jay puts his heritage in its place. Although it's a part of him, he's received the influence

from his father and owns it. He has respect for his heritage and honors it by not claiming

more than is appropriate. Jay does not have desire to seek authentication with this part of

his heritage, unlike his sister who moves to the Dakotas to establish a connection with her

family who still lives on the reservation. He is comfortable with the role it plays, yet

when it surfaces and he's confronted with the possibility of interacting with a member of

the tribe, he becomes excited to make a connection. The tension between owning his

roots appropriately, with sensitivity, is apparent. As Jay continues to acknowledge the

salient identities, the ones for which he makes time, I wonder if this will ever be an area

of further exploration.

I ask Jay how he knows he's having an impact as an educator. He is in the midst

of a transition from one role at his college to another role. A concern accompanies this

transition. A metric he used in his previous role was the relationships he had with

students, particularly students of color. Will Jay be able to maintain the relationships with

students that he has fostered over the past few years now that he has more of an

administrative role? He is used to hearing their stories directly. He responds:

> Because I'm trying to constantly evaluate, am I somebody that can be trusted by
> communities that are traditionally disadvantaged on campus? So, I don't have that
> now, I mean, you can tell by my office I'm hiding in the middle of an
> administrative building.

Jay's office used to be in the student center. His new role calls for a new location. He is

now located off the beaten path in an area not frequented by students. Hidden from

students, he worries that the relationships, along with his informal assessment tool, will

eventually be lost:

…what's going to happen when they all graduate? And so, this is something that I'm really concerned [about], and I've spent some time thinking about recently, because a lot of them are going to graduate this year. There's not many underclass students or juniors right now that I've had that kind of relationship with, but a ton of seniors this year. So, when they're gone, how am I going to gauge my, who I am, what I'm doing, the impact I'm making, how am I going to gauge that as it relates to the student body experience? I don't know yet, I'm concerned about it.

This is a critical juncture in Jay's professional career. A desire exists to continue to progress in responsibilities, yet Jay sees a downside of moving up in the hierarchical structure. His direct focus is now on staff instead of students. Jay is in transition. He ponders, "I'm trying to find my way, right, because this is something I care about, but how can I be an agent of change when my role has changed, and so I've been trying to find my role in that."

Participating in this study gives Jay the opportunity to reflect on his own transition. He mourns the departure from focusing on students while simultaneously embracing the positive impact he can have on staff. Yet, he is fully aware that this transition will be full of moments of learning and contemplative situations. Here he talks about a recent incident in which he had to make a decision, how that decision was challenged and how he deals with the subsequent fallout.

> …we needed to make an organizational change, about two months ago, and a staff member of color, during a staff meeting when I announced that this change was going to be happening, a staff member of color basically said "this is par for course, [this university] has always perpetuated basically racist tendencies and people of color never get chances here, and white people do, and you're perpetuating it." So, I was mortified. I mean, just absolutely mortified - because this was the first major controversial move that I made in this new role. I had done smaller controversial moves, but this was a major one, and so I had to spend a lot of time sitting with that information, that feedback, and really reflecting and saying and asking myself, "What's the nature of my motivation to make this organizational move, and is it inherent in that, is there racism? Is there, am I promoting elitism in any way, shape or form?" And then there's part of me also that worries a little bit, sometimes intentions don't matter, because sometimes a perspective is germinated on a campus, perspective on an administers point of

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view, say regarding diversity. And it takes off, even if it's unfounded. And so, on one hand, I was being really reflective on, you know, have I really been true in this decision making, and then I was also pondering, oh my goodness, how is this going to play out in the short and long run, in terms of how I am perceived? So, fortunately, I mean, when I went through the internal process, I ended up, I felt like that I was still respecting the things that I espouse. So I felt consistent with that choice. And as it's played out, I think it's been fine on the other front too.

Jay has to check himself and think deeper about the impacts of his decisions on his staff.

He's conscious of his own privilege and how it accompanies him to work, how it

influences policy, and most recently, organizational change. He expands on this:

> …when you're making policy decisions, you take all the information at face value, and it's strictly an analytical exercise to say, "What should we do?" And so, this example that I just had a month and a half ago, where what I appreciated about the courage that it took for that staff member to share what they did, was that, I hadn't even mentally gone through, the *how will this decision be perceived by a staff member of color?* Given these other environmental factors, and given the lack of trust in the institution, and for me, the privilege was I made a policy decision based on the so-called facts. There's so much more in the environment than just the so-called facts, I mean there's facts that are hidden in and around and behind and under privilege that we so often don't try to understand. I think, with administrators who come from a privileged background - they don't understand why people get mad when they think that they've done the due analysis. In reality, there are many other perspectives to try to understand, and put into the analysis mix.

Jay is embarrassed he misses analyzing the environmental factors before making this

decision the first time around. I ask him how the relationship changed as a result of the

incident.

> …that was a person with whom I've had a really strong relationship for four years, and so it was this moment of, and I think that perhaps part of the fairly strong emotion that was inherent in their comment came from the fact that maybe, I think they had a lot of trust in me, and I think maybe they perceived my decision as being out of character. Fortunately we had that foundation, and so me being open, and I just think that in life and leadership or what have you, it's okay to be vulnerable and to make mistakes. And so for me to say, "I wasn't taking the time to contemplate these other issues that you brought up, and you're right, and I missed it." That's actually, in that situation, all it needed.

Although often simple, it is not always easy to be vulnerable to making mistakes and owning up to them. The admission to his colleague that he "missed it" helps to resolve the interpersonal conflict. He has genuine concern for letting down his staff or colleagues. Vulnerability is something that doesn't always equate itself with the various roles played by Student Affairs professionals in higher education. Perceptions exist that you can't be an expert and be vulnerable. If vulnerability is allowed, the professional will not be taken seriously and therefore discarded as an expert. There exists the perspective that vulnerability is weakness. Yet, examining the unknown requires an openness to the unknown. Giving up power and "leaning into the discomfort (Brown, 2011)," the unknown allows for an authentic discovery we see Jay engage in above. Jay elaborates on the role of vulnerability in his practice:

> I was just at an AAC&U conference a week ago, and our…theme for the conference was this exact notion of, can faculty members step out of the expert role, and trust that learning will still occur? And here's the really interesting thing though, even if we get faculty members to be, to at least try it, to take that risk, students aren't willing to do it. Because students have been conditioned, for 12 years of education plus, that that person standing in front of the room is the expert, and so it's this really mind boggling dilemma. You have to overhaul the entire educational system to allow for this change in paradigm. And so, I think it's in some ways like that starfish parable, proverb, whatever it is, where the guy is walking to the beach, and he throws one starfish back in the ocean. And then a passerby says "What are you doing, you'll never save all the starfish?" And he says "I know, but do you think that matters to the one I just threw back in the ocean?" I think for those of us that are willing to embrace vulnerability, part of it is knowing that the system probably won't get overhauled in the foreseeable future, but we can do our part.

And doing his part includes being involved in initiatives that spark change. For now, it's his immersion with a staff team that requires a new way of doing their work as a collective and cohesive unit. While perhaps not systemic, Jay's sphere of influence is

realized and he is intentional about exercising his ability to effect change. I ask him how

he sees his role in the practice of vulnerability.

> Being vulnerable in front of others, because it's really, I think it's setting the
> example that it can be done, and it's not, it's like, it's rewiring people, instead of
> equating vulnerability with weakness, to equate it with something else.

> The parallel to our discussion is my own investigation into this topic of

vulnerability as a researcher studying the experiences of those with whom I identify. I

share with Jay the discomfort I feel with regard to the use of language and the

categorization of our discussion using terms that don't necessarily resonate yet needing to

find ways to talk in ways that are mutually understood. The language we use, how we

choose to identify, how we categorize our students and each other, what identity

development models we use as frameworks for understanding each other. These

constructs can be prohibitive of getting to the basics of relevant discussion and

subsequent action around issues of inequity.

> We, the whole social justice conversation, to end up really moving the ship in the
> direction we want it to go, it has to be, here's the real irony, we have to, instead of
> privileging those with high EQs, it has to be open to everybody.

Jay and I both share the concern of how we open the discussion up to everyone and

anyone. To really invite everyone into the conversation, the use of language becomes

important. The use of theoretical frameworks and constructs that don't include common

vernacular are not going to further open dialogue about inclusion. Jay underscores the

importance of simplifying language use in discussions around issues of justice. He says,

"I think there are so many white people who are afraid of messing up, they don't even

take a step." Jay suggests that we've become so concerned about what is being said that

we've alienated the very folks who need to be invited into the discussion. He knows he

does this, too:

> …and I'm especially judgmental of those who have expressed views that I think are a little ignorant, you know, that my PC radar is always going off, but this fear of not getting it right, or messing up, you asked about how white guilt paralyzes? There might be a connection there, because I think that fear is really a paralyzing factor.

> Accompanying fear is silence. That silence can turn into guilt. A cycle is created.

If an individual does not feel supported in a community or environment, that individual

will likely not speak up and explore areas that are unfamiliar or confusing. Jay sees how

he contributes to an environment not conducive of learning and exploration. Cornel West

(Boise State University, 2010), who spoke on my campus, said "Social justice is the

modern day term for love." I share this quote with Jay who says, "I think he nailed it. He

just nailed it." Jay and I talk about how this is not a topic that permeates discussions in

higher education or Student Affairs. What is missing from the conversation, Jay is willing

to address:

> But, how can it be okay and safe to have the types of conversations, to mess up with each other, and to sometimes not agree with each other right off the bat, but to be committed enough to that relationship to keep moving and keep moving and keep moving, and all of a sudden love is building.

Jay makes it sound so simple. To hear someone's personal story, to share that story, to

care about another individual, to accept their perspective and explore their perspective all

require some semblance of emotional intelligence from both parties. Love, as a tenet

through which we are connected to another, becomes a powerful concept. Jay relays a

story about attempting to mentor two students who were struggling to come to terms with

their roles as leaders. The office dynamics were becoming intense and the tension during

discussion around topics explored in the office were heightened by varied levels of

understanding and sensitivity. Our discussion follows:

> Jay: A couple years ago we had just a dynamic student staff that was willing to
> just jump into the pot, whatever pot it was, with each other, and this one, you
> know, the stereotypical rich girl from [a suburb], who really needed
> developmental PC [political correctness]. She was, she did not get any of the
> conversation.
>
> Leslie: So she used all the terms?
>
> Jay: Oh yeah, it was… (pause)
>
> Leslie: Gay, retarded, pow-wow, etc.
>
> Jay: Yeah, and we had in the staff, someone you know, who is hyper sensitive but
> also gifted and educated in this work, and it was a nightmare. It was a nightmare.
> My, I had two really intense - I'm even a little bit gun-shy about using the word
> mentoring, it's a two way street.
>
> Leslie: But if you need a label, go ahead.
>
> Jay: The mentoring of both of those [women] was really intense.
>
> Leslie: Yes.
>
> Jay: And with the staff member of color, it was saying, will you please, just be
> patient, and give this person time, because they-deep down, they're trying, and
> they want to understand.
>
> Leslie: But, to just have them not use labels anymore, or PC, to have them not use
> relatively offensive terminology, but not understand why they're not supposed to
> use it, were you able to get at that next layer of…
>
> Jay: Yes, oh we made, honestly, where both of them ended up, I give them tons of
> credit, because they both did a lot of inner-work, to get there. Well, both sides of
> it, to allow someone, to support someone in failing.

Jay understands his students are at different places with exposure and understanding of

diversity and inclusiveness. He helps the young women to understand they both have

responsibility within the conversations. He connects love to forgiveness:

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To me, one of the huge challenges with this work, is that people who have been discriminated against, who have been wounded, by the privileged, for us to really make progress, they still have to do something. And so, you're taking somebody who's been quote on quote, a victim, and the victim still has to forgive, and that, and be patient. Well, wow. I mean that's, to me, really deep, and really difficult, because there are a lot of people that have been hurt enough, that it doesn't feel fair, it doesn't seem fair, it doesn't seem right, because the offenders, the privileged, whether it's intentional or not, should be the only ones who have to fix it. But, we'll never get it fixed if that's the case.

Jay and I wonder about an outlet for the often-times rage that accompanies these discussions. How do we guide students or colleagues to places where they can release their frustrations as we continue to encourage them to teach others about who they are in ways that will help the other understand and appreciate difference? How do we do this without marginalizing the individual or discarding responsibility in the learning process? I wonder how this can be operationalized. I ask Jay what it would look like if, day to day, interactions with staff and students, the underpinnings of conversations and interactions, were filled with love. He says, "I actually think that people's understanding of love is probably pretty raw, right now...when you look at the media's representation of love, there's nothing there, there's no depth there...I think that would be a really difficult thing."

Jay finds it difficult to articulate what it would look like and moves us in a related direction. A focus on experience can create the kind of change that often propels an individual into a greater state of awareness and action:

And it's that notion of if you're hurt or wounded, then we all are hurt or wounded. So this idea that the experience of the individual is simultaneously characterizing the experience of the larger community...And I don't know that we, I don't think that we made a whole lot of gain in that, with that way of thinking, like people just didn't get it, so when I take students to [Central America], we had a ton of growth. I mean, just phenomenal growth in a short-term immersion trip - that is really inspiring. One area where I have not seen any growth yet, if there are people starving in [Central America], what does that mean for me, here in [the

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West], and that's just a chasm, or a leap, that is almost too big for any of the students that I've worked with, and there have been some great ones, but none of them have made that leap.

Although Jay is not aware if any of his students have connected global issues to their local experience, he recognizes the potential in providing these types of service experiences to students as a mechanism to assist in thinking critically about perspective and worldview. There is tension apparent in his desire to assist in student growth and development and the disappointment when that does not occur as naturally as expected.

Jay examines his own capacity to impact others. With limited hours in the day, and after sleeping is accounted for, he has to prioritize:

So, now I'm down to 17 hours in a day, and I want to be a dad, like we've talked about, right? And I want to be a husband, and I need to provide for my family, so then you start, it becomes this really hard thing about choices.

Survival plays a role in balancing what Jay is able to physically and emotionally give to his various communities with what he wants for his students. The desired shift in his student's exposure to new experiences, the subsequent change in attitudes and perspectives may occur over time. He only gets a glimpse of their life during their stay on the college campus. He may never get to see the impact his influence has contributed. I ask him what is his expectation. He says:

Well, that's the question, what do we expect, and I ask myself that, like what am I expecting of me? And what is, okay so I care. That's good. What then is my responsibility? And I can make it bigger than I'm capable of doing, in an instant.

I wonder if we've made it too difficult to assess how we impact others. How does he know he's positively impacted others? What is the measurement? If he can't determine the impact, what sustains him in continuing to do this work? Jay talks about the fact that

it is nurturing, it feeds his soul. His response to my string of questions about the growth

that happens during the life journey is thoughtful:

> …the phrase that I've really taken to in the last year or two is "it's about
> becoming." Because becoming is a perpetual act that's not - it infers that we're
> going through, kind of like a soul evolution. But that it doesn't have an ending
> spot.

It also suggests that "becoming" is about being present. Jay has to be present in order to

"become." Jay articulates this so simply, when the process of "becoming" or identity

development as I've categorized it throughout this study, is incredibly complex. Jay

continues, relating this notion to his practice:

> …in higher ed, can we help students embrace the notion of becoming? So last
> year, that was what was the focal point of our staff development with student
> staff. It was awesome. They loved it. They totally bought into it. Now, we happen
> to have, I mean after four years, we kind of hired people that were okay going
> there. But it was, it was so rewarding, I can't even begin-I mean, I learned so
> much about me, and about them and just about all these issues, because we really
> went there. We read hard stuff, we talked about the darkness, like the proverbial
> darkness of life and what does it mean to sit in the darkness, and then all of a
> sudden we go to [Central America] and a lot of the staff went on this particular
> trip and the first night they were meeting with this nun who says and no lie, this
> was the greatest educational moment that was unplanned in the history of my life.
> She said, "The thing about [Central Americans] that I've come to love and respect
> more than anything else, is that they're comfortable sitting in the darkness." And
> my staff was like, "Oh! Tell me more"! They were all over it. And I thought,
> you've got to be kidding me, so good. A hemisphere away, so I mean…18 and 19
> year olds can go there. They can do it.

> Knowing the importance of this metaphor to Jay, I ask him what is learned while

sitting alone in the darkness. There have been times when he was facing death, and I

wonder if he learns more about himself during those times than when he's in a high point.

He agrees:

> I think you're right. Because if you flip the metaphor a little bit, and turn it into
> the metaphor of the refiners fire. The hotter the fire gets, the more it refines. And
> purifies, and takes out the toxins. And if you look at it in terms of Thoreau, he
> used the metaphor of a swamp. And he said, 'whenever I'm in need of reinventing

> myself, I find the dankest, darkest swamp, for it is my sanctum sanctorum, my holy of holies'. And in the context of the role of the swamp in nature, what the swamp does, is it filters out the impurities of the water, so the water then goes into the aquifers, which is what we drink, so it, swamps are part of this change and purification, becoming better than we were.

The contrast of the holy to the darkest, dankest place – the darkness – is stark. Jay connects to this metaphor because he has seen that place, has lived in that place. At least twice, he finds himself in deep despair. The first, while his body is riddled with cancer. The second, when he contracts e-coli and thinks he's back on the brink of death. His use of metaphor connects to his experiences, both the highs and the lows. He shares his love of metaphor with me, using a recent example he's embed into his staff retreats. During this transition into his new role, Jay is responsible for a team of professionals who have never worked together before. His primary focus is to help them heal the past and transform into a trusting team focused on supporting students in their academic pursuits. He discloses:

> …it's the power of metaphor–that's one of the things I am learning to balance better because I love metaphor–love it love it love it, and err on over doing it. So, as we've had our all-staff meetings – and we have 55 people come into a room, some haven't taken so well to my use of metaphor…but in my mind, I am 100% intentional about what I am trying to do, and I am trying to facilitate inner work.

Knowing his team recently came together under his leadership and that they are in the midst of understanding how to work together as a functional unit, I ask him to paint me a picture of what he means and how he uses metaphor to engage his staff in change. He illustrates:

> So for us this year the easy connection has been organizational change. So, we're all thrust into this new organizational model that none of us had a say over. So what are we going to do with it? How are we going to make sense of it all? Our first time to meet was in the fall–there were multiple reporting lines heretofore. And now all of a sudden we're a family. I thought this worked brilliantly and again, this whole approach, I am indebted to the folks [at the leadership retreat].

So in the fall I said, "For this year, we're going to be talking about us as seeds. So let's talk about us as seeds. What are seeds doing in the fall?" So at our fall meeting, we explored that. And how, with deciduous trees, they are pulling in the chlorophyll to find what is my essence? Because they have to protect that essence. So the color exits the leaves because it has to be pulled in to keep the trunk and the essence alive. Then we drop the seeds for their becoming later in the in the following seasons. So what does that mean for you as a professional in a climate of change? And what does that mean for us as a new organization? What is our essence-what have we just pulled in as our chlorophyll to protect and keep us alive?

Jay's metaphor is simple, true and beautiful. He uses metaphor effortlessly, with an energy and fervor, in an attempt to garner buy in from his new team. Although some of the staff struggle with his use of metaphor and call his approach "touchy feely," he revisits the metaphor throughout their first year together:

When we met in the end of winter, and we're looking at spring, and it's this idea– so I've been using, very moderately in my opinion, because I can over do it. (laughing) So, I've been using one poem per meeting that really strikes it. In this last meeting, late winter early spring, it's a poem–very, very, short essay rather. It's called *The Courage of the Seed,* basically that, as spring is approaching for the seed to germinate and blossom it gives itself over to an unseen power in the darkness of the earth. So in the earth, It can't see what it's going to become and what the next step is, but it trusts that it's on a journey that's going to meaningful and wonderful, so it has the courage to crack open and allow itself to be cracked open. So what I am getting at is professionally, are we willing to allow ourselves to do the same thing?

I am curious what Jay thinks about those staff resistant to his use of metaphor. To what might their resistance be attributed? Are Jay's expectations realistic? Is there a correlation to those same staff being resistant to self-work? Jay believes they are not aware of their own resistance. He adds, "I am trying to get a tipping point. I want enough people bought into this so that I am not the preacher man–so that it becomes the culture of our organization that moves us along." I ask him how it's coming along so far, this push to change culture.

I am not disappointed. I think we're at an ok place. I tend to have to force myself to be patient. I tend to be more OCD – this is where I know I want us to be, so we gotta get there. This takes time, it's hard work-major organizational shift. And it's a methodology that's different and that folks aren't necessarily comfortable with.

Patience will be important as Jay continues to bring his staff along with him. He acknowledges his style and method are not the norm, yet be believes his approach will assist the organization in moving forward together. What he is about to face is riddled with nuance in how the staff might react to his method:

My challenge…I am in this position of authority/leadership. The ones who want to get on the bus right away on this–my fear of the challenge with them is that if change doesn't happen quick enough they will see it as another failed attempt. So how do I help cultivate the hope and the patience and the trust that we're making progress with the choir? So while at the same time getting the other folks to choir rehearsal. And that's why I think leadership is really hard. I mean that's one of the reasons (laughing).

I share a similar story with Jay, in my own professional life, of how I am using a specific tool to encourage folks to become more comfortable with organizational and interpersonal conflict. He and I discuss how it is often easier to build trust between a leader and the team but more difficult to foster the trust building amongst the team members themselves.

So much of this, it's about authenticity for me. I'm geeky about that. I like to use them and I think they realize I am coming from a place of authenticity and that's ok. I like to throw touchy feely metaphors. I like to play with that–it works for me.

Consistency and authenticity are important to Jay. As he takes on this new role and grows into his own style of leadership, he hopes his open invitation to join the creative journey toward change is received by those who are still skeptical. The change he makes in the last all-staff meeting underscores his own understanding of the needs of his team:

So this last meeting, I had my binders of metaphor and quotes and proverbs and I was thinking, Oh man we could use all this and it would be great. But I had this

moment of, Oh [Jay], you gotta recognize that there are different places being filled in the room not just your little space that you like to occupy. So we did metaphor but the bulk of our conversation–we threw up the standard organizational S curve and we talked about where we are on the S curve, where do we wanna be, and what's it going to take to get there? It was a linear (even though the S curve is not linear) conversation, and it was a great conversation. Then I wrapped everything up with metaphor and part of this is my own learning experience about how do I strike the right balance. But being able to strike the right balance is about emotional experience. I am sorry to bring it all back but it really does come full circle…

Jay is perceptive and has an innate ability to tune into those around him. He is aware of the discord between his flair in leadership style and the requirements to strike a balance to meet the pragmatic needs of his constituents. He knows multiple methods are necessary to bring the entire team into a cohesive unit with shared goals. His methods are received in various ways and he attempts to bridge the gap between creative and traditional delivery. As Jay continues to hone his style of leadership with this new team, I suspect he will simultaneously continue to delve into the composition of his team, striving to understand and know them as individuals.

Thematic Analysis: Jay

The themes emerged and were developed throughout the interview process. Part of the process included a shared approach in discussing and working through the themes. Layers of discovery awaited our discussion. As we worked through the themes together we found ourselves talking circularly, recognizing the interconnectedness between the themes. We chose not to disentangle them and instead, recognized the relationship between them, as parts of a whole. Themes explored include Fluid Identities, Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness, Spirituality, and, Action and Presence.

Fluid Identities

Jay and I discussed terminology and the connection to how certain terms inform

his identity. We discussed what was salient and relevant to him and what was not. I asked

Jay about the use of buzzwords in higher education, and specifically, student affairs. I

asked him if "cultural competence" was becoming a construct that we layer over the top

of expectations for staff? And if so, how are we articulating our expectations around the

tenets of cultural competence as well as the defining characteristics? Jay responded:

> That's one of the challenges…I think every institution probably across the
> country has included something about diversity or inclusivity into their strategic
> plan and measureable outcomes. Well, how do you really measure it? I don't
> think I'm uncomfortable with it.

Jay was put off by the phraseology in this context. Further, he saw this type of statement

as presumptuous. This presumptuousness could be correlated to any population. Jay

illustrated:

> So, even though I was really fortunate to be one of the co-advisors for the black
> student union, I think if I were to go before the group and say, "I feel culturally
> competent in what it means to be black," how would that go over?

Jay's upbringing included many conversations about justice related issues. The bulk of

the conversations surrounded inequities around race and ethnicity. Jay acknowledged that

he is still growing his understanding of other student populations and the challenges they

face.

> I desire to be present in those conversations and in action just like we've talked
> about. But really the entry point for social justice for me was race/ethnicity. I just
> feel like there is-I'm farther behind on the learning curve with LGBTQ issues
> than with race/ethnicity.

Competence is a static word that suggests that we've acquired and own something

whereas consciousness might be on the same parallel with the term becoming.

Consciousness suggests a presence, an awareness, not a landing place. This was more

palatable for both Jay and I, as we agreed that consciousness also implies that we might

not know the answers and an approach to addressing this includes building relationships,

asking questions, and being inquisitive in appropriate ways. Jay continued to ponder,

"…we're being more liberal in our use of the term literacy and that doesn't feel right

either. Its like, 'are you culturally literate'? But that, again, kind of has the academic

measureable feel to it."

What is the problem with academic measurement? Measurement and assessment

have become more important to educators who must prove their relevance in a consumer

driven market where many options for higher education exist. But were the constructs for

assessment and measurement inclusive in their development? Are we trying too hard and

using the right methods to figure out how we know whether progress is made? Jay and I

thought this a worthy avenue of inquiry. He continued:

> I mean, to spend some mental time kind of chewing on the notion of can it be
> measured and how would that look. I think that's an appropriate avenue. But we
> don't like to say that we don't know and I don't think we know yet. I don't think
> we've found…we haven't found the simple, yet profound, way of doing it. Why
> don't we just come clean with it and say, "We don't know yet."

Jay suggested we, those in higher education and, specifically student affairs, needed to

own the fact that we don't know how to measure the development of cultural

competence. And, at the same time, this notion of cultural competence or consciousness

is vitally important in the teaching and learning environment. We talk about it, we often

expect it of our staff, yet it has become a buzz phrase because we've lost the

underpinnings of what it means and how do we know when it has been achieved. Jay

acknowledged it might be easier to discuss on an individual level. For example, he might

have some semblance of how he's perceived by the number of students of color who seek

him out to receive support. The institutional or systems level is important to address as

well. Jay elaborated:

> …from an institutional or systems level as kind of tipping point… how many
> Latino students do we need to have on campus before we create a tipping point of
> culture change? I don't know if there is a magic number. It's going to be relative
> to each campus and that specific make-up of students that you have at the time,
> both majority and Latino. It's all going to factor in to when that tipping points
> going to occur. So, can you try to measure that? Well…we do our headcounts and
> our retention statistics and those all matter but they're not really getting at…when
> that cultural shift happens.

Jay was talking about a cultural shift toward inclusiveness, acceptance and even

celebration. He was referring to a shift where dissonance and tension between

populations diminishes based on the growth of population. More specifically, when does

the Latino student feel like they belong?

> If we look at the institution I'm at now, and carrying on with this Latino student
> idea, there's still very much the perception that we're outsiders on this campus, so
> when, at what point though will a Latino student come to campus and say, "I
> belong here and I see enough people like me and some of the procedures and
> policies of the place speak to me." So all of a sudden it feels right. I don't know
> when that tipping point is. But I want to shoot for it.

Jay and I talked briefly about strategies to answering the questions that we don't know.

What are the issues preventing Latino students, to use the same example, from feeling

connected to the campus community? Jay talked about the impact this desirable culture

shift will have beyond campus:

> …because when that tipping point happens here, it's not going to be bounded by
> our campus boundaries and by our local community boundaries. That tipping
> point will flow to the home communities of our Latino population too. So in our
> situation, the conversations [in those home communities] will be fundamentally
> different than they are today when that tipping point happens.

I asked him what the barriers are to moving in that direction. Is the institution primed to

do this work? Or are they already doing this work? Jay referenced the need to listen and

be vulnerable while listening to the community perspectives on what is *not* happening

that needs to happen in order for the community to feel a welcome part of campus. He

also mentioned the importance of the President and the university cabinet's role in

listening. If not present, there is little hope for systemic change. He added, "Our current

executive cabinet doesn't play vulnerable." I asked if that is because they think they

already have the answers. "Yeah," he responded with sarcasm, "to everything."

One of the most salient identities Jay mentioned was that of educator. I asked him

if, as part of the construct of being an educator, he was also a student. He said, "From a

fluid point of view, my identity as a student of life, if that is an identity that stays salient

through the ebbs and flows, then yes."

Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness

Jay talked at length about the need to be emotionally intelligent as an effective

practitioner. Emotional intelligence "refers to the capacity for recognizing our own

feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in

ourselves and in our relationships" (Goleman, 1998, p. 317). Jay also called it the

"mindfulness approach." He was explicit in his definition that this approach requires an

individual to incorporate "mindful strategies to living-to be able to watch your world/life

progress." Jay equated emotional intelligence with forward movement in his work:

> I think this plays at both individual and the system level is this idea of self-
> awareness. I guess that's what I mean by inner work too, and when we engage in
> inner work it's hard, it's uncomfortable and it frequently walks us into the
> darkness. But in the act of doing it, it's liberating, and inspiring, and growth
> producing in ways that we can't experience unless we are willing to do that inner
> work. So, using a pretty traditional EQ approach, folks that are intentional about
> developing their EQ, I think, are the ones that self select by and large into this
> kind of work. There would have to be a statistical correlation there.

If there is a correlation, then perhaps the key to growing a community of individuals committed to activism and justice work is to focus energies on emotional intelligence. This could occur in staff and faculty development, student development both in and out of the classroom. How can this intentionally become a part of the general experience of higher education? Is it not already a significant part of the collegiate experience? I would argue it is present, yet in isolation. While we make significant attempts to measure student learning, what linkages exist between emotional intelligence and addressing issues of bias and oppression on college campuses? Jay underscored the importance of softening the discussion around this challenge to grow and develop, as individuals and institutions, by using the arts as a possible entry into personal change:

> I really feel that creative expression is the window for all of us. It's the toolkit, if you will. So the tool is the arts, I think, and the arts broadly speaking. [To] understand the pulse of the group or the individual to say, "Is it going to be poetry, is it going to be the theater, is it gonna be one's own kind of free write experience, or is it going to be music?" And so you build these opportunities to do that kind of inner work through and around and in some kind of creative expression. Cause that-my experience, that's what opens the windows for people. And I don't think it's-that's not an indirect approach. It's not trying to ignore the main issue, or to try to do a work around. I think that's how human beings were hardwired. I think you and I both ascribe to the power of the arts and one of the powers is it kind of softens some of the walls and we're better able to do the work.

This window that Jay discussed is a potentially powerful tool. An individual can engage at various levels of comfort. Minimally, one can observe and reflect as an audience member upon the content before them. At a deeper level, one can engage actively as a participant or creator. His use of metaphor in leading his team was his invitation to participate in creative ways of self-reflection. It was a safe window from which to begin the exploration process. This was a pure example of emotional intelligence in practice. I asked about his intuition, his ability to sense how others are feeling. He answered:

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You used the word feeling and I think it plays into the mindfulness thing. It's also being able to set your feelings and emotions to the side and not be swept up with them. When we talk about social justice work, it's a really hard thing to do because so many of the issues are hitting at the hard, really raw nerves.

I asked if and how he is able to suspend his emotional state.

Well I don't know that I have the answer coming from a disadvantaged community, but from a person of privilege, it's this defensive posturing–not wanting to feel guilt or ownership or responsibility-those feelings present as emotions. So can you suspend that to try to be able to see the movie from a different perspective from in the middle of its raw, hard-core emotions?

Teaching this as part of the mainstream curriculum in higher education might not be feasible across the disciplines. However opportunity exists in the training and development in which student affairs practitioners participate. This compartmentalization of the emotional state would bring us further in self-actualization and self awareness work. Disengaging from an emotional and personal location might allow an individual to immerse herself in the depth of learning with the required vulnerability. This might allow them to be present in the critical moment where learning can take place. A balance between reveling in the emotion and persevering with the work is imperative. Jay added a caution:

It's not ignoring the emotion. Let's say a white student who is coming face to face with issues of continued inequity that they haven't confronted before–there is this immediate knee jerk reaction that is defensive or something to that degree. I think the recognition of feeling defensive-I wonder why, what's fueling this? That, to me, is healthy.

Jay's approach to mindfulness included this notion he discussed earlier of sitting in the darkness. It is a coping mechanism and a reflection exercise. I was interested in this particular metaphor as connected to emotional intelligence and mindfulness. He elaborated:

> Darkness is broad. It's a broad metaphor and concept. It reflects a time of pain and internal suffering – that's the gripping darkness that many most naturally assume is what we're talking about. But it's also the unknown and not being in control, and realizing that there are other forces in life and the universe that you're not in control of. That makes people uneasy. Not being able to predict what the future holds so the nature of the unknown makes people uneasy and I call that darkness too.

Particularly relevant was this notion of the unknown. When delving into issues of privilege and power and locating self in the context of other, the unknown was present and must be addressed. Jay had become comfortable with this darkness. While his time spent in that space was due to some difficult personal health issues, it had expanded beyond that to encompass much more. He was willing to explore the darkness as he moves through his world, expanding and stretching his view of himself and the world around him. Jay concluded his thought with a self-reflexive realization:

> For me inner work is pretty big. Initially I was drawn to it – not that I am good at it or better – but I don't want to minimize the impact of some of what I'd call external–some of that is conversation with colleagues, taking time to read what others are taking time to write about. It's not just me meditating. It speaks to this idea of sometimes we just don't know what we don't know. To make progress there has to be exposure to what we don't know. Part of that exposure is the coming out. Are you willing to put yourself into communities that are different than your heritage communities? Are you willing to put yourself out there in relationship building. That's part of the exposure but part of it is the good faith, due diligence to study.

Jay was clear that he does not rely solely on himself for continued growth and development. Egocentric to suggest this work comes only from within, Jay gave credit to the environmental factors that prodded, pushed and ignited him. He is an educator and as much a student.

Spirituality

As Jay and I worked through the themes we developed, I asked him to take a step back to reflect on our conversations. Because he did not identify with many of the terms

and constructs that have been developed around issues of privilege and power, I asked

him to share his thoughts on how he makes meaning of the interrelated topics we've

discussed.

> For me, it's spirituality. I agree with you-the interrelatedness of all this. My strengths–connectedness–blessing and a curse…My motor is constantly turning to examine how things are interrelated and interconnected sometimes I have to turn that motor off because sometimes things just are as they are. My spiritual exploration is about sitting in the darkness, and being vulnerable, and not knowing everything–and it's about me trying to deepen my understanding-what's my relationship with God, with other people and what's the purpose of all of this? And so, as I explore those questions – those are my three driving questions of my life.

Spirituality had been present in our conversations in a variety of ways. Jay illuminated a

theme that has been a constant thread of our discussions. His faith was central to his core.

He remained steadfast to the early teachings of spirituality from his father and other

sources. While I find dissonance and tension in the tenets of religions, and had to work

through my own developed biases about the role religions play in society, Jay found

peace in the faith and spirituality that is the foundation for all he is and how he operates.

This bias manifested itself in my inaccuracy of not asking him to delve in deeper about

the role spirituality played in his life. I articulated my discomfort and possible discard in

our final interview. Clearly a foundation and significant influence in Jay's life, I

suggested the prominence of this theme. Jay agreed, "Last night I was thinking about our

conversation and that one of the key threads that we didn't talk about was spirituality."

He helped me to understand the influence of spirituality in his work:

> For me to even engage in those questions in an authentic and honest way, requires me to be present, and active, and I mean it's hard. It's not like my religiosity stops then my social justice piece begins. They are the same and I don't know how to separate them.

Spirituality is not a daily topic in many circles in higher education, yet it was fully

present in Jay. I asked Jay his thoughts about this. He explained:

> I think a lot more people do and would if it's connected to eastern religion. My experience has been that people are pretty open to that and that there is some perceived parallel between an eastern perspective and open mindedness and a healthy spirituality. When we try to make the connection between traditional Christianity and these things–the work–then it causes all sorts of confusion in people and they don't see how the two can go together. I think that is our main stumbling block right now. I think we've unfortunately stereotyped a huge number of people who are doing this work because of their western spirituality. The western eastern dichotomy is total off in my opinion.

To eliminate it from discussion in the context of Jay's story would have been a

disservice. He continued:

> The fundamental tenets of Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, I am 105 % hook line and sinker into. In no way does that detract from my Christian beliefs–it supports and enhances, but that's a whole way of thinking about religion and spirituality that I think we struggle with…

I reflected on my discard of mainstream religion with a movement toward an

individualistic spirituality that stems from the basic tenets I learned as a child. I agreed

with Jay that there feels unhealthiness about the polarizing and politicizing much of

mainstream religion in our society. We've drawn boundaries around religious identities,

and I do not wish to be defined by these boundaries. I told Jay I wondered if we, again,

will embrace the possibility of healthy spirituality and its presence in higher education.

He responded:

> …there are so many layers to this politicization–ugly layers. And now pretty deeply entrenched. And it's really sad. I see it in my own faith community too…We're consistently reminded to participate in government as an act of citizenship–multiple parties are good–be respectful, be authentic, be civil toward differences of opinion. That's the message coming out of the leadership but not enacted by the lay members.

Jay's parallel with his faith based community and my experiences on the periphery of an

organized religion were similar. We both found it troubling. Yet, his constant exploration

of his relationship with God and others and finding purpose in all of it were motivating

factors for continued energy and exploration.

Action and Presence

As I sat with the transcripts from our first two interviews, action and being

present were two methods that seemed consistent and significant to Jay. He demonstrated

through reflection and examples that he finds ways to be involved in matters of meaning,

whether volunteering for committee work and immersing himself in the lives of students

through advising a club. He moved our discussions beyond the idea that there is a fixed

identity upon which he reflects. He was active in his own development and desired some

semblance of data that tells him how he's doing.

Jay believed in accountability. He searched for ways to measure his own

performance and he was cognizant of the need to do this better at a departmental and

institutional level. It was not simply about the impact of his efforts.

> I think there are two avenues – one is I think we need to hold ourselves
> accountable for some performance indicators. There is this movement and I am ok
> with it. There is something about diversity and globalization–what are some basic
> performance indicators? We're going to be transparent about this–the data is
> there–we know it's not telling the story but it guides and tells us how we're doing
> on our commitment. Part B is we have to start figuring out how to get the stories.
> We've been trying to do quantitative [measurements] which will give us our
> basics, but we need to stop kidding ourselves. We need to make some more gains
> on this shift. What is the qualitative approach that will best serve answering these
> questions? That is where all of our energy needs to go.

Jay emphasized the importance of the story. Capturing the lived experiences of students

and others in the campus community contribute to our understanding of how our

environments are inclusive of all peoples and voices. If we merely look at demographic

numbers, we're missing significant information about the experiences our constituents are having. He posed a challenge:

> The element that we're missing that is embed in this conversation that we haven't talked about is for whom are we doing the assessment? We know that there are – whether perspective students or the state legislature or US news and world report (laughter) – whatever those external entities are… that's where we need to find the basic performance indicators – that's what we feed. But if we really believe in this and it's more than lip service, then we have to care about the stories. We're doing this for the people who are part of the institution. But I don't know that institutions are having that conversation.

Jay hit on something often omitted in the daily conversations surrounding assessment work in Student Affairs and Higher Education. For whom are we doing this assessment? And why? Certainly, there can be and are multiple answers. I appreciated his challenge to intentionally engage in the conversation and pose the necessary critical questions. Simple, obvious and often overlooked, Jay called for a shift and inclusion of the story as part of our practice.

Concluding Thoughts

As I reflected upon my time with Jay, I was intrigued by his journey thus far. One particular aspect of his story prompted much reflection, both during the writing and analysis process. Jay had a tendency to focus on the positive. While this was an admirable attribute, his idealism caused me pause. I wondered time and again if Jay was omitting information about what happened to him while he sat "in the darkness" during various low periods throughout his life. Although I asked him to talk more about what it was like to "sit in the darkness," Jay tended to steer our discussions back to what he learned, how he was changed or a focus on the positive outcome. I am left to wonder whether this was a survival mechanism or whether this was intentional and meant to contribute to the story Jay wanted to be read. Either way, I am left with his resilience and

perseverance. For those qualities have contributed to who Jay has become. His journey, however, is far from over. Jay's next phase, his educational focus having already shifted from students to staff, allows for new opportunities to impact those in his spheres of influence.

Hannah's Story

> I'm the story keeper, I'm not the storyteller.
> Two lives, connected internally but not for the world to see.
> Always here, but never public.
> I listen; comfortable with silence.
> Take your time. Choose your (s)pace.
> I will keep your story safe.

Introduction

Hannah is an artist. She uses art to invite others into places of comfort in order to give them space to just be. She uses art to express who she is and how she connects to the world around her. When I meet Hannah at her office, I am struck with the vibrancy of her office space. From the moment I step inside the inner office and get close to her office door, I am taken by the myriad of paintings, sculptures, knick-knacks, and messages that are present. The walls are alive with messages of inclusivity, support, empowerment, and passion. It is impossible to stop looking around, taking in the various statements, questions and invitations to dig deep into the self and explore what might be inside waiting to get out. One particular piece of art catches my eye. Beautifully illustrated, it reads, "The past is my heritage, the future my legacy, the present my responsibility." Another highlights what it means to be an "ally." Yet another piece empowers the reader to "take charge," stating boldly "you don't follow in someone else's footsteps." Another montage highlights everyday heroes.

The posters and flyers of various events indicate a support of university and community programs. Postcards from individuals decorate a section of the wall and suggest that Hannah is well liked and appreciated. In addition to the visual stimulation, Hannah's office contains numerous puzzles and gadgets with which to play for her many visitors. Her office beckons.

Hannah and I have known each other for about ten years. We worked together on a project many years ago and have stayed in contact through a national organization to which we both belong. Our volunteer efforts have crossed paths over the years. I was excited to receive Hannah's interest survey. She is currently the director of an advocacy center that advocates for underrepresented and historically marginalized students. I have some basic knowledge of her perspectives on issues relating to social justice, equity, diversity, and the role of the majority population. But our worlds intersect primarily around professional development work. When I read her interest survey, I was thrilled to invite her to participate in this study, and subsequently, to see other aspects of her being. I present Hannah's story in a way that honors her perspective about the role the early years play in her life. That life history, until 29 years old, is the backdrop to the individual Hannah is today. Although compartmentalized, these separate lives are connected. My respect for Hannah and her perspective on the intersections between her life chapters is given for what they are and how they contribute to the Hannah who is the focus of this story.

Shadow Years

This segment chronicles the years that create a backdrop for Hannah's story. The shadow is representative of Hannah's depiction of her early self, but placed in the context

of Hannah today. This segment of Hannah's story "consists of all the characteristics,

lessons, dreams and ideals which we have blended and bonded into our everyday self"

(Panek, 2011, para 11). The shadow is also a reflection of the relationship between self

and other; between self and communities; and, between self and society. The shadow is

not solid: it is figment, whether imagined or remembered, and is ultimately representative

of the past. These are Hannah's shadow years.

Hannah spends her younger years moving from home to home. Her mother is

addicted to alcohol and drugs and is unable to care for Hannah. Her father dies when she

is very young. Her earliest memory is of her father and is clear:

> I was about a year and a half and my father was still alive and with us, and he had
> me on his lap on the table, and he was teaching me to draw happy faces so I
> remember (gesturing) circle, dot, dot, smile and it was over and over drawing
> happy faces and it was funny because when I had first told my mom that, she was
> like, "There is no way you remember something, you were only a year and a
> half." And I described the house we were in and what we were doing and she was
> like I remembered this. And she remembers that this was an actual event and it
> must be because I lost my father…that is the only memory I had of him.

Hannah experiences polarity in her early years. Because her mother is incapable of

consistently providing for her, she moves between her mother and grandparent's

households, navigating the challenges each presents. She recalls what it was like at her

grandparents:

> So I grew up when I was little having servants, telling them, you know how four
> year olds are – "This is what I want!" And somebody does that for you… Mrs.
> Brown was our housekeeper's name and, we have gardeners, and they would let
> me play in the trees, basically anything I want. I had the run of the place. One day
> my housekeeper waxed the kitchen floors, and told me to be careful when I walk
> in here, you might fall, its slippery. I said, "Well you can't tell me what to do."
> And I promptly slipped and fell and hit my head and got a nice little bump on it.
> And I couldn't cry because she had told me and so I couldn't fess up and show
> she was right. I stomped off. Because her name was Mrs. Brown and some of our
> other maids were Mrs. White or Mrs. Black and so I thought people of color, they

were people of color, because their names were colors. And so that was my first perception of the difference.

The staff bend to her every need and whim. Her simplistic view of race is corroborated by the names of the staff members who work at her grandparents. The ironic correlation between name and skin color is not lost on young Hannah. People of color are meant to serve her. Life with her mother was drastically different. They were poor, with little resources for the basics:

> …when I was with my mom we didn't have enough food, and so you ate whatever. So if you had Miracle Whip and bread you would have Miracle Whip sandwiches. My grandmother would send us home with a lot of food, like peanut butter or something, so then we had some stuff.

Yet, the value of respect for others is instilled early on in Hannah's childhood. Hannah articulates the confusion between "running the show" at her grandparent's house and how this behavior is curbed by her mother:

> Being with my mom, of course, we didn't have the resources for me to be an imperialist four year old, and it was like this is what we have, this is what there is, and if I said something about someone of color or thought someone should do something for me because they were servants... [My mom would say], "That's not how we treat people. You are no better or no worse. You're a person, they're a person."

The environments in which Hannah lives cause dissonance in her way of thinking about others. She receives conflicting messages but ultimately absorbs her mother's words. Hannah's understanding of skin color is challenged one day. She and her cousins are at the beach playing in the sand. Hannah grew up in southern California, "in the ghetto area where I was one of the only white children." She shares the time she finds out that skin color doesn't work the way she thinks it does:

> I have cousins, my oldest cousins, are Black and white mixed. My next set of cousins are Mexican and white mix and then there was me. And I am covered with freckles, and I have a brown spot in my blue eyes. And so our thought was,

as you got older you got darker. Because I am the youngest and I am just starting to get my spots, eventually they will blend together like my middle cousins and eventually we turn out like we are supposed to be, dark like my oldest cousins. And so they thought they would help this process along and so they slathered baby oil on me at the beach, when I was seven or so, and of course I ended up with the third degree sunburn.

The layers of color upon which she fixates, in anticipation, do not show themselves. She has to make peace with her skin color – light, creamy with spots. After a conversation with her aunts and parents, she realizes that her expectation around how skin color changes has flaws. You keep the same skin color, regardless of the skin colors of those around you.

As Hannah becomes an adolescent, she becomes more in tune to how she feels about the predicament in which she finds herself. Her mother's use of drugs is troubling. She can't bring friends home for fear of finding a joint in the couch cushions. Her brother begins to hang out with a gang and as a result brings numerous racial slurs and derogatory sayings into Hannah's world. She uses the phrases while simultaneously realizing the negativity connected to the words. The gunfire is loud, popping, outside the bedroom windows. Despite the environment, Hannah's mother provides a constant reminder:

…and my mom said, "Just because we live in the ghetto doesn't mean you can talk like you live in the ghetto. You know this is not where you belong, you need to take your education seriously and you need to not end up living in the ghetto. This is not something to be proud of, this is not a place that you want to be."

Although the next few years are trying for Hannah, this message remains constant in her mind. During the teenage years, Hannah begins to separate herself from her mother because of the incessant drug abuse and neglect. She shares a turning point in her early teen years:

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I have always been a very dualistic thinker, in terms of black and white, and seeing what my mom did with drugs and how it impacted her life with us just made me very angry…I think the turning point with me with her was - I was out riding a moped and I touched my leg to the pipe and another third degree burn on my leg and I went home and said, "Mom, we need to go to the emergency room, it's really bad, it really hurts, we need to do something." And she said, "We can't go right now because I'm waiting for my drug deal." And I said, "No, we really have to go," and I had to wait for her drug deal. How can you make that choice? I'm your kid and I'm in pain and you're going to wait for a drug deal?

Hannah can't accept her mother's choice to put drugs first. While she learns acceptance from her mother, that acceptance is not universal and does not apply to her general feelings about her mother. Hannah runs away from home. She continues to go to school as that is a safe place for her. However, being considered an official runaway in the eyes of the local police and finding a safe place, was not easy:

…the police would be waiting for me every day after school. One of my teachers would let me go early and we would figure out what side they were watching and I would take off on the other side. I was staying at different places. I was friends with gang members, too. I never did any drugs or anything and so they always protected me. So I was safe with these gang kids and…they took me to this student, this kid who went to our school. I wasn't friends with her but I knew who she was and her family, they were Mormons and apparently they took in run-a-ways, and they had a nice-I had my own room and they protected me. Nobody would have thought to look for me [there]. I went to school, continued to do everything, and my mom missed me, and finally we had a meeting with my guidance counselor at school.

Hannah lives this way for a couple of months. Her mother agrees to attend counseling sessions and quit doing drugs. This doesn't last long. Hannah comes out of her room on Mother's Day and finds her mother doing drugs. She stuffs her things into a backpack and walks out:

I said, "Happy Mother's Day, I'm gone." So then back on the streets. I thought about how I could survive on my own, thought about prostitution. I am fourteen, stood at a street corner and the first - the van pulls up and I was like no this is not a choice I can make for myself so I took off and went back to my friends and back to the gang members and they helped me get back into another house and then I

told my aunt and uncle who were also my godparents through the Catholic church and they said I could come and live with them.

Hannah's mother signs over her custody rights. This is devastating to Hannah and she tries to find a way to deal with her mother's abandonment. Depression ensues. Hannah enters into some difficult times. Her aunt and uncle, who are her legal guardians, send her to reparative therapy because they think she's gay. She is placed in a mental hospital and assigned to behavior modification techniques for several months. During her involuntary stay, she is kicked out of her aunt and uncle's house. Released from the hospital, she has nowhere to go and finds a place to stay with a classmate from high school. When she goes to her aunt and uncle's house to pick up her belongings, she finds everything she owns in garbage bags on the front lawn. Eventually, Hannah learns that a distant aunt inquires into her whereabouts and she moves in with them and finishes high school.

Hannah gets a job at a resort and takes a stab at adulthood. She meets a guy at the resort and goes out on a date:

> …I ended up marrying him because I thought if you accomplished all these tasks in life then you win the prize and everything is okay. And I was still really struggling, I had an eating disorder, I wasn't as depressed but I was still struggling with stuff. [I] got married to him, that was a really bad idea. We were together for about five years, and I was working, I was teaching preschool, going to community college...

The relationship is rocky, and Hannah experiences abuse by her husband. She struggles to keep her depression at bay. She knows she's trying to meet some unwritten societal expectation yet she is fully aware that this cannot be "it." Hannah takes a second job working with developmentally disabled men. She assists them with learning basic self-care skills, like showering and going to the library to check out books. During her time

working at this live-in house, one of the owners pulls her aside and encourages her to

move on:

> "This is not the life that you should have," he said. "You need to do something
> more, you need to go back to college, not community college, you need to go to a
> university, and get a degree and move on. You're really great here, but this is not
> where you need to be. And I don't have any say in what you do in your personal
> life," he said, "but you can do much better. Make a clean start, you're young, start
> over, leave, go somewhere, go to college."

She hasn't considered making a clean start until the owner points out her potential.

Around the same time, Hannah's husband's aunt visits and talks with her about the vows

she made with her husband. The aunt tells her simply "if you don't leave him, it will be

your death." Hannah accepts this gracious permission to change the course of her life's

path. She accepts that this was a failed attempt and gives herself permission to leave this

marriage.

> Hannah attends a university in California. She spends a great deal of time working

with students as a peer on multicultural issues:

> I was a facilitator for *Students Talk About Race*, which was part of the Clinton
> administration. So we went to High School's… to mentor high school students
> and have dialogues about race. I also participated in *Day of Dialogue* exercises as
> a facilitator on our campus, talking about race and working with friends and
> colleagues who had white privilege or white male hetero privilege and challenge
> those around not wanting to or not being able to recognize that [privilege].

Hannah puts herself in places of emotional discomfort in order to challenge herself to

grow and expand her worldview. She sees herself as a strong ally to marginalized

populations and spends much of her time working with other students on these issues.

She begins to become involved in the LBGT center. She identifies as a strong ally. In

fact, many of her friends are gay. She recollects an "a-ha" moment:

> …the school paper came out and there were two very controversial articles. I
> don't remember the other one, but my attention was drawn to the vandalism that

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happened at the LGBT center and my friend who was [a] white heterosexual male was drawn to something else. We were talking about our outcry of injustice- how could this happen - and we realized we were both talking about completely different things. Oh, we don't all think alike. So those bits and pieces and standing up for what I think is right but also recognizing privilege.

In her early twenties, her undergraduate experience is a time period when discoveries are made about justice and privilege and her associated responsibilities. She continues to become more in tune to ways in which her privilege impacts others:

> I got lost in downtown Los Angeles one day. I'd parked my car and was walking around the street trying to find someone to give me directions and this kindly older African American man stopped me and said, "Hey princess, I think you're in the wrong area." He wasn't condescending – just a pet name [or] affectionate name when you don't know someone's name… He said, "You're lost, let's get you outta here cuz you don't belong here." I was just dressed in jeans and whatever and don't drive an exciting car but I don't belong here and it was clearly evident to him that I'm not where I belong. In fact, his perception was that I wasn't safe where I was and he wanted to get me out of there. And that was a kind of an eye opener thing.

Different environments present different obstacles. Hannah realizes after intervention from the kindly gentleman that her safety may be at stake. Accustomed to growing up in a community similar to the one in which she is lost, this doesn't occur to her until it's pointed out. Her comfort is natural until she is told it shouldn't be. She reflects on the roles that her gender, race and class all play during this incident. Highly involved in residence life, she has roles that require her to assume authoritative positions. Another incident reinforces this notion that safety does not come hand in hand with her leadership roles:

> …white is not the majority there and I was responsible for making sure the buildings were secure so I was securing a building, and there was a young man, Chicano Latino, who wanted to come into the building and I was telling him he needed to leave, and, you know, he got into my space and was posturing in a challenging sort of way and I am asserting myself that I am in a position of authority and you need to follow what I'm doing. All of a sudden he stepped back, Great, see? I'm in charge, this is what I do. I locked the doors and stepped

back into one of my students who was a former gang member and I realized this guy didn't leave because of my authority but because of whatever silent message he was getting from the gentleman behind me. My student said to me, "You're stupid if you think you can do those sorts of things. Yeah, it's your job, but you have to know when you aren't in a good position." Oh ok. So my position doesn't just protect me. You know, just those little things that start to come together that help in realizing my identity and my privilege and my access aren't universal. People perceive me differently, my privilege and access ((told me)) me that there are clearly places that I don't belong.

Being underrepresented is familiar to her. She was a minority in the community in which she spent much of her early years, and again as a college student. Yet, she is still developing an understanding of how she is perceived, and how her various identities (white identity, paraprofessional identity) play out differently depending on the situation. When she realizes that the Latino man who wants into the residence hall does not leave because of her authority, she begins to dissect how aware she is of her roles, her privilege and her identities. She comes to an understanding of her identity as a resident assistant and how it does not trump local gang hierarchy.

Hannah receives her bachelor's degree and is tirelessly job searching. The Director of Residence Life asks her if she's ever thought about working in Higher Education, in Student Affairs:

> …I didn't know that was [a] job. I just thought that people at the university were doing things, I didn't know they actually - that that was a whole thing. And so she showed me. I was just learning the internet at that time, and she showed me online, [the] OshKosh [Placement Exchange] and all these jobs for people who graduated college that were looking to be hall directors …and so I applied to all these universities and it wasn't until after I had gone through all these different interview processes and selected where I was going that I looked at everything and I hadn't applied to a single place in California.

Hannah needs to leave the life that has been difficult on so many levels. She unintentionally seeks positions anywhere but California. The separation process is underway and includes a need for physical distance in order for her to move on. She's

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ready for a significant change and a fresh start. She has taken the first steps toward a

different life, yearning for new beginnings. A significant and profound moment in

Hannah's life, she prepares for departure and, ultimately, the reinvention of self:

> I packed everything up. People wanted to come with me, help me move up
> [north]. And I thought, No, I need to do this by myself, it's my right of passage
> kind of thing. I look in the review mirror and said, "I am leaving this behind." I
> have lived my whole life being who people think - being who I think people think
> I should be, trying to be someone [so much] that I have no idea who I am.

This chapter closes as Hannah makes a conscious decision to go this transition

alone. Symbolic is the singular nature in which she prepares for a new start. Panek (2011)

elaborated on the symbolism of the shadow. To complement the "physical, visible

person" depicted in this segment, is the "invisible, Shadow person which consists of all of

the characteristics, Lessons, dreams and ideals which we have Chosen to *not* incorporate

into our everyday self" (para 12). Hannah is ready for reinvention. Already a distant

memory, Hannah does not look back.

Rebirth

Hannah emphasizes several times in our discussions that her professional roles are

a significant part of her identities. She is highly dedicated to her work; it defines who she

is. Hannah is a professional student affairs educator at a large public institution in the

west. She works primarily with historically marginalized students, helping them to

develop programs, conduct outreach to other students, and remain academically and

personally successful. Hannah begins to seek out opportunities for diversity and social

justice trainings, multicultural education, national issues forums and many other forms of

professional and personal development. These are important to her as a new professional.

She attempts to understand her new self in the context of the profession. During this time,

she begins to become aware of her sexual identity. When I ask Hannah about a significant

experience in her adult life, she describes her own progression from intolerance to

acceptance:

> …being in a relationship with her and letting go of my own internalized
> homophobia and [thinking], It's not weird to kiss a girl. The first time kissing a
> girl it's, Oh my God, this is wrong, I am going to go to hell, and then it's, I am a
> good person, I haven't killed anybody, I don't plan on killing anybody, so who I
> love shouldn't matter. Really coming to terms with that and recognizing that this
> is just who I am.

A powerful comparison is made by Hannah: equating murder to love indicates the

severity around the repercussions for the desire to love another woman. The reparative

therapy she receives while in the neuropsychiatric center during high school is ingrained

and not easily shed. She grapples with this and ultimately embraces this part of her core

being. Hannah is aware of the intersections of her identity. I ask her to elaborate:

> Religion was a very strong part of my identity growing up, but it's something I've
> distanced myself from. But, I still feel spiritual. All those different things still
> come into play, I guess. I started off my early life as Republican, now [I] have
> more liberal views although I still think many of my students think I am pretty
> conservative. But all those things come into play with locating me or
> contextualizing my perspective…

Although Hannah says religion was important to her in her younger years, this is the only

time it's discussed. I wonder how strong it was, and what led her to abandon it. She

continues to have experiences that underscore the notion that a singular identity can

emerge as prevalent over the others. One event is recurring:

> One of the most interesting things I've noticed in the last few years, since 9/11, is,
> I am a middle aged, Caucasian female: All American looking, clean cut. So you
> look at me and you don't think anything other than white female. Well, I am also
> apparently the antithesis of what a terrorist looks like. Every time I travel, no
> matter where, I am always the one who gets pulled aside for the pat down. The
> only thing I can think of is that it is a way of showing that we're not racially
> profiling – *look we pulled her over too.* I feel like I am the epitome of whiteness.
> And so, people would not question that there is any racial motivation there…I am

affiliated with the university so there is some class privilege there. We'll pull her over to show that we look at everyone equally.

She sees how her whiteness is being used, whether consciously or unconsciously, to make a counter statement about racial profiling in the airport security process. She sees her appearance as representative of white America. Her role with the university adds another layer: the privilege of class, connected to her professional role. I ask her to expand on these layers of identity and how they intersect:

> For me, those elements are my political beliefs. My education, knowing that is something that not everybody has. My background as a white person growing up in, often times, a place where I was the minority as an individual. And sexual orientation, religion, all those things help me locate myself in a social cultural context. So I think they all intersect with each other. There are times when my white identity might be strongly influenced by my class position. So whether I am middle class or poverty level or upper – that will play into how my whiteness is seen. My sexual orientation, when you couple that with my gender... I feel unsafe going out at night by itself but if you put that with my position in the university and I am on official [business] then I am safer because I am seen as an administrator not just a female. So I see these intersections, how I am contextualized, really influences how my identity is seen by myself and others.

Although not isolated as a topic, race continues to emerge in our discussions. Thinking about Goldberg and Levin's (2002) premise that it's possible for white people to "have an honest sense of themselves without hiding, dismissing or subjugating any of their realities" (p. 4), I ask her what does it mean to construct a healthy white identity and if that's even possible. She responds:

> Owning my white identity and knowing that whatever privilege is afforded to me for being white isn't anything that I've earned. I am not entitled to anything special because I am white. I have to acknowledge my whiteness in a way that is respectful and honest. That…people are humans and if…we're having a conversation and it's apparent that my whiteness makes me have a different perspective then I have to acknowledge that it's because I am white. That's what my experience and my perceptions are – doesn't make it right or wrong but that's my perspective and, and I have to acknowledge that. And also just not to just completely go off the other end of the spectrum and renounce my identity and what a horrible thing I am because I am white. I have to learn access and privilege

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because of my whiteness that people of color don't have. So I have to use my powers for good not evil.

Hannah acknowledges a continuum with regard to her white identity development. On one end, she needs to own her identity and understand that her white skin color grants her unearned privileges. She understands the role her whiteness plays in her life. On the other end, she cannot assume the historical burden. She finds balance somewhere in between and works to use her privilege for positive impact. She compares her role as an ally to people of color to the role of an ally for LGBT individuals:

> I know that people in the LGBT community-that our allies are really the ones that can make a significant difference. Because if an ally advocates for something, people can say, "You don't have anything to directly gain from this…maybe it's something that should be considered." If it's a person of color or LGBT person arguing for rights, [people can say], "Well, you want that because you just want to be special." "No, I just want to be equal." As a person in the majority I think there is an opportunity to use your identity to advocate for others.

She makes this analogy and illustrates the responsibility she has as part of the dominant white population.

Hannah recognizes and honors others by knowing them. Collecting student stories is her methodology. It is her focus. She concentrates on the students who enter her life and gets to know them. She plays multiple roles and she works to ensure the students understand these various roles: mentor, supervisor, educator, and administrator. She has to navigate the complexities within these roles as well as the stories she collects:

> It's my role to make things as safe as they can be. But it's not my role to silence anybody. I won't do that. That's made me a little nervous. And then, on the other side…I let them know before they tell me something - that there are some things I can't keep secret. So, know that before you tell me. And they know that I talk to administrators and they know that I am a safe place to get their message to administrators. And I take that responsibility very seriously. I don't want to breach their trust. When I am working with students…What is it that you're wanting to do? What it is I can offer, how I can help or how I can't help? But making sure that I don't betray them so I don't hear the stories. Sometimes it's not

about a big student protest, sometimes it's about dealing with someone who's suicidal – or something that doesn't make it to the mall of campus. At the same time students need to know I am a safe person who can get them access to the system but not going to sell them out or pass them off to someone else.

Hannah understands her responsibility for advocating and supporting students coupled with her responsibility as a university administrator. Her students may not see her as an administrator, thereby inviting her into conversations that put her role in jeopardy. She is upfront with the students about her duty to the university. She cannot collect and keep some of their stories. She maintains open communication lines so the students see her as an advocate and an intermediary between students and administration. I ask her how she sustains herself in this work, with often competing interests. She mentions the Chinese Blessings, 100 wishes. I ask her to share more about her own wishes. She reminds me of the core values that keep her grounded:

> I think integrity, accountability, compassion, curiosity, lifelong learning. Those are some of the wishes - for myself and for the students. Integrity is number one on my list. I don't want to compromise my integrity for – as an immediate gain type of thing – it may be an easier way out – to sell out – and do what other people want you to do. Maybe I would make more money, or maybe get a better promotion if I'd just do what others want me to. But I value integrity in others and I expect it of myself. And I am not willing to sell out. Sometimes that makes things much more challenging. Yeah I think that's part of the politics of any organization you work with. Part of higher education as well.

Hannah has opportunities for upward mobility and project development within her institution. She entertains options and discards others. Complacency is a barrier for her; she's unwilling to settle. The support she extends to students includes advocacy but also helping them learn from failure:

> I hold my students accountable. I believe in letting them fail if they can learn from that. I am not one to just sign off or do it for them because it's easier. Often times there's a lot more time and energy and conversations going on in letting them fail. I know that if they aren't going to classes, I call them in and talk to them about it. If they are not being kind to each other, we talk about this is a safe space and we

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all have to take part in that or you don't need to be part of this space. It's your choice… so integrity and accountability. Those are important to me.

Hannah's method of practice includes encouraging critical thinking, challenging concepts and philosophies, and keeping the students at the forefront of her practice. She invests in their holistic development, challenging them to participate in their educational experience, attend classes, and participate in the building of community. She is intentional about this aspect of her work:

> I have to remind myself why I am in this profession and keep myself connected to that. Even the Chinese blessings –100 wishes - it's on my office wall to remind me of those things I value and wish for myself and for students. Having conversations with them rather than just about them. That I don't decided things administratively without making sure that I am really advocating for students and not just doing what I think needs to be done because in my expertise that's what needs to be done.

I share with Hannah my perspective that as educators we often believe ourselves to be the experts on the needs and wants of students. Yet, how often do we test our theories by conversing with students in meaningful ways about their needs? Advocacy is often thrust upon others based upon perceived need. Hannah agrees and delves in deeper:

> That's like any social justice work… you have to remind yourself that you can't do things *for* other people – that's not advocacy. You have to work *with* people. With-and work with them toward whatever those goals may be – but you can't just do the work and say, "Hey look what I did for you." So, with students, I also keep a list of student names and maybe a one or two word summary of what that contact was about – because so many students come in and out of my life or in and out of my office door in this work. There's just so many of them and I want to take the time to honor and respect their life journey. And that I have this opportunity to touch them, or help them, or to support them and that I keep track of that so I don't just lose these moments with these students – that they aren't just part of my job – I check in and do my job but I make sure to honor that each student is their own individual.

Despite the high level of student traffic in and out of Hannah's world, she finds ways to ensure she is connecting to each individual. She puts mechanisms into place to track them

and their stories. I ask her what she does daily to keep this focus. In addition to reading

journal articles and blogs about current policies and issues that impact students, Hannah

says:

> And listening to the students. Seeing how easy it is to overlook that one simple but significant thing. I've had more times this semester where I've had a workshop scheduled for my students…and I had handouts and a specific agenda that I was going to follow, but as I went… [to] where the students are - they have other conversations going on - are very familiar with me walking through listening to their conversation – they don't stop if I am walking through, so I listen to what they say and I sat on the couch and listened. They start talking about their issues and concerns. That particular day I was going to talk with them about what it means to be a student activist, a social justice activist. And we never got to that topic, because they were having some concerns within the center of talking to each other respectfully. And respecting and acknowledging different sexual orientations, different identities, different issues related to gender or sexual orientation and so it ended up being a whole different type of advocacy or activism training instead of having to do it for the rest of the world, it was how do you end up being activists for yourself? And we had some good conversations about that. Talked about community standards in the center. I really feel that making sure I have these connections with the students, that it's not something big going on, that I am in touch with the day-to-day issues. Then I can see things before they happen and can be proactive versus reactive. Students, in my experience, don't tend to be very receptive when a big thing happens and administrators gather to talk with them – they don't really have much to say at that point. I really work to talk to them day to day on the stuff that maybe isn't as significant. Then when they are organizing something they tend to come to me because they can trust me, and they can talk to me openly.

Hannah has the ability to separate herself from the role of administrator. Yet, she also

acknowledges her role as an administrator. She puts the student first and walks the line

between student advocate and university administrator. It's a fine line that requires astute

navigation. She allows the students to drive the conversations, knowing learning is in

progress all the time. Although she sets out with a specific agenda she allows the course

of discussion to turn direction as it resonates with the students. She meets them where

they are at the moment. Her agenda can wait. Theirs cannot and is likely as important if

not more so than her own. This prioritization of issues allows Hannah to draw in the

students as she demonstrates her commitment to listening.

I ask Hannah to talk more about this notion of "walking the line":

> I am part of university administrator meetings where I know what the universities
> position is and what kind of a response will be taken for different student actions.
> I also work for a center with students and I hear in their day-to-day lunch
> conversations when they come and talk to me and they're planning a protest or
> their wanting to organize this or that. I see my role as very fragile but valuable.

Hannah has to be intentional about the amount of information she shares. Here, she

chooses student and campus safety above all else:

> I pass on enough information to administrators. "Hey, you know, this is kind of
> brewing, are we aware? Do we have a plan?" Then I talk to my students. "Ok you
> want to do this, what do you want to accomplish and is this the best way? If so
> more power to you. If it is, do you know the laws: noise, trespassing, etc. etc.
> There's ways to get arrested and there's ways to not get arrested. I help give you
> the [tools] and help you with contacts but ultimately it's your decision." And go
> from there. I walk the line and that's a position that means a lot to me because
> that's what student affairs is about for me, [the] student development piece and
> framing your voice. I want their voices to be heard. Part of that is learning how to
> express it and the other side of that is teaching people how to listen. How do you
> hear – how do you not just talk back and tell people stuff?

I am curious about Hannah's experiences walking the line between administrator and

student advocate. Having watched other university educators choose student advocacy

over their responsibilities as administrators, I wonder if she ever feels compromised. She

shares:

> There've been times that have made me kind of nervous on the administrative
> side. I've shared all I can share but they want me to share more or stop it. And
> that's not my role.

What Hannah says about the expectation to "stop it" strikes me. Whether the student

protest or some other activist act that is brewing, Hannah knows that is not her role. I

reflect on the times I have been expected by others in university administration to squash

or silence students who are disrupting campus life in controversial ways. Hannah and I

agree these are opportunities for collegial mentoring in order to help fellow educators

understand that students grow through experiential learning. This is the delicate place

Hannah talks about earlier, her unwillingness to "sell out." She sees the barriers present

in her work and maintains a stance on what she is willing to do:

> There are different priorities pulling from different directions at you within the university system. Sometimes it's easier to go with the flow. But I am the one who asks the questions or says no. Or has turned down opportunities for me or for the students I serve.

Working at a Predominantly White Institution, Hannah shares with me that it is

challenging to not get stagnant or complacent in her work because she is not confronted

with racism often. It is not as visible to her at her institution but she is fully aware that

racism and racial privilege is present and occurring in subtle as well as overt ways. She is

working on a performance piece with students around issues of bullying and harassment.

Theatre students assist with the production as that is not Hannah's area of expertise. One

particular student struggles to work with and feel supported by the production company:

> …they felt she was very confrontational and disrespectful and very difficult to work and wasn't a team player with and I was blown away because I don't see that at all with her. And it happened several times - it was always when I wasn't there. Sure enough as soon as rehearsal over that I would get an email that this student was difficult to work with – so I'd have several conversations with her and ultimately she decided that she was going to step down from the performance because it wasn't working out. And it was really sad – she's still a part in terms of like videotaping it. She's not on the stage; she's just behind the stage now.

This doesn't sit well with Hannah and she digs deeper to find out why the tension exists.

Her student's move from the forefront to the background is symbolic and not lost on

Hannah. Hannah has worked with this student in the past and has found her incredibly

talented, an excellent student, and passionate about projects such as this. As she listens to

the student, she is struck with the undercurrent:

> I really felt like this was racism. That she was being treated differently because she is African American and her communication style is different than what we have in place on campus…every time she had an issue with something and talked to our theatre folks – one student was like, "Well I can't make rehearsal because I have my honor's thesis – it's close to my deadline so I need to write." "Ok yeah yeah you can do that." Another one, "I am part of a university ambassador group and we have a function that day." "Ok, that's fine." This student, her example was, "Well, I said I had to take the GRE exam and that's the only date and time it is and I can't make rehearsal that day." And it was like "Well, you need to make sacrifices – we're all making sacrifices – you need to look at what your priorities are." And she's like, "I know what my priorities are – I am going to graduate school."

Hannah knows she needs to have a conversation with the student. Hannah's supervisor

reinforces this and she decides to talk with the student more about her observations.

> So I call this student in and we're talking and I said, "You know, I think we're talking about this white elephant and nobody is calling it what it is. I think that you and I both see this but we're not naming it. And I want to put that out there and apologize to you. I think you made the right decision but for the wrong reasons. I understand that you have a lot going on right now and maybe this is isn't the best time to be a part of this but I can't help but think that racism played into it?"

Hannah isn't willing to let this pass by under some other guise. She isn't sure how the

student perceives the situation, but she addresses her concerns directly. I ask how the

student responds:

> She was blown away and said, "That's a really big thing to say. I don't have the energy to talk about that. I didn't expect you to say that." She said, "I really try hard not to go there when these things happen to me because I know that people – you know a lot of African American people will go there and say everything is about racism – and I try not to be that person." And she said, "But when it's so different for everyone else when they had an excuse or and that was ok but mine wasn't. The thing I did was ok. I have to say – I don't have the time or energy to think that's what it is but yeah, it's there." And I apologized for that.

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Hannah empathizes through apology. Although not the responsible party, she takes responsibility for something that happens during her watch. This is her project and she is accountable for what takes place during the process of putting this production together. The student continues. According to Hannah, she said:

> "I don't mind being held accountable if someone talks to me and they respect me." She said, "You call me on my stuff all the time, you call me to your office and challenge me all the time. And I don't care because you care about me. But when others do it and it's all these other things and they disrespect me – they don't earn my respect."

The student's response supports Hannah's premise about relationship development with her students. Her student welcomes Hannah's intrusive nature because they have a relationship. Her student does not really want to call out the production team and name their behavior as racist. But she is willing to dissect it a little bit with Hannah. For this student, respect is not earned outright based on authority or role; it is earned based on the development of trust in relationship. Hannah is aware of the challenge of being in tune to the dynamics at place in various settings. She says, "I think it's easier to ignore racism when you don't see the diversity out there and you have to challenge – have to be more cognizant and hyper vigilant to make sure I don't fall into that complacency as well."

Hannah and I talk about the prevalence of discussions in student affairs surrounding social justice, anti-racism work and the development of cultural and intercultural competencies. I am interested in how she sees herself connecting to those terms.

> I guess I broadened my work. I am not just seeking out those things specifically but I think that the core of what those things meant to me is still in my work. I don't identify with the title, and I don't seek it out specifically to do but voice and presence and agency are things that are really important to me in recognizing other individuals and not to *other* people. It's still really part of what I do but it's not the focus of what I do.

This surprises me. The recruitment materials I sent out around the western region utilize

the terms social justice and anti-racism educator, yet these are not terms with which

Hannah identifies. In an attempt to better understand why these terms do not resonate

with Hannah, I ask how she identifies in her role in higher education.

> When I was a new professional, I really did, I really sought out opportunities for diversity training and anything that would put me in that role – national issues forums, day of dialogue. And I don't seek those things out, like the [Social] Justice Training Institute-that's not something I have been a part of.

Although her need to be identified as a social justice education existed early in her career,

Hannah summarizes her higher education identity today as, "student affairs officer,

educator and student development personnel. Somebody who works with students."

I tell her about a focus group I hosted at a regional conference a few months ago.

About 35 student affairs professionals around the western region got into the discussion

of terminology and how these important themes had become throwaway buzz words for

many. I ask Hannah how we capture who we are, how we embed justice into our work,

and how we name it? Hannah and I struggle to find a meaningful way to frame the work

we do. She says:

> That's a really good question. I hadn't really thought about it until you asked in this. Definitely in my early career, that was something really important to me but I think, like our colleagues in your focus group, it's become a buzzword. It's far more important than a title or a certificate. I don't think it's one of those things you can check the box off one and say, "Yep! I am culturally competent."

Hannah and I continue to discuss how prominent these topics are at regional and national

conferences, in educational publications as well as on our own campuses. Hannah shares

a quote by Stuart Hall: "Another critical thing about identity is that it is partly the

relationship between you and the other. Only when there is another can you know who you are." She resolves:

> That's kind of where it comes to me for what I do now. Just wanting to be this social justice advocate, it's bigger than that, and broader than that. It's not about race, or sexual orientation. It's not about the difference. It's recognizing and honoring the other and at the same time knowing that I can't look at other without seeing reflections of myself. And I can't look at myself without acknowledging others. But I don't want to be a part of "othering" and I also want to be mindful of the ways in which I am "othered." And that helps me connect to not doing that to other individuals.

Hannah's practice evolves and morphs. She is present and accountable to the various constituents at her institution. She stays true to her values, is unwilling to compromise those things she holds true. Her motivations shift over the years, from self to others. She focuses on the individuals before her, striving to understand them and honor their stories, often using art as the method to engage her community. Hannah is an educator, an administrator, a student affairs professional. Her history informs her being and her practice. She is comfortable in how she moves through her various roles, advocating tirelessly for her students. As a mid level professional who focuses on marginalized students, Hanna is diligent in her search for positive impact.

Thematic Analysis: Hannah

This segment of Hannah's story analyzes the developed themes from our interviews together. I've changed tense use to underscore this reflection portion of her story. This section takes a reflective look back at the themes developed during our interviews together: Contextualized Identity, the Individual Stories, Presence through Art, and Core Values and Beliefs. A sub theme of Barriers will also be explored.

Contextualized Identity

Hannah and I discussed how she interacts with the world around her. That interaction looked different depending upon the context. Her "history, experiences, and culture" shaped and influenced how she located herself within particular communities. Further, her "history, experiences, and culture" helped Hannah make meaning of her circumstances. Certain identities emerged depending on the situation in which she found herself. She has experienced her privilege as a white woman, an individual who has access to wealth, as an educational administrator. She has also experienced oppression or marginalization as a lesbian, as an individual who lived in poverty for periods of time, domestic abuse and as a white minority. However, Hannah made it very clear she does not subscribe to or believe in reverse discrimination. She explained this perspective. "It's because I stood out because of being white. I'm recognized as being someone who has more opportunity, more access to privilege. That's why I was "othered." Not because I am the picked on one."

A correlation was drawn between her experiences of being "othered" and her desire to not "other." Her past experiences have informed how she made meaning and developed a consciousness surrounding how her privilege manifests itself in both her private and professional worlds. Hannah experienced socioeconomic status in polar opposite ways growing up. While living with her mother, there was often not enough food in the house. With her grandparents, there were servants and maids attending to her every whim. Her perspective today was shaped by the dramatic dichotomy in which she found herself:

> I've experienced poverty, but I've also experienced wealth- so all of those things inform how I interact with things now…I can go to my pantry and I always have the ingredients to make chocolate chip cookies whenever I want to. Because those are things you don't have to have. We never just had stuff like that in the

cabinet…Because I know what it was to be poor, to go without, that shapes how I value or interact with things now.

Hannah has compartmentalized her background and history. While very present in her own mind, she does not share her story with others on a frequent basis. Her history has shaped who she has become as well as her daily practice but she doesn't "put that on other people." Self-reflection, internal talk with herself about her reactions and values based on her history and experiences, has become a norm. Hannah has a conscientious approach and a high level of mindfulness in her ability to see herself in various contexts.

Hannah fills multiple roles: educator, practitioner, advocate, mentor, and many others. Depending upon which role she was focusing, certain identities emerged to the forefront. She was conscious about which role she was in and how there might be dissonance between another role she plays. This was illuminated when she was asked by upper level administrators to share more than she was willing about students who were planning a protest. She had to determine whether she was an administrator or a student advocate. She negotiated the pressures between these roles frequently. Her role as administrator did not protect her from possible incidents that take place outside the university. Her role as student advocate requires careful treading, as there are certain secrets she cannot keep in confidence. The intersections between these roles existed and manifested themselves in certain ways. Each of these roles produced something different for Hannah. She expanded on this theme:

> That's very true in my work. I think about it all the time. It's challenging working with students and they get to know you and they think of you as a friend. I'm not your friend. I can't be your friend. There are going to be times when I'm going to do or say something that your friend wouldn't do for you but that's what I have to do…and boundaries. I am not your buddy, I care for you, I care about you, but sometimes I'm going to challenge you, I'm going to hold you accountable. Sometimes you're not going to like me.

Hannah's students required a significant amount of her time. They were the core of her work and she makes herself accessible to them. Her office environment is inclusive and welcoming, with fantastic gadgets and trinkets that welcome an individual in, and immediately puts them at ease. She told me how she works through the nuances around confidentiality with her students:

> …students will come in and say, "I need to talk to you," and [I say], "Okay, so let's talk." "Well, I need it to be a secret." and I [say], "Well, let's talk about that for a second because there are some secrets I can't keep and so are there elements you want to tell me"? They will weigh it out and figure it out and [then say], "Well, I think I'm just going to tell you." And [I say], "Okay," and then we'll figure it out and I try to give them and empower them in the process so even if it's something-if this is something we're going to have to talk to somebody else about…how do you want to go about doing that? This is what I have to do.

There were many paths Hannah could take in conversations where students are revealing potentially disturbing information that requires Hannah to report. However, she did not back down and set the students up with the information they needed in advance, in order to make informed decisions about their self-disclosure.

Hannah's office was located in the center of a larger office area, with a student lounge and student work-stations. This was a place designed for the students, by the students. This was their safe place. Conversations aplenty took place in this environment and Hannah was careful to respect the boundaries. If the students were disclosing information not intended for her ears, she tended to abstain from entering the conversation, unless there was potential harm to an individual. However, she maintained a "finger on the pulse" of the community. If the students were talking about "drinking in the community," she might consider a way to invite discussion around this topic with her students in an appropriate setting. Another intervention opening for her was if the space

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was not being utilized with the ground rules set by the community. If Hannah sensed that disrespectful behavior was occurring, she would step in and invite discussions around inclusiveness and acceptance. Hannah had no issues interfering if she thought a student was at risk:

> I will step in and intervene, "You know, I overheard something, I'm sorry for eavesdropping but I'm concerned about this and can we talk about this"? These are some things that I've heard that concern me and these are some things that I need to do or be mindful of. So, I feel that I am very consistent in what I do and even though they might not like all of the outcomes, they know what to expect from me. They know even when I get unhappy with them that it doesn't mean I don't like them anymore.

Hannah juggled multiple roles with her students: administrator, advocate, mentor. She challenged them to think critically about how they were treating each other and modeling their own leadership traits. Her identities emerged contextually and were varied depending upon the situation presenting itself. She was comfortable with these varied roles and how her identity played into the roles. She owned the responsibility of balancing the roles while simultaneously helping her students understand them as well.

The Individual Stories

Hannah's commitment to her students is illuminated by her focus on the individual. She shared multiple anecdotes with me that indicated her interest in understanding and honoring the individual. She told me about a recent project she coordinated that was focused on the power that one individual has to change the world. Hannah collected their stories, giving "voice and presence" by listening and hearing another. Story collecting was a method of giving power. It was the way Hannah gave back. She said, "I am ok with silence and letting people just be until they are able to tell me, "Well the reason I really came by was XYZ. Or going to people in other places."

Hannah understood the importance of meeting individuals where they are. She was willing to do whatever it took to ensure individual's felt that they had the necessary space and time to share their stories. Her office environment was set up in a way to invite individuals in to share their stories. The multiple toys, images, and knick knacks available for visitors were intentionally placed there to allow individuals to become comfortable, thereby engaging at their pace in discussions about what was going on in their lives. Hannah underscored this notion of setting the stage to welcome others', saying, "I am not big on power. And I am willing to give mine up."

This admission was testament to her commitment to the individual and the individual's story. Hannah has found a comfort in her role in higher education and student affairs. This comfort has allowed her to prioritize her students, putting them first, and finding unique and creative ways to ensure they have opportunities to share their voice.

Presence through Art

Important to Hannah was being present. She understood her impact on the communities around her and beyond, given her role in several regional and national communities. Presence and being present was a core theme that permeated many of the stories Hannah shared about her interactions with others. She demonstrated this awareness time and again. She sought opportunities to give up her power to encourage and make space for another to share their voice.

Recently she completed her doctoral degree in education. Toward the end of this period Hannah realized her practice had been significantly impacted by the consumption of time and energy toward her dissertation research. She reflected on the moment of

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realization and vowed to shift into high gear to focus, again, on those students she primarily serves.

One technique Hannah found especially useful in her work was engaging students through art. In addition to the array of materials she provides in her office area to invite students in, she gave an example. "I just bought them some coloring books…letting them be creative and using art as a way of expressing and telling the story, and finding the beauty in things." Often not a medium prevalent in our work with students and staff, Hanna found a way to utilize art to form connections and bonds with her students. Art was used as a "medium for social justice," giving her students the voice and presence to think critically about their connection to the communities and the world around them. It enhanced her ability to be present.

Hannah's immersion into the community has increased. Instead of "just going out and building a house and being done with that," she used art to "find the healing, find the story, find the experience." She said, "From there you find ways that you can collaborate to make change." She has developed an intuition that helps her meet people where they are in their own development, understanding and perspective. She abstained from assumptions and makes every attempt to listen loudly to their issues, concerns – their stories. Art has become the constant thread amongst these interactions and endeavors. She highlighted the outcome of one particular project upon which she worked with folks she didn't know:

> It was great because it was, well, I don't know who you people are but it's awesome. And then you look at all these different people in body size and skin color and age and ability and…they are all so beautiful.

Her commitment to issues of justice, with particular emphasis on social justice, was seen through her work in the arts. This particular project was focused on collecting stories and illustrating the power of the individual. Both personally and professionally, Hannah has found a way to connect with various communities, providing opportunities for individuals to bring their voice to the surface through the medium of art. This has become her intentional and unintentional commitment to active engagement and change making in her world.

Core Values and Beliefs

Hannah has developed a set of core values and beliefs that seem unshakable. She illustrated that consistency is something that she not only values, but her students depended upon it. Consistency in her methodology has allowed Hannah to create relationships with students and staff. These relationships are built upon her abilities to be consistent in her methods, communication, and actions and reactions. Her students have come to know and understand when she will and will not intervene. They appreciated her challenging them to think critically about their roles and their interactions with others. This has been highlighted in the anecdotes that Hannah has shared throughout her story.

Hannah has remained steadfast to her commitment to finding ways to balance her advocacy of students and her role as administrator. She was unwilling to "sell out" and give up her values to hidden agendas. When questioned about the intention of students, she provided as much information as needed to satisfy the administrative requests while not over sharing students concerns and plans. She has to find ways to preserve their confidence in her while maintaining her administrative responsibilities. Given the populations for whom she advocates, this is a constant navigation.

She has also discussed values of integrity, accountability, compassion, curiosity and lifelong learning. Integrity was at the forefront of this list. Hannah resisted others' wishes in order to preserve her commitment to her core values and work with students. She knew her unwillingness to "settle" or compromise her beliefs might prevent her from getting a better job, making more money, or being considered for promotional opportunities. This was inconsequential to Hannah as she was unwilling to discard her values.

Barriers

A sub theme developed during our discussions. Hannah works in a functional area in student affairs that is isolated from other departments whose primary focus is advocating for the underrepresented students. She acknowledged the difficulty in finding community within the larger university. Not only difficult for her professionally, her students felt disconnected and isolated from other marginalized populations.

The advocacy student centers are located on an upper floor in the student union. As you move down the corridor, you encounter centers for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, African Americans, Latina/o students, women students, and the center for Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation. The actual walls create yet another barrier. The departments are built like "little boxes," each containing its own set of administrative staff and students inhabited within. Reporting lines vary up through the hierarchical structure, impeding collaboration across divisional lines. Staff do not attend the same meetings or work on similar projects. Separate budgets, strategic plans, goals and outcomes are developed independent of the other advocacy areas. Competing

philosophical mindsets and methodologies likely impact the inability to function

cohesively.

Students, regardless of multiple dimensions of identity, must choose which center

might meet their needs. Similar services are offered by each of the centers. The barriers

impact Hannah as well as her students.

Concluding Thoughts

As I reflect upon my time with Hannah, in person and immersed in her story, I am

drawn to this particular admission:

> I lead by doing. I think of myself- not as a leader who is so charismatic that
> everybody-I am not a great speaker. I don't stand up there and say, "Hey,
> everybody follow me." I am not that kind of leader. I tend to be the kind of leader
> who sees what needs to be done and does it. I give everything to make it happen.

Hannah's humility is seen in these words, yet I think differently about her and her talents.

She has a quiet, strong presence. She is introverted in nature, and that is seen in her style.

She is patient and kind. She is genuine and wants to know more about the individual

before her than telling them about herself. I am drawn to her quiet, persistent delivery.

Her words above indicate that she, or others perhaps, think of leaders as needing to have

a certain captivating personality, one that wins others over. Her style is inclusive and

effective and I'd argue that her contributions are widespread and impacting.

Hannah described her role in higher education as a servant leader. Her primary

role was to serve her students as individuals, meet them where they are in any given

moment, and encourage and challenge them to contribute to their communities in

meaningful ways. Hannah's formative years provided a backdrop from which to

understand how she has developed her worldview. Her history, experiences and beliefs

informed the way she saw herself in any given context. Critical incidents were numerous

and shaped the ways in which Hannah created a new world for herself after her undergraduate years. She was explicit in her understanding about her privilege and subsequent power and was fearless in giving up her power in order to give another individual voice and presence.

Ferd's Story

> There is no there there.
> Don't look for it - you won't find it. It doesn't exist.
> There is no there there.
> It's continuous and ongoing – there is no ending.
> The journey as a joke, an excuse. What about now?
> Do you need one more piece: knowledge, information, a feeling of security?
> What are you afraid of? What is keeping you at bay?
> There IS no there there.
> There is now – this very moment – this very second.
> Waiting gets you off the hook – keeps your distance in check.
> Go in. Go now. Do the work. Don't wait for security.
> There is no there there.

Introduction

Ferd was nominated by three different individuals to participate in this study. I reached out to him to invite him to submit the interest survey. His succinct responses resonated with me and were an indication that our subsequent conversations would be full. I chose the pseudonym Ferdinand, Ferd for short, because it is an Italian derived name and means "ardent for peace." I am attempting to honor the heritage and also give nod to the peaceful, reconciliatory nature of this individual. I have observed him in settings and his approach to bringing people together is gentle, supportive and welcoming. His office environment is open, expansive, with windows overlooking a courtyard in the center of campus. Several paintings and drawings are hung in his office. They are simple and beautiful and representative of the diversity Ferd appreciates.

Ferd's career in higher education spans five decades in various functional areas including residential life, student activities, leadership, and diversity education. As a senior student affairs officer at a regional public institution in the west, which I've named College of the West, he has spent 47 years as an educator in institutions of higher learning across the United States. He is preparing to retire in the next year from his position; however, in our time together he talks often about work that needs to be done. It is clear to me that retirement does not end Ferd's commitment and dedication to this work.

Life Story

Life at home is a place of dissonance for Ferd. Growing up in an Italian family, oppression is realized in a variety of ways. The cultural divide in the Italian communities is alive and at play. Ferd recalls:

> We're very conscious of being Italian, we're very conscious about being Sicilian on my father's side, because…Italy has its own sort of pecking order, and if you're Northern Italian, in some people's minds, in England, and the minds of Northern Italians, you're superior to Sicilians who are seen as sort of more backward. One of the early racist [incidents]-which I didn't make the connection when I was really young, was, if other Italians wanted to insult the Sicilians, they would call them Afrikaans.

The pressure to assimilate into American life permeates Ferd's early years. "My grandparents spoke Italian – they were part of the generation that thought you needed to become American and shouldn't speak Italian."

Gender norms that were anything but equal in Ferd's mind are very present. He has to wrestle with the discord between the expectations of being male and the repression of the women in his life. Being a strong young man means something to his elders and it

is reinforced in a variety of ways. Ferd shares a story about the time he stands up to his

grandfather who is a powerful figure in his life.

> When I was living with my grandfather, he was a big violent guy, and I didn't
> know this until later. They used to live downstairs and I'd go out in the backyard.
> If I was in the kitchen and I wanted to go out the front door to go play, I'd pass by
> him in the living room and he'd lumber down in the chair and pretend to sleep.
> And he'd reach out and grab me and he'd squeeze me. I was always completely
> trapped. If I showed pain or something he'd squeeze me harder. So one day I
> dashed by him and he grabbed me and I was so frustrated I punched him. 'Oh
> what have I done? Was he going to hurt me?' Instead there was this moment of
> indescribable pride. I remember he got a black eye and was showing his black eye
> off to the neighbors.

He is rewarded for a momentary act of rebellion, of violence. This is a rite of passage for

Ferd. His position within the family begins to shift. The privilege of being male in an

Italian family is continually strengthened. Ferdinand feels this at the early age of seven or

eight:

> At some point my dad and my uncles and aunts bought a cabin up on [a] lake in
> New York. My dad and uncles – this kind of male society fishing together and I
> felt proud to be this big guy and all that. Felt like there was this coded language
> and I remember that in being out in the beautiful lake.

Ferd experiences another marker in his rite of passage by being invited into this secret,

coded discussion with the male role models in his life. Racism and classism play a role

early in Ferdinand's cognitive growth and development. Surrounded by layers of

inequity, he wrestles with the dissonance between loving and admiring family members

who are also blatantly racist. The constant epithets that come out of his uncle's mouth are

unsettling for Ferdinand. Then there are moments witnessing courage and honor, like the

time his uncle saves a kid who was drowning:

> …he was seventy and down on the beach in Florida and sees a kid out in the
> water [who] gets hit with a surfboard, pulls him out and gives him mouth to
> mouth. Why did you do this, saved his life? He didn't understand the question. "If

it was my kid, that's what I'd want." That level [of] blue collar: brothers, courage, heroes, yet a racist.

Ferd recalls "from middle school on I was conscious of whites, being white, because there were some conflicts between Blacks and whites in the schools, but that didn't mean I owned the privilege associated with that." Witnessing racism does not impact him at this early stage in his life, yet, Ferd is highly aware of the inequities between the genders. He sees that opportunity does not exist for all. Ferdinand chafes at the lack of access afforded equitably in his family.

> I had an aunt that I was really close to, because my mom and dad were really sick. My mother was really sick and my dad was really busy. She helped raise me and she's one of my favorite people of all time. She had a really, really great mind. You know, she's just really sharp. The standing joke was that every time you looked at her, she had her head in a book. She loved to read. And she couldn't go to college, and she used to go to local colleges and hang around and kind of dabble at the life of the campus.

I ask Ferd to elaborate on the barriers to college for his aunt, as his early understanding of inequity seems to have a powerful influence.

> You know, poor family, didn't have money. Her younger brother, who wasn't half as bright, got to go and flunked out pretty quickly. He was also a football player. I think he may have gotten a scholarship or something. I always just felt like, oh what a shame, just a shame. And it was because she was a woman. Privilege was afforded to males, and there's a sense of, that's just not right.

> Ferd does not share much about his high school years. He moves around a lot because his father changes jobs. Ferd experiences physical violence in high school more than once. Specifically, his interactions with African Americans are often difficult. Once after a football game, when he was working at the hotdog stand, he gets into an altercation with a group of students. Another time he is confronted and physically struck by a fellow student. An African American student, who is part of this social circle, intervenes and significantly shifts the outcome in a way that shocks Ferd:

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> [He] said, "No, this guy [Ferd] is a great guy." The whole dynamic and fear-having someone cross over to keep me from getting hurt was an emotional experience. That was a powerful imprinting… which left me thinking how does this happen? I don't know what triggered it – I don't even know what fueled [the] hostility. So, I remember that. The real difficult things – cognitive dissonance -- for me to deal with have to do with racism.

He cannot articulate the underlying reasons for these conflicts, just that they are present. The implications of someone in another sociocultural community choosing to "cross over" and lend help are numerous and the gesture has significant and positive impact on Ferd.

As the oldest brother in his family and the first to attend college, Ferd doesn't have the influences of family to pave the way during his college search process. College isn't really on his radar until:

> I got called by the track coach from Michigan State and he started talking about MSU this, and MSU that, and there were all these clues…I wasn't dialed into schools not in my immediate surroundings. He said, "So, what do you think, do you want to come to visit us"? I must have had MSU and SMU confused, because I said, "Yeah, coach, I've always wanted to see Texas." Then he said, "No! MSU, MSU"! And it should have been apparent to me, you know, Big 10 champs, and all these other clues. Then I was embarrassed, and, because I was embarrassed I said I'd visit, and then I wound up going there.

College in the 1960's is a time of movements: Black Power; Women's Rights; Environmental Issues. Ferd is immersed in the campus environment during a time of conflict and strife. A resident assistant in the University residence halls, Ferd can feel the tensions are high. One day, a group of African American students occupy the cafeteria and amidst flaring emotions, Ferd tries to restore some semblance of peace by bringing in speakers to work through the issues with the different groups of students. This is his first effort at facilitating reconciliation during times of conflict.

Ferd's graduate degrees are in the sociology of religion and environmental

sociology. His focus is on the impact of different communities with regard to the

intersections between populations and pollution. He studies the connections between

social justice and sustainability. Ferd doesn't share much about his college experiences.

In our discussions, he lumps his academic pursuits together and moves on to his early

professional experiences.

Ferd finishes his PhD while working full time in the residence life department at,

what I'll call East State College, a large state school in the East. This is during a time

where it is "not the norm to accept diversity." Doing a fair amount of diversity training,

Ferd accounts for this time:

> …with a smile on my face. Here I was a 22-23 year old and this would have been
> in the early 80's. The HR department and the President at [East State] decided
> that every supervisor needed diversity training. They asked me and a colleague to
> do that training. It was offered through the HR department. So here we were
> doing daylong training for deans and vice president's and I felt a real resistance to
> that…back then they weren't even going to give you lip service. They were going
> to fight you tooth and nail around these things.

Ferd immerses himself in diversity training in his early twenties, both formal and

informal. Highly engaged in academia in several capacities, his youthful optimism

prevails in the difficult with training those three times his age. Two peak experiences take

place working with students at East State College:

> There was one program we did when we were [student activities]. We took a
> historically black and historically white fraternity and we helped them to work
> together. There had been some conflict on campus- different allegiances around
> Palestine and things like that and we were able to get those organizations to come
> together…they co-sponsored a week-long event called Ebony and Ivory and
> explored bias from the two perspectives of historically Jewish fraternity and
> historically black. When I was in student activities I was doing a lot of work with
> the historically black fraternities who'd felt alienated in IFC and [we] had a lot of
> success in creating trust and engagement and that came to get national
> recognition.

The second is a volunteer 40-hour training program Ferd and his colleagues develop for students in the engineering program. Incorporating some of the skills they teach in student affairs, the program resonates with the women as the field of engineering was male dominant, individualistic and competitive. The program becomes very popular with the students in engineering and the question is posed as to whether or not this program should be offered for credit. Ferd returns to the students with this idea and they respond strongly:

> "We don't want it for credit," they said. "The people who need this most will not take it for credit." It's a high level of risk taking. What a comment about higher education. Just to see that program so embraced. It had become such a model – student affairs work translating into workplace integration skills.

> During this time, Ferd, in his 30's, and a colleague develop a consulting firm

doing human relations work. Designated the early professional years, Ferd simultaneously works as a diversity educator while maintaining a full time positions at East State College, first in residence life then in student activities. The consulting firm is hired by a state in the eastern U.S. to deliver diversity training for state funded organizations that were found in violation of civil rights. Their firm delivers the "punishment."

Ferd begins to work with a colleague who develops an initiative aimed at sponsoring teams to travel throughout the country helping colleges and universities understand "how they could successfully implement diversity initiatives on campuses." He and his two colleagues develop a manual for colleges to use. The manual includes identity development models as well as programmatic initiatives that campuses can use. The development team deconstructs the models and analyzes for whom they'd be most

effective. The program is so popular, the development team add three others to their group. By the time Ferd leaves the program he has "probably visited or interacted with folks from 250 schools – heard their stories about what they were trying to implement and the barriers they faced on their campuses."

Ferd meets his wife during this period. A Slovak woman, she lives in Europe until her mid 30's. She works with Ferd for some time in the consulting firm. Her influence on Ferd in their relationship is profound. Their children are raised bilingual. Ferd briefly discusses the notion of language and how that affects brain development. It is important to him to keep language alive, especially in a culture where the dominant language is English. His wife and partner have parallel careers in education, although her focus is developing culturally relevant experiences and educational improvements with native children in the northwest.

In the late eighties and early 90's, Ferd begins to think about upward mobility. He wonders what would it take to become a senior student affairs officer (SSAO). He seeks mentorship in this area and takes a new upper level position at a university in the Midwest. I'll call it the University of Torrence. In a short six months, Ferd is made the interim Vice President for Student Services. His work includes varying aspects of addressing diversity and inclusion. He summarizes his time at the University of Torrence, both on campus and in the community:

> The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences felt like the College which had 6,000 students was not as inclusive [as it could be]. [It was a] chilly environment for women. He asked me to chair a college wide committee that would address that [issue] for the college…also there was a local high school that was having racial conflicts, predominantly white. I worked with them for about a year. There were a lot of town gown things I worked with…I chaired town gown committees on improving experience of Hispanics in the community and on campus.

Ferd accepts a vice presidency at a college in the west. He spends the rest of his professional career working at College of the Pines, a regional, partially state funded college. Ferd's responsibilities, in addition to being the senior student affairs officer, continue to focus on inclusiveness and justice. He runs numerous committees and task forces that address issues of equity and bias, as well as initiatives that focus on recruitment and retention. Our discussions are alive and full of presence, despite the impending retirement on the horizon.

Resonant Themes: Ferd

Ferd and I discuss the themes developed from our first two discussions. We talk about how his perspectives have shifted over the years. He used to be surprised and shocked when a bias motivated incident would occur. Now he sees patterns and cycles in behaviors and events. "Ah, I've seen this before," he acknowledges. In his later professional years, he acquires the ability to react differently to what is presented in his daily practice than in earlier years. The themes emerge through our rich discussions and I provide Ferd with a draft of what seems resonant: Responsibility and Accountability; Transformational Practice; Campus Ecology; Justice, Assessment, and Spirituality. The following details our discussions around these themes, constructing meaning throughout the analysis. The analysis is also delivered in present tense, as the bulk of my time with Ferd is spent amidst the themes themselves.

Responsibility and Accountability

Fred takes responsibility for his role in contributing to a just community and society. He makes choices in his work and poses a set of questions that are reflective in nature, but also a summation of his perspective on his own level of engagement: "Where

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are you spending your time? What committees are you sitting on and what workshops are you going to? You really can't say [anything] about all of this if that's not where you're spending significant portions of your time." Ferd recalls, "…early on in my administrative work, I noticed pretty quickly, and this was around African Americans, they didn't really care what I said, they cared what I did." Ferd is explicit that he is not interested in lip service toward issues of diversity, justice and inclusion. He is active, present, and involved in change making.

I ask Ferd to talk about what motivates him in staying active in this work. He explains the framework from which he operates:

> My operating framework is to assume that I'm a racist. I'm a racist in recovery, I would like to believe. Just as I'm a sexist and a sexist in recovery, and that I'm always one step, one mental piece, one joke, one whatever, away from- just like an alcoholic kind of reverts, and has to be forever vigilant. I see myself as racist, sexist, homophobic, and I would like to believe I'm in a state of recovery, but you can't live in this larger society without wanting that and the notion for me is constant vigilance and work. The work that you have a responsibility to do by virtue of having privilege. And maybe for other reasons, too, because it really chafes you to see injustice. So, being privileged comes with it a responsibility, so when I see myself in those systems, it's with realizing that I'm a product of those systems and it's always there. And for me personally, and that you got a responsibility to work on.

Ferd navigates carefully and finds the space between identifying as racist and a desire to not contribute as a racist. He uses the phrase "in recovery" as a way to signify effort is being made toward a new and different self. He sees his privilege, owns it, and works to use it responsibly and with accountability. "Chafed" by injustices around him, he is motivated to take action and disrupt the existing order of systems and structures in his environment. He locates himself in these system, whether higher education or beyond, and strives toward positive impact.

Cautious and mindful of both his private and public lives, he struggles with the

comparative ease addressing issues of inequity in his professional life:

> I see myself as constantly slipping, constantly having to be mindful, and
> constantly having to work on the intersection between my public college life and
> my family life. I think for a while I was more comfortable dismantling things in
> the public arena, where it was somehow easier than it was in the family or private
> thing, the ways in which the maleness or other things played out there. So, it is the
> fact that I am a product of systems of bias, privilege, and have so much privilege,
> that have dominant status that continues to be the struggle. And, there is
> something, and you know this, there is something about the ability of people who
> are in majority group status to put the issues aside for a while. And when it
> becomes uncomfortable, or too hard, that of course comes with privilege. And so
> when I have to be mindful of the fact that you shouldn't be putting this aside, and
> there are times when I can catch that reaction that says, "Oh please, don't start,"
> and then see the privilege associated with that.

He acknowledges the required vigilance in being present and accountable in this work. It

necessitates constant reflection and action. It is ongoing and progressive. He recognizes

the trap for many white student affairs educators who are immersed in this work:

privilege allows us to take a break, pause, hide-out for a while to take a break from the

difficulty. We, those with white skin privilege, can hide behind our whiteness without

being discovered. As we discuss the barriers to being engaged in justice work, Ferd

shares a time where he catches himself discarding an emerging student group's issue:

> I'm…saying, "what?" And then realizing, well, wait a minute, can you remember
> your reactions like that before, around issues of race and gender? The other
> challenge in all of this is making the transition to, as we unfold other isms that we
> hadn't been thinking about, to think in different ways and challenge yourself in
> different ways. People can be in your face in different ways, and so in some ways
> the exhaustion [that accompanies this]. But I say that knowing it isn't anywhere as
> near as exhausting for me as for people historically oppressed. Because I can put
> it aside, and I think that notion of challenge for me is trying not to put it aside,
> trying to embed it in every piece of thinking that I do. [Finding] an openness to
> the newly emerging ways in which this privilege can manifest itself. So, yeah, the
> dominance of I think racist, sexist, homophobic institutions, male and white skin
> privilege, these are all challenges. The fact that I can set it aside.

He uses metaphor to illustrate the ease with which we, those with "skin privilege," can choose to operate. If our work takes place on a stage and during the day we are front and center on stage, and the spotlight is on, we are present in our vigilant justice work. When we slip back stage, and the spotlight isn't on us, it's easier to revert into a position of privilege. We do not have to address whatever issue has presented itself, and no one will know.

In addition to racism, he acknowledges his recovery work is also present in other areas: sexism and ableism. Ferd is quick to add throughout our discussions that he has powerful influences from colleagues and friends along the way. These caring individuals are instrumental in the continual growth, increased understanding, and intentional reflection of who he is and the skills and abilities of which he's continually developing.

Part of being accountable to the responsibility of actively engaging in justice work includes barrier removal. Ferd talks at length about not getting in the trap of "I need to know more before I can be effective. Just one more training and then I'll know." He continues:

> It's nonsense. So the question is, ultimately, what are you thinking is going to happen that is not [already]? It becomes the biggest game of all. In Buddhism we talk about people being on a spiritual journey being a kind of joke, because it applies that you kind of get somewhere and then you can be aware, be more enlightened. I get it, but most teachers are saying "what's keeping you from doing it right now"?

We talk about our work as a journey. The journey: a metaphor for growth and development, continual learning and understanding. Some journeys come to an end, others might continue forever. How we look at this term – journey – is a topic of interest for both of us. Ferd shares his perspective about the journey as an excuse:

It absolves you of responsibility, in the second, in the moment, to do everything you can to transform your life in that moment. Because journey implies you've got to go from one place to another. So, what's wrong with the place you're in right now? And I think a lot of us are like that. We're afraid to, if this is work that's important, then what are you waiting for? What is there about right now that makes you feel like I need to be better prepared? What's keeping you in this very second from doing the work? I think we have to watch our own language and our expectations of each other, to prevent this notion that you've got to arrive at some point to do this.

I, too, share perspective about getting stuck in the guilt of whiteness and privilege in general. It can make us immobile. It can prevent us from being present and authentic. He elaborates on how the journey itself can become a barrier:

It's a big way of never getting there, of letting yourself off the hook in a way, because it's like, well I don't know enough. When you do something, people know your motivations. I have had staff around me, and I know but what you feel is their sincerity and their struggle and their desire to do something. But other people talk the talk but they don't strike me at all as they're about anything. Ultimately, what are you afraid of? [Are you] afraid of saying the wrong thing? Where's your internal compass? If you know your motivations to be sincere, and you say the wrong thing, is that the end of the world? Is it the end of the world to be called racist? I think people are so hung up on race or gender that it's hard for them to do the work in the very moment in the very second. Because they've got to read one more book they've got to get one more external validation before they can feel comfortable…I just think stuff like that becomes a way of distancing yourself from taking the responsibility and just doing it.

Ferd describes authenticity as an important characteristic that can assist in helping others understand intentions, even if certain interactions don't go as hoped. He distills the difficulty of engagement in the work down to motivation. What are the motivations behind the action? If it is true, well intentioned, Ferd suggests this is more important than failing to do or say the right thing in the moment. He alludes to a need to strengthen one's ability to handle the criticism and the feedback that go along with doing this work. Trusting your intentions and delving in and being present in the moment are more important than having all the knowledge and information first.

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Transformational Practice

Important to Ferd is seeing change unfold. He expresses a need to see the action beyond the talk. He develops relationships with partners to ensure the work is being done alongside colleagues who are interested in the depth of work needed to ignite change. Ferd has an implicit sense of where institutions are on the continuum: from no attention to inclusion of diversity to actual institutionalized change. He believes the goal should be to ensure all elements are integrated into the fabric of the institution. He underscores the importance of commitment to ensure that the work, through initiatives, curricula, and policies is real, not merely symbolic:

> I believe that inequality is deeply ingrained in our organizational cultures. Consequently we must incorporate transformational rather than additive approaches in promoting change. The former requires us to examine and probably alter almost every part of our work (decision making, supervision, organizational structures, the built environment, curriculum, teaching styles, etc.). The latter suggests that our work is done if we add or alter one or two elements in our work environment.

Transformative work must permeate every layer of the institution in order for real change to occur. Ferd challenges our thinking to go beyond doing business as usual:

> Because this work is about total institutional transformation, it's about how we hire, supervise, evaluate, and on and on. Every aspect of our work has to be taken apart. We can't go about doing 98% of the business the same way and say, "Oh because we're doing 2% of the business differently we're therefore committed to changing these sorts of systems of oppression." It doesn't work that way. And it's uncomfortable and it isn't always easy and it's exhausting at times. People talk about institutionalized change as another way or phrase for that. I see a lot of what I would call additive window dressing, both in terms of individuals and in terms of the institutions.

I share a conversation I had with a colleague recently. She leads a center that focuses on multicultural education and had shared with me her philosophy about balancing "food, fabric, and festival" programming with in-depth group dialogue and identity exploration programs. Ferd shares his perspective about this:

As we all know for students in certain stages of identity, that food, fabric and festival becomes the first way in which they become exposed, but it absolutely cannot end there. And not even for those individuals, but sort of institutionally. One of the things that caused me to choose to come to [College of the Pines] was when I came here I went to the bookstore and I said okay, how much has this stated commitment actually been translated into the texts and the curriculum. And it was one of the things that attracted me to [College of the Pines] because I saw this strong presence in almost every course around these issues. I thought, okay, I'm not sure where they are on this continuum for additive transformation, but it feels to me like they're on their way, in terms of making sure this just isn't about one book or one lecture. This is about trying to build in significant ways.

Ferd's reminder that development and awareness happen gradually is well received. Although an introduction to diversity or justice issues may take place in a passive mode, movement toward action aligns itself to the possibility of transformative work. Yet the stage must be set in order for the players to entice the audience. In this case, groundwork includes food, fabric and festival programming and texts in the bookstore. With the groundwork laid, initiatives can grow and build upon solid foundation. Ferd accentuates the necessity of thinking about transformative work as a continuum.

Campus Ecology

Transformational work can also be witnessed by examining the physical community and campus surroundings. Ferd is in tune to the "built environment." Campuses include ecological features: names of buildings, artwork on and around campus, street names and other important markers. Of what and whom is the art reflective and representative? What are the installation pieces and what are the meanings behind their acquisition? What are the names of the buildings or specific rooms and how were they named? Ferd looks for indicators of inclusion. He illuminates another part of his identity and his perspective on the built environment:

I'm a campus ecologist, philosophically. And I think the built environment is sort of one of the last bastions of privilege and one of the greatest opportunities for conveying institutionalized values. So the architecture, the artwork on campus, I

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look at that. I mean there's all sorts of research about what kind of buildings send what kind of messages to different student populations. So who's thinking about that? If you're not, you're not really being transformative, the built environment stays the same. The other powerful other reason why I think the built environment is such a powerful tool, is that it speaks to students 24/7.

During my visit to College of the Pines, I am immediately struck with the large Native statues that welcome visitors to campus. I meander through campus trying to find the building in which Ferd works. I take a longer route than necessary and am taken with the greenery on campus. The buildings fit in with their surroundings in an almost supernatural way. It's calming. Ferd talks about the impact physical buildings have on community:

> I think we're fortunate in some ways-our architecture. We know that the traditional, the collegiate gothic architecture that we associate with colleges like Ivy league schools and England, sends mixed messages to many student populations. There's been cognitive studies done, and many historically oppressed people, when they are conscious of that European hierarchical conqueror, whatever they associate with that, feel associated with those buildings. And we know that lower buildings or things that break away architecturally from that are seen as less threatening, more welcoming.

He underscores the often ignored, but important, necessity of including students from various communities and cultures in designing the built environment.

> I partnered with architects and we would say, "Okay, design an element that speaks to your culture, we're going to prominently display it in a building." And the students would work it out. That working it out in and of itself is a powerful thing. How do you find a cultural symbol that is appropriate to all the within-group differences? So the actual process of coming up with a physical element can be a learning thing, and the continued presence of the physical element. So I think that the built environment is often overlooked, there are a lot of things about how we assign students to spaces, what kinds of concentrations, historically oppressed groups in any spaces.

As we explore this resonant theme, he clarifies that campus ecology as a framework includes elements beyond the built environment. The layers of characteristics that make up particular populations are part of this equation:

...are they progressive, conservative, interested in coming to college to primarily to obtain a degree? Are they interested in making some real change in the world? Our students at each institution are going to come with us different aggregate characteristics that are part of the campus ecology perspective, just as the surrounding communities are going to have some aggregate characteristics that are going to influence our work for justice in those communities.

In addition to the physical and the community characteristics, Ferd talks about the organizational components as part of the campus ecological framework:

How our decisions are made? Who's included who is not included? These social dimensions as well... From my perspective, an important piece of campus ecology [is] the built the physical characteristics in the particular environment, but there are social and organizational components that have to be considered because they influence the work. I believe in the multiple dimensions within the environment - some of which is not visible but is social and hierarchical.

Advocating for an inclusive approach to the design and build of a campus environment, Ferd impresses upon me the layers requiring consideration and attention with regard to campus ecology. I ask him to reflect upon the change he's witnessed over the years at College of the Pines. He says:

I'm pretty proud of the degree to which [College of the Pines] is building this into the fabric, and that doesn't mean the process is complete. We've come pretty far along as a predominantly white institution, our retention rates for folks of color and first generation students are comparable to what they are for all students.

Ferd has demonstrated direct impact in this arena. His role as the senior student affairs officer affords him the opportunity to make high level decisions about the campus environment. His methodology is inclusive. I could feel the results of his work the moment I stepped foot onto the campus of College of the Pines.

Justice

As populations continue to emerge on campus, Ferd recognizes a need to continually learn about the issues preventing some from feeling connected to campus. This particular week, it's the emergence of a growing student population who identifies

as transgender anarchists. Ferd is trying to understand the particular issues this group of

students is facing that are preventing them from having a meaningful experience at the

college. Inclusion and understanding are at the core of his reflection.

Throughout our discussions, the thread of social justice makes itself present. I ask

Ferd to share his perspective on social justice education. We talk about what it means to

identify as a social justice educator, and he expands my thoughts on the use of the phrase

social justice:

> …the word social suggests that it's there for all of us, in a way, that makes sense.
> I always say the intersection between social justice and sustainability is a big
> topic, and so some of the people in the sustainability area are talking about social
> justice, economic justice, other forms of justice. Social justice may have
> connotations that are too narrow, environmental justice…You've got to wonder
> why you can't just say justice work - in all of the ways in which it might manifest
> itself. I do think it's inclusive. It's about the physical environment and who
> benefits and who doesn't from certain physical conditions and it is about
> economies, and so it's really a kind of justice work, in a way. Again, the problem
> is when people think about justice, then they think about it in a court system kind
> of way, but I like social justice, it talks about justice maybe for people, but it
> doesn't give sufficient attention to the economic justice, come to think about it, I
> actually want to read more about how people are defining social justice as distinct
> from economic justice, are they all talking about the same things, I've just got to
> learn.

Justice is more inclusive than just the realm of social. So we broaden this theme to

address justice as a whole concept. Justice is more than an outcome for Ferd. It is the

motivation as well as the work. Justice is environmental, economic, and social. Justice

and fairness are essential components of the work for Ferd. He is explicit about what he

means:

> [Justice is a] major motivator. Justice and fairness. Fairness is about the treatment
> of people. It doesn't mean treating people the same…individuals need different
> things. Groups need different things. Imagine we're all starting a race together
> and some are behind. There are historic issues that need to be addressed to make
> things fair.

Ferd is able to see the shifts in his own perspective as groups needing different support emerge on his campus. He has to be constantly vigilant about remaining open to the new issues that are presented. Ferd makes a conscious effort not to lose sight of the "times of conflict" throughout the stages of his life. He says, "It's a way of being mindful…and at the same time recognizing the ways in which I have privilege."

He simplifies the inequities through the metaphor of running a race together. If we all don't start at the same line, how are we all to have the same chance at winning? Ferd has shared multiple examples in how he has been involved in working to rectify historic decisions in attempts toward inclusivity.

Assessment: Tracking Progress

I ask Ferd during our exploration and expansion of the themes if there was anything missing? He identifies immediately that we haven't really discussed assessment as a primary focus in his work. Ferd is interested in trying to assess effectiveness of the initiatives for which he is responsible. Recognizing this work is continual and ongoing, he spends time looking at outcomes: "Is progress being made? How do we know? What are the indicators for success and how are we using them to change our environments and programs?" He asks a lot of questions about effectiveness, and recognizes there are many ways to capture whether goals are being met. He says "good assessment keeps us honest." This resonates with me. We discuss the fact that while we can measure progress, we never really land. We're never finished and we won't really know the full extent of our impacts. Ferd strongly feels that knowing we're making progress must be operationalized, that we must demonstrate commitment through measurable outcomes. He ties assessment work to our earlier discussion on transformative vs. additive work, noting that we must continue to "peel the onion."

I acknowledge my surprise at not identifying assessment as a theme. It is clear as I review our transcripts that we discuss this throughout our time together. Ferd's methodology includes finding ways of *knowing* and he does this by implementing various kinds of measures that help him to gauge progress. This *knowing* is not only about Ferd's self-reflection, or his presence and his practice. It's also about knowing his constituents. Knowing, for Ferd, is core to his understanding connection to self and the communities through which he moves.

Spirituality

Ferd's spirituality plays a grounding role in giving him the opportunity to see different worldviews and appreciating how the variety in perspectives enrich his outlook. He is excited about the influences of multiple perspectives and recognizes the legitimacy these perspectives bring. He talks about his commitment to "breaking through to non-dualistic thinking" and how that is not an easy thing to do. I ask about a pivotal moment in his life where he experienced an event that changed the core of who he is. He describes this intense event:

> I was staying with a silent order of Trappist monks…part of my interest in sociology was to try to understand both cognitively and experientially the intersections between the mystical – enlightenment or spiritually divine… And then feeling like that in one particular setting, at a monastery, the sense of the world in its itness. Without experiencing your thoughts, but directly experiencing your world-moving beyond. Our minds are seen as dualistic, including the most basic-me as separate from the universe–having a powerful flash of insight into that not being the case-a construct. The notion of me as separate was a construct and not at all reality. That was a powerful experience.

I share with Ferd that while he acknowledges multiple identities, this notion of spirituality is not focused upon as if it more than a backdrop. Yet, it is present, thematically, throughout our discussions. I ask whether it is part of the background or a more prominent feature in the composition and complexity that makes up Ferd.

I think spirituality has been an animating dimension of the excitement of this kind of work. For me, starting off as an anthropologist and sociologist, one of the things that was exciting about difference, was the opportunity to take on a different worldview or spiritual orientation and the idea when you know you are an anthropologist and you're trying to understand a society that is so different from you and then as you become familiar with it on the inside you can see how its coherent, how it's different and how it works.

Ferd is clear that spirituality has contributed to how he feels about learning about differences in other individuals and groups. He continues on what is at the core of his excitement about these discoveries.

That's a big part of the excitement about incorporating different voices and different worlds – is that you move from, "Ooh gee, isn't that alien and strange, and not like me," to "[oh my] isn't that fascinating"? And it works for the people within who hold to that worldview or that different cultural orientation. It makes sense - it's like when I go to the intercultural communications institute - and they talk about, "This is about trying to understand…as opposed to standing back and saying, "They are different therefore they are less than…" That actually, when you get into them, they make sense – given the history, the set of experiences – the richness of life. And a lot of that has its origins and fascinations with religious traditions… you know how does different religious orientations to the world works – my PhD is in environmental sociology – and just the fascination for the various religious forms and how they can view the worldviews of people and actions… so what it brings to me is the notion of legitimacy – even if it's not the perspective I hold – it enriches us when we understand them – and the sadness when those worldviews and perspectives have been shut out of the dialogues is limiting.

Ferd concurs that the "spiritual dimensions" he has explored, which are different than the one into which he was born, is important to him "in terms of [the] excitement about why" different perspectives and worldviews would be included in our work, our teaching, and our learning.

I ask Ferd to take a step back and reflect upon our conversations. What have we not discussed? He tells me that he is interested in the intersections on college campuses between "diversity work and sustainability work." Ferd believes these "animating ideologies" should "not be thought about separately" and that they are "highly

interdependent" upon each other. Reflecting on our conversations he concludes with strong perspective on how his life partner's work influences his own work. Ferd says "it's a movement from me to we; my identity is intertwined." A set of shared values, and a strong commitment to those values, has been cultivated harmoniously throughout the many years shared thus far.

Concluding Thoughts

As I look back on the discussions Ferd and I shared, I was inspired by his commitment. Ferd was preparing to retire yet our discussions were alive with presence. Ferd's commitment to his work extended beyond his formal position as Vice President at College of the Pines. He had plans and desires to do more with regard to the intersections between diversity and sustainability. He sought opportunities to impact others through his work in the regional and national associations to which he belongs. There was no end in sight for Ferd, despite being on the brink of retirement.

Ferd and I spent more time developing the themes than we did on his life story. Although he provided anecdotes and a summary which painted a backdrop of his history, our conversation gravitated toward how Ferd made meaning of his experiences. He traced his identity development through rich descriptions of strife amongst fellow classmates and family members. He reflected back on incidents that informed and provided context around why he took up diversity and justice work early into his college experience. Environmental and societal factors were immensely influential and were the impetus for Ferd's lifelong commitment to education.

Ferd's story encompassed layers of critical consciousness that have led to transformative practice. I end with his story because I was inspired by the level of action

embedded in his practice. The examples Ferd brings to light in his story were indicators of action.

Composite Story

Several commonalities and similarities existed across the participants' stories. Significant was the role that **personal history** played in participants' growth and development. In two participants' stories, Hannah's and Ferd's, negative experiences early in their life histories had marked imprints on them. Their familiarity with being targeted and mistreated by family or peers resulted in the development of empathy and increased understanding around issues of inequity. Both Hannah and Ferd put those experiences in the proper context and were quick to acknowledge the incidents for what they were, but not as a comparison to others who experienced racism. Both Jay and Ferd discussed the influence and the importance of their genealogical heritage, linking it to identity, yet compartmentalizing this heritage with regard to their identity as white persons. Three participants, Hannah, Ferd, and Jay, articulated a-ha moments that infiltrated their early years and helped them come to an understanding of privilege and where they located themselves in the construct of power. Health and wellness had a significant impact on three of the participants. Elizabeth and Jay experienced cancer and how it influenced and altered their perspectives and worldviews. Ferd experienced illness through his wife and life partner, having a profound impact upon his more recent years. Gender rebellion was present in Elizabeth's youth, while gender oppression in Ferd's family left a lasting impression on him.

All participants discussed to varying degrees their **multiple dimensions of identity**. Sometimes a particular identity arose over the others depending upon the

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context of the situation. Identity was fluid, changing, and new layers were developed throughout the participants' lives. Professional identity was also multilayered. Participants saw themselves as educators and administrators, with nuances attached to how they made meaning of these roles. No participants identified as social justice or anti-racism educators, although they all believe the work is embedded in their practice. These were not identities they were willing to claim, yet they were all forthcoming in the ways in which they infuse justice and anti-racism work into their daily practice.

Terminology use was an important discussion item amongst all participants. The terms participants used to identify themselves in their professional roles were not the terms I used to invite them into the study. Yet they identified enough with the chosen terms to elect to participate in the study. During our discussions, this came up numerous times. Although participants acknowledged their distaste for the terms social justice educator, anti-racism educator, and culturally competent, it was not because of the meaning behind the terms. The meanings behind the terms were relevant and important to them as individuals and as related to their practice as white student affairs educators. Their distaste had to do with what has become of these terms today in higher education. They discarded these terms because they have become watered down, buzz phrases that are given lip service in our mission and visions statements, but with little action attached.

All participants expressed an ability to be **present** in their practice. They all acknowledged meaningful experiences as a result of being "in the moment" working through diversity and inclusion initiatives. The impetus for their desire and attention toward being present was varied. Ferd and Jay identified as spiritual beings, recognizing the influence of this spirituality and naming it as foundational to their practice. Elizabeth

and Hannah found their presence through the individuals with whom they work and for whom they advocate. Their presence was realized in the discovery of stories. Further, Hannah's ability to be present manifested itself through her devotion to art as a medium for social justice. All participants developed varying abilities to be able to reflect upon "how they showed up" in their communities, how they were perceived and how they needed to shift their actions to be more inclusive.

While all four participants articulated their responsibility and accountability for addressing racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression, they recognized the **influence** of others on their knowledge, skills and abilities. All participants named sources of inspiration, education and influence. Often colleagues played this influential role, but family, friends, readings, and teachings also had significant impact on their continual growth and development. All participants saw themselves as something larger, participants in communities committed to positive change. They acknowledge their spheres of influence and were determined to measure impacts through various formal and informal methods.

Although not a theme developed throughout the process, it was clear that all participants were engaged reflexively in the telling of their stories. Their analysis permeated the discussion and unfolded simultaneously to the story itself. They were challenged to think deeper about these topics and their own practice. Each articulated places in which they were halted in their development or understanding of self and other. They spoke of the challenges within sociocultural and sociopolitical spaces and illuminated moments of confusion and clarity. As they worked toward a more developed understanding of privilege and power, one commonality was foundational. Muddy and

messy, the unfolding of their stories mirrored the practice itself. No prescriptions or guidelines from which to pave a clear path existed. The work itself requires ongoing reflection and attention.

All participants pronounced their dedication to further growth and development through action, reflection and immersion. All participants were able to find themselves along a never ending continuum, striving to stretch themselves to grow further, learn more, and diminish their negative imprints on individuals and larger communities. All participants declared there is no end in sight. Their work, impacts, reflections, and dedication were nestled within a larger commitment to vigilantly address their identity as white student affairs educators striving to use privilege and power to positively influence their higher education communities.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not address the issue of critical consciousness and action-oriented practice. Based on the types of interview questions I asked and the topics covered in our time together, the participants shared significant details about their formative years, their perspectives on the topics of justice, anti-racism practices, and their roles and responsibilities as student affairs educators. While there are lived examples of disrupting and interrupting racism and other forms of oppression, a fourth interview would have allowed for further exploration of how these participants bring their critical consciousness into the workplace. How do their identity, background, and experience inform their demonstration of commitment to justice and inclusive practices? This was an area not addressed to the fullest extent possible.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to develop personal narratives of white social justice and anti-racism educators who have increased their understanding of social justice and made meaning of their roles in higher education. More research was needed to understand the experiences of white student affairs educators who chose to immerse themselves in social justice and anti-racism work. By way of introduction, I will provide a recap of the first four chapters. First, this chapter will discuss the findings as related to the literature. Second, a summarization of findings linked to the primary research questions will be presented. Third, recommendations for future research will be addressed. Fourth, I will provide a reflective perspective from both practitioner and researcher lens.

Chapter Recap and Summary

In Chapter One, I presented the research problem, the purpose of the study, primary research questions, and the significance of the study. This study sought to develop personal narratives of white student affairs educators who have increased their understanding of social justice and made meaning of their roles in higher education. This study explored their journey toward becoming culturally competent leaders at institutions of higher education. The primary research questions guiding this study were: How did white social justice educators describe and make meaning of their roles in higher education? What influences (and critical incidents) contributed to their journey toward becoming culturally competent leaders? Through a qualitative paradigm, specifically using narrative inquiry as the research design, this study illuminated the stories of white

social justice educators and their experiences with identity, recognizing privilege and power dynamics and how those aspects impact their roles in higher education. Researcher perspective and bias was addressed as well. Chapter Two reviewed the literature on critical white studies, identity development models, multicultural competence and social justice. Critical white studies was outlined and a part of the conceptual framework guiding this study. Its primary tenet seeks to not only understand the social context in which we live and work, but to instigate some form of positive change. Supporting the tenets of CRT and bringing suppressed stories, or counter narratives, to light adds to our understanding of the racialized world around us. Identity development models (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1984, 1990, 1994; Ponterotto, 1993; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Goldberg & Levin, 2002; Jones & McEwen, 2000) were presented and summarized in order to provide some context applicable to the study. Multicultural competence and social justice in Student Affairs practice was explored because of its relevance to the study framework.

Chapter Three reviewed the overall design, approach and rationale for the study. Population selection was addressed and included a purposeful sampling method using a regional professional association network and its relevant knowledge communities to recruit participants. Participants were also recruited through direct contact with multicultural services departments at universities in the Northwest and Western region. Snowball sampling occurred as well. Sites varied per participant. Data was gathered through a series of three interviews with each of the four participants. Thematic, holistic and categorical content approaches were used to analyze the data (Lieblich, et al., 1998;

Riessman, 2008). Trustworthiness was addressed and mechanisms were in place to ensure the study was sound in design.

Chapter Four presented the participants stories. Each story was presented in a way that allowed the reader to join and participate as the story unfolded. I introduced the participants, using their voices to richly describe, through critical incidents and memories, their life histories and current practice. A focus on identity, privilege, social justice, and cultural competence wove together the threads of their stories. Together, the participants and I co-constructed and developed themes and sub themes from their stories.

Findings and the Role of the Literature

Mercer and Cunningham (2003) said that more research was needed as to how critical life events impacted positive and/or negative white identity development. Their study with white college students underscored the position that white identity development cannot be fully measured through the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale. Rather, dimensions of white identity can be examined. This is significant because the WRIAS has been "unquestionably accepted" by many researchers (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003, p. 220). The authors suggested a multidimensional approach to measuring white identity be used. This study contributed to the body of literature by illuminating how white student affairs educators, through critical incidents and educational experiences were able to develop positive identities resulting in life commitments to inclusive and intentional practice. This section connects the findings to the literature in order to underscore the relevance of the thematic developments.

The review of literature was broken in to two segments. Inquiry Domain I summarized literature addressing the foundational research on critical white studies, including the construction of whiteness, and applicable models of identity development. Inquiry Domain II reviewed literature related to multicultural competence, including tenets of privilege, and social justice as a practice in the life of Student Affairs professionals.

Critical White Studies

As Giroux explained, critical white studies is important in education particularly for white student affairs educators who aspire toward anti-racism practices because:

> Analyzing whiteness opens a theoretical space for teachers and students to articulate how their own racial identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture and what responsibilities they might assume for living in a present in which Whites are accorded privileges and opportunities (though in complex and different ways) largely at the expense of other racial groups (p. 314).

All participants were able to articulate how race privilege was experienced in their lives and in their work. In response to Hartmann's (2009) position that whites cannot see race as a problem unless they see themselves as part of it, the participants were all able to locate themselves along various constructs. Further, the participants were all in, as Ferd coined, "stages of recovery," from racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression. All participants were able to see the "other" and understand their relationship to "other," thereby underscoring Delgado and Stefancic's (1997) premise that whites need to be able to understand nonwhiteness in order to become more aware of themselves and how their privilege impacts and marginalizes others. Because the participants were able to critically analyze their own whiteness, it gave them space to move toward anti-racism practices (Aveling, 2004). Participants' ability to see oppression in various

contexts within and beyond their communities, coupled with their ability to articulate, to certain extents, their responsibility for combating oppression, demonstrated their critical consciousness. All participants understood their power, both personally with regard to race privilege and in their privileged positions as educators in predominantly white institutions of higher education. Participants were drawn to this study because of their investment in social change. Their perspectives and actions support and provide a parallel to Doane and Bonilla-Silva's (2003) stance that only by "becoming fully conscious of whiteness can we develop progressive action toward the goal of racial justice (p. 33)."

Identity Development

Identity development models provided a framework from which to reflect while analyzing how participants make meaning of self and their relationships with the communities in which they learn and live. Participants' ability to "continuously engaged in a process of uncovering how white skin privilege shapes who we are and how we are related to the world around us (Goldberg & Levin, 2009, p. 5)," was witnessed in their in depth exploration in the interview process. That self-examination in itself supports identity development scholars premise that identity development is a continual and ongoing process. Participants were able to describe where they were in their development and all articulated they had much more work to do in this area. All participants illustrated challenges they had coming to terms with their own whiteness, highlighting experiences and incidents that helped them to move along the continuum of development, toward Immersion-Emersion and Autonomy (Helms, 1990). All participants were able to acknowledge their whiteness; acknowledge the unearned privileges associated; live with the conflict between white as racial power and multiple layers of white identity; and,

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work to "deconstruct a singular, monolithic whiteness" (Eichstedt, 2001, p. 447). Goldberg and Levin's (2002) Radical White Identity Model was perhaps the most applicable to these findings. Participants' ability to understand white privilege, examine ethnic, religious and cultural roots, analyze the intersections of their multiple identities, and articulate how anti-racism has been infused into their practice was captured throughout their stories.

All participants discussed their multiple and intersecting identities. Race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and their many various roles all played into their sense of self and how they saw themselves as part of the communities in which they move and society at large. While participants identified various points in which certain identities emerged over others, always present was the recognition of the interconnectedness between their multiple identities.

Supporting Owen's (2009) conclusion that white educators in positions of leadership must be cautious in how they present themselves, their knowledge and their understanding of oppression, participants in this study led teams with humility, vulnerability, and an openness to multiple perspectives. Participants discussed their need to be able to critically reflect upon their presentation of self in their work. Often conflicting roles and nuances challenged them. Recall Ferd's acknowledgment of how he interacts with the world around him as cyclic. Institutions of higher education are microcosms of society and the patterns and movements are often reflected in the changes and emerging themes that are presented. Ferd said, "Ah yes, I've seen this before…" He was less surprised and more prepared to address and advocate for an emerging

population. Yet, he still had to be fully aware of his criticism and impatience and work hard to put it in check.

Beyond Multicultural Competence

Recall the use of the definition I adopted for the purpose of this study. Multicultural competence was defined as "the awareness, knowledge and skills needed to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant and productive ways (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004, p. 13)." All participants exhibited competence in their stories about their interactions with others. Although these variables, awareness, knowledge and skills, were still being developed, and will continue to be developed for years to come, all participants were able sift through how they contributed positively to various areas in their purview. From interactions with staff and students to reconstructing the way in which the built environments is inclusive, participants shared many examples of deliverables. The fear of the unknown and of not having enough information, data, and knowledge did not prevent these educators from delving deeper into their practice, finding ways in which to be present and active on a daily basis.

Dialogue can occur without action. It is certainly important to have awareness and knowledge. But without skills and action, dialogue becomes empty words. In higher education, faculty and staff spend an enormous amount of time exploring concepts, developing rubrics, and sharing philosophies. Appropriate terminology can be learned and might indicate some semblance of cultural competence, but the action component is more important and must go deeper than words. Critical consciousness is imperative for the action required to prompt change. Recall Kolchin (2002) who criticized scholars for concentrating on representations of whiteness instead of lived experiences and for

ignoring other forms of oppression. The participants were explicit in differentiating between dialogue and action. Moving beyond dialogue and demonstrating commitment through action was imperative for all participants. Although invested in levels of knowledge, understanding and skill development, all participants discussed the importance of being able to demonstrate commitment through action. Barriers, perceived and actual, permeate the ability to walk the talk in this work. Individuals can become immobilized by numerous challenges: guilt, lack of knowledge, fear of doing or saying the wrong thing, and many others. Participants illuminated the need to accept the presence of vulnerability and failure, for both allowed them to acknowledge their inadequacies and persevere.

While there was still relevance to the application of multicultural competence to their work and their practice, the participants and I embraced a more developed way of thinking about our practice. Multicultural consciousness was a more appropriate way to capture the lived experiences and action-oriented practice that was demonstrated in this study. Each participant sought out opportunities for further development and challenge. They placed themselves in positions of being uncomfortable and relished the opportunity to grow. The participants found themselves eagerly in the midst of a developmental journey that had no end in sight.

Social Justice in Practice

Social justice in higher education is reserved for the elite who are able to tackle and overcome the layers of barricades that prevent many individuals from attending institutions of higher learning. Although the participants in this study have chosen student affairs and higher education as career choices, they were cognizant of their privileged

roles as practitioners in institutions of higher education. They acknowledged their spheres of influence were mostly within the confined walls of the institution. However, there was a conscious movement toward impacting communities beyond the "ivory tower." Participants recognized that activism and activist work takes place primarily in the communities and neighborhoods of our cities and towns. They did not attempt to inflate their own efforts at creating more inclusive educational environments. Outreach efforts to increase access to higher education were one way of bridging the gap between higher education and the rest of society. In-reach efforts included modifications to policy and protocols with attempts to dismantle the historical constructs in PWI's and was another way to influence change.

Although I set out using specific terminology to market and invite participants into this study, the chosen identifiers of social justice and anti-racism educator did not resonate with the participants. They identified in different ways and were not interested in using, as I inferred from several participants, trendy conventions to capture their work. What does this mean about the use of language in our work? Is this surface level discussion preventing us from a deeper commitment to an actionable practice? It was clear that the participants were focused less on the constructs around what it means to be an inclusive educator, and more focused on the individualized nature of their interactions and demonstrated commitment to those in need. This was seen in their methods, their practice, their involvement and their willingness to see themselves along a continuum of learning and development. Although sensitivity existed to put language in its place, a search for the "right" term to underscore their commitment was not at the core of their practice. While participants desired using the "right" terms and phrases, they were more

interested in ensuring their actions demonstrated their commitment. Language use as its own barrier was discussed at length. Knowing the appropriate words, the terminology, what can and cannot be said has become a primary focus in student affairs and higher education. The participants and I concluded that when this politically correct jargon becomes more important than the intentions behind our actions, it has potential to be debilitating. Educators can show their commitment if they say the "right" words and use the "right" labels, but this is a surface level demonstration. Student leaders can be trained to use all the "right" words, but how does this encourage them to critically examine themselves beyond acquiring a set of seemingly appropriate terms? Participants spoke about an authenticity behind the motivations for engagement in this work. They were fueled by love for humanity; fueled by passion for injustice. We must move beyond the discussions of politically correct terminology and deeper into meaningful discussions. "Why is it so hard to talk about diversity?" was a question prompted in Elizabeth's story that warrants additional exploration.

The participants were willing to put themselves "out there," to acknowledge ignorance and to continually seek ways to work toward justice using their privilege and power to effect positive change. They were committed to practice as the primary focus of their work. This meant being active, engaged and reflexive as they simultaneously continued to work toward integrated self-actualization. All participants strived to be more inclusive in their work, more challenging of others with whom they worked. They were committed to justice, whether environmental, economic, or social, beyond their outlined job responsibilities and requirements.

Research Question One: Summary of Findings

How did white social justice student affairs educators describe and make meaning of their roles in higher education?

Many connections were made between understanding white racial identity, recognition of privilege and power dynamics and positively impacting the workplace for the betterment of equitable outcomes as social justice educators. Developing these narratives helped uncover the pathways and experiences for developing white anti-racism identities for four educators who work at PWI's. The participants described many ways in which they made meaning of their various roles as educators at PWI's in the western United States. Overall, the stories provided insight into the history and background of the participants, illuminated their motivations, outlined their struggles, and dissected the resonant themes that connected their stories together.

Although all participants identified as white student affairs educators or administrators, the language I chose to use, "white social justice educators" and anti-racism educators" did not resonate with the participants. They described, in varying ways, the watering down of the meaning of these terms and acknowledged the terms had become "buzz words" in various sectors of the academy. An important distinction, the use of language in the research questions did not deter the participants from recognizing the need to categorize and label the study in such a way to draw ideal participants. Despite this acknowledgment, three of the participants understood the deeper meanings of these terms yet made a conscious choice to name their identities and discard these terms.

Eighteen themes in total were developed from the interviews across the four participants stories. Elizabeth's story produced four themes: Progressive and Continual Development, Contextualizing Identity and Differentiating Roles, Self Reflexivity, and Knowing the Individual Stories. The themes developed from Jay's story included Fluid Identities, Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness, Spirituality, and Action and Presence. Hannah's themes included Contextualized Identity, the Individual Stories, Presence through Art, and Core Values and Beliefs. Ferd's story generated themes of Responsibility and Accountability, Transformational Practice, Campus Ecology, Justice, Assessment, and Spirituality. Four themes that were common among two or more participants included Identity: Context and Fluidity, the Individual's Story, Spirituality, and Presence. These themes were discussed in depth both in the stories themselves and also in the composite story.

Howard (2006) mentioned that some researchers stated that enough had already been written about Whiteness. Howard was encouraged that more and more research examined Whiteness and that white educators were talking about struggles with racial identity development. Howard called for an expansion of this research. He stated "we cannot begin to dismantle the legacy of dominance without first engaging Whites in a deep analysis of our own role in perpetuating injustice (p. 99)." This study provided significant insight into four white student affairs educators' attempts at analyzing and making meaning of their identities and experiences.

Research Question Two: Summary of Findings

What influences, experiences, and critical incidents contributed to their journey toward becoming culturally conscious student affairs leaders?

As discussed earlier, my choice in language did not appeal to the participants. All participants articulated a preference for the phrase culturally conscious versus culturally competent. Competence suggested to them an arrival and an ending place, whereas consciousness allowed them to acknowledge the ongoing and continual nature of their progression.

Participants shared their life histories by way of chapter summaries and anecdotal memory recall. As they traced their histories, highlights, lowlights, critical incidents and memorable influential experiences were shared. Influences, both positive and negative, included family, friends, co-workers, students, colleagues, mentors, and teachers. Impacting incidents, readings and scholarly writings, research and professional development experiences also proved influential along each participant's life path.

Experiences were vast, deep and varied between participants. All participants shared the common experience of education, higher education. All participants had completed terminal degrees in various subjects, and all participants are current practitioners at various levels in student affairs in institutions of higher education. This immersion in the Academy undoubtedly influenced and motivated participants. Most participants had significant experiences throughout their early years that piqued awareness, thereby contributing to a personal search for meaning with regard to identity, and where they located themselves in their various constructs, whether in their personal or professional circles. Failure and perseverance were bookends, allowing participants to move through and reflect upon the ways they could learn from mistakes. All participants found solace in their ability to get back up, challenge themselves again to do better and

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do more. Each took something different from the shared experiences, and became stronger because of these experiences.

Critical incidents played a significant role in participants' development of healthy identities. In various stages throughout their lives, incidents proved pivotal in their abilities to grow as white student affairs educators. Their understanding of the ways in which they contribute to the structures that support the dominant paradigm were realized and attempts were made to minimize negative impacts. All participants underwent transformation and acknowledged the ongoing responsibility to continue challenging themselves to think critically about their presence and impacts.

Reciprocity

Because the participants gave a great deal of time and energy to this study, I discussed with each participant ways in which I might give back to them or their campus. Several possibilities existed to address reciprocity. As part of a regional community, I suggested to participants the creation of a dialogue group to continue these conversations with other interested colleagues. This would occur at regional and national conferences or as drive-in discussions. Depending on the campus need, I offered to work with campus diversity initiatives in the form of coming to campus to deliver a workshop with educators or present at a campus forum on related issues. I offered to each participant, taking into consideration confidentiality issues, to present the results of this study to an appropriately identified audience. Co-authoring articles and co-presenting at conferences was another possibility explored.

Recommendations for Future Research

For the researcher interested in a study of this nature, I provide some suggestions on the tenets I would keep and those I would change. There are multiple ways to gather life histories. My chosen method for interview one produced interesting and rich data. While I would not change this choice, I would suggest delving into the multiple ways to conduct this important inquiry and selecting a method that is meaningful. I also found it insightful to have spent time with participants in their places of work, their offices, and the buildings they inhabit. Touring their respective campuses allowed additional observation while I took in their environments and surroundings. The opportunities for observation presented themselves and I took advantage of the offered gift on each campus.

Another perspective I would be remiss in not sharing is to be mindful of the process of research as well as the product. Throughout the research process I spent much time in a reflexive state. This proved useful throughout all stages of conducting this study. At times, I got stuck, felt overwhelmed, or became blurry eyed and "muddy" in my perspectives and ability to progress. The reflexive process was as important as the data collected and the recreation of these stories. At one point, I questioned whether to include a particular story. I reconciled this through the realization that this particular participant and her story had something to offer the reader just entering a process of self-examination in issues of privilege and power. At another point in the process, I was concerned about the depth of one of the stories. I reconciled this concern by, to use a phrase Jay has given me, albeit in a different context, "sitting in the darkness." I wrestled with where I began and ended in this journey and whether to merge the complexities around language. I

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ultimately came to the realization that the stories are the stories. There is no mold or template to follow. They emerged and developed the way they did, for all the right reasons. I resolved my concerns, my struggles, my perceived and actual barriers by taking the needed space to immerse myself in a reflexive process.

Consider strongly the choice and use of language and phrases as you design the study. This study underscored, through participants perspectives about diversity and higher education, that "buzz words" have become prevalent in our discussions surrounding issues of diversity, justice and inclusivity. As they emerge in our vernacular and become expectations in our work without clearly defining what is substantive, these watered down terms become meaningless. Further I would suggest strong consideration be given to how many interviews you choose to conduct. As mentioned in the composite story, I would like to have conducted a fourth set of interviews with each participant. This would have allowed for increased attention to how participants are active in the disruption of racism and other forms of oppression. This is an area worth further exploration.

This study produced a set of narratives that illuminated the experiences of white student affairs educators who were open to critical and self-reflexive examination, and were willing to talk about how they made meaning of their roles in higher education. A focus on justice and inclusivity in their spheres of influence provided insight as to how these educators addressed their own privileges and how they influenced the ways in which these educators "showed up" in their practice. Their experiences and willingness to vulnerably expose their challenges, their hopes and their successes resulted in a set of counter narratives to the body of literature that exists about the roles and experiences of

white student affairs educators. This research adds to the gap of literature addressing the practice of empowered white student affairs educators and their demonstrated commitment to social justice. It was my intention to contribute to the scholarly discourse and attempt to underscore the important role white identified administrators and educators have in diminishing and reversing the long standing effects of institutional and individual racism.

Further research might explore how white student affairs educators who strive toward inclusive practice impact their communities. How are they perceived within their communities, how is their impact felt or seen or known? A contribution to the literature that addresses why it's important that educators and administrators understand their own identity would be important. Jones (1997) addressed ten different aspects that she believed influence an individual's core identity. She explored multiple dimensions of identity in female college students and constructed a model that is applicable to all (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Emerging theories and applications of identity as multidimensional are worth exploring at a deeper level.

Another possibility for future research lies in how white student affairs educators who are immersed in justice and inclusivity can create networks and communities outside and beyond their spheres of influence. Additionally, research is needed to address how white student affairs educators can positively influence and impact institutional policy and protocol, colleagues and other workgroups, and assist in creating more inclusive environments for the many beneficiaries of higher education. Studies about the positive and negative impacts educators have had on students – directly or indirectly – would be useful to support the premise.

Other researchers suggested additional areas of future study. Pope-Davis and Ottavi (1992) suggested research be done in the future to evaluate variables such as faculty demographics, staff demographics, on racial identity attitudes – cultural assumptions, levels of acculturation and the impact of socioeconomic status (p. 394).

In her chapter *Reflections on White Identity Development Theory* (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001), Hardiman acknowledged the important contributions made to date on white identity and whiteness as areas of study. She stated that research needs to be done on factors that affect the way whites deal with their identity – whether the abandonment of racist ideals and privilege or proponents of "'English only movements', 'standards', 'family values', and other codes for race-based privilege (p. 122)." She also encouraged future research to focus on what group or groups whites belong to at a cultural level, indicating that there is more to a culture of whiteness than superiority, dominance and racism. Hardiman suggested four additional areas of focus for white identity research: 1) White Identity Development models should address how whites feel, think and reflect upon their whiteness, 2) How do whites experience ethnicity and of being part of a racial group, 3) What constitutes a white cultural identification, and 4) Are there ways whites have "responded to other groups' 'identity movements' that are not defensive, reactionary or oppressive (p.125)"?

<div align="center">**Practitioner and Researcher Reflections**</div>

Practitioner Reflections

This research project illuminated my never-ending journey to make meaning of my own privilege and subsequent power, and how it shows up in my practice. At the onset of my doctoral program, I knew I wanted to examine white student affairs

educators who imagined themselves enlightened and committed to social justice and anti-racism work. Did their journeys mirror mine? Did their moments of realization and understanding mirror mine? This interest and commitment toward my own self-exploration resulted in this study.

I recognize this study and the dissertation itself was an exercise of white privilege. My concern about conducting this study was the balance that must be struck with uncovering narratives of white educators using their privilege in action-orientated ways to impact change while not reifying whiteness by bringing these stories to the surface in the first place. A place of discord lies between suppressing other voices and surfacing these stories. My hope is that these stories will inspire other white educators to increase their responsibility for self-examination and critical consciousness.

My inner monologue was growing and becoming louder. Having been a diversity educator for five years, then moving into upper level administration as a generalist, I developed guilt about my departure from "the work." It used to be my job and my work. It is now only peripherally in my areas of responsibility. I wanted it back in my life and this was a way to reintroduce it and embed it into my practice. I'd lost touch with the stories of the students and the staff who comprise my focus. This methodology was chosen to spark and initiate a return to this focus of the individual story. I spent much time writing and reflecting in my research journal. This was a safe place for me to capture my insecurities, struggles and "a-ha" moments as a researcher. Here, I write about the important parallel in my own life with this narrative research project:

> The emerging parallel is profound to me. I am mirroring this method in my own practice-with students and with the staff. Their stories are important and significantly impact the work we do on behalf of [students]. We've gotten away from the story in higher education. We've become customer focused, data driven,

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framework associated-best practice affiliated. We've gotten away from the core of the human experience which is shared in a storied form.

Recall this perspective by Kim (2011), who acknowledged "there are more and more researchers, including practitioners, who employ narrative not only as a research methodology but also as a pedagogical tool in teaching and learning" (p. 82). As a practitioner, narrative inquiry allows for a fluid way at co-constructing and strengthening, through this research partnership, a community of educators with similar goals. It is this community for which I search.

I continue to reflect on my own progression as an educator in the field of Student Affairs, and my own struggle to maintain presence as I move progressively throughout the hierarchical organizational structures. I recall the job announcement for the position I currently hold. It read "demonstrated commitment to issues of power, privilege, and oppression," yet the commitment that I attempt to demonstrate is not *really* required for the position I hold. I struggle to be present in the work of my colleagues whose primary focus is on advocacy for the underrepresented, both student and voice.

Although I seek out opportunities for action-oriented engagement, I must continue to challenge myself to move beyond discussion into initiatives that ignite change. Whether policy, practice, programmatic endeavors, I have the privilege of using my knowledge and skills to positively impact change. I cannot remain silent. Silence has weighed on my heart and mind for several years as I struggled to figure out a way to bring this work back into my practice. It is not enough to know information. It is not enough to acknowledge competence through use of terms or applicable theories or constructs. My commitment must be demonstrated through action and direct involvement. I strive to reinvent myself and redefine my purpose as an inclusive educator

in all that I do, both personally and professionally. I aspire to "show up" like the participants in this study and find my spheres of influence. They are my inspiration.

Researcher Reflections

There were numerous hurdles over which I had to leap throughout the research process. Despite the preparations I'd made every step of the way, I found myself second-guessing my competence with my chosen methodology. The first challenge I faced was with the recruitment process. I put out a call for participants as articulated in chapter three. The one thing I did not anticipate was for my call for participants to travel virally. I had an interested participant reach out to me from Switzerland. I was not prepared for the call to go beyond the identified region and neglected to ensure that if it did, the materials outlined the geographic region to which I was committed. While the interest level was exhilarating and encouraging, the follow up required significant time and energy.

I fumbled sometimes in the interview process, trying to search for the right ways to ask questions, often revising them awkwardly mid-sentence. There were times in the analysis process when I realized I'd not followed up on something that was important to a participant. Missed opportunities abounded and I had to simply move through them one at a time.

One of the most incredible discoveries as a researcher was coming to terms with the complexities around language use. As the study unfolded, the participants and I adopted different terminology to better represent how we made meaning of certain concepts. At the beginning of the study I used the term *cultural competence*. Toward the middle of the interviewing process, it became clear that the term *cultural consciousness* was more appropriate and relevant to both the participants and myself. The process of

coming to clarity around resonant terminology assisted in my own skill development throughout the research project.

The first time I reached out to the participants after writing first drafts of their stories, I received feedback from Hannah. She said my choice to use first person in delivering the stories was "interesting and unsettling." I was alarmed although ironically I agreed. I circled back to her sharing my rationale for the use of first person: I wanted the reader to join me in hearing the story as it unfolds. The feedback provided by the participants was critical to the development of their stories. Although it was difficult and I held on to some fear around this part of the process, I was very transparent with the participants about the choices I made throughout their stories.

Reflexivity was critical through the research process. While the participants displayed this as a theme in their own work and lives, I employed a high level of reflexivity during this study. I had to remain present while being able to step outside of myself and "see" what was unfolding while I was in the middle of the process. This was not always easy to do. For example, during at least two of the interviews, I was incredibly in tune to the conceptual framework guiding this study, and I found myself re-crafting questions that seemed more relevant than the natural progression of discussion with the participant. While unfortunate, as I missed out on some wonderful possibilities of further exploration, what I learned as a researcher was profound. Reflexivity itself became an artistic approach within narrative inquiry. Perhaps the best example of being immersed in the data while simultaneously reflecting upon the research process was the development of the poems. By taking a conscious and mindful step back from the narratives as a whole ended in the creation of the interpretive poems that introduced each story. The

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development of these poems was derived from a long period of silent reflection about the participant, the observations from which I was able to draw, and the research process itself.

I was humbled knowing that it must have been difficult to read a co-construction and interpretive reproduction of their stories. The participants were gracious in their feedback about accuracy and misunderstandings. They did not hold back as we analyzed how they made meaning of the constructs that together, informed their practice. Their gifts made this process rewarding. I am grateful to them for the time they took in sharing their lives, their struggles, their journeys and their hopes and dreams.

As I end this chapter, I recognize I am beginning a new chapter as a white educator and practitioner, recommitting to dialogue and action. I hope this research project invites others to join the conversation, move beyond conversation, toward action. For action is the core of what must take place in order for true change to occur in our institutions of higher learning. To truly embrace others, we must know them, understand who they are, what happened along their journey to inform who they have become. We must listen loudly and suspend our own disbelief to embrace the unknown. For me, this is only the beginning.

Final Thoughts and Call to Action

Before I entered the research process, I knew I wanted to conduct a study that had the potential of inciting action. Whether individually or collectively, I wanted to deliver a meaningful product that was compelling and relevant to others who are interested in deepening their commitment to social justice and anti-racism practices. From the reader who simply wants to ingest the stories of others to the reader who finds themselves

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somewhere along the continuum of development, this study is relevant beyond higher education. If we begin conversations about these topics in our educational systems from pre-kindergarten, through the primary and secondary years, the likelihood of normalizing the difficulty and challenges around unpacking privilege and power becomes greater. Embedding critical discussions and analyses of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation into educational curriculum and co-curriculum requires thoughtful intentionality and astute facilitators. Yet, we cannot wait to develop the formula for how to do this. We must lean into the awkward and messy practice and bring the discussions to light. I hope you find inspiration to look within, challenge yourself to think critically about the work you have done and the work you have left to do to leave this world a better place than how you found it.

Endnote

Chapter One

1. There exist many perspectives about the use of language in the context of privileged racial identities, specifically, to capitalize or not to capitalize the word (W)white. Many scholars capitalize the word White (Hughes & Giles, 2010; Owen, 2009; Bordas, 2007; Goldberg & Levin, 2007; Watt, 2007; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2007; Anderson & Middleton, 2005; Manglitz, et al. 2005; Goodman, 2001; and Clark & O'Donnell, 1999). Many do not (Tochluk, 2008; Jackson, 2006; Allen, 2004; Yancy, 2004; Kivel, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 1997; Feagin & Vera, 1995; and Frankenberg, 1993). I am a white educator striving toward a holistic identity as a white anti-racism and social justice educator. I began my journey into this research capitalizing White to indicate the need to recognize White as a racial group with privilege. I thought only with that recognition could I begin to dismantle the power that lies within the dominant group. However, as I reviewed the literature, I find myself switching back and forth within the argument. If I capitalize Black or African American and not white, am I contributing to racializing those populations and not whites, thereby positioning whites in the center of the discussion and further marginalizing the oppressed? While I continue to struggle through this inner monologue and exploration, in this research proposal, I use a lower case w (except in those cases using direct quotes). My reasoning is to transparently recognize our place in the social justice movement, in partnership and alongside our colleagues of color.

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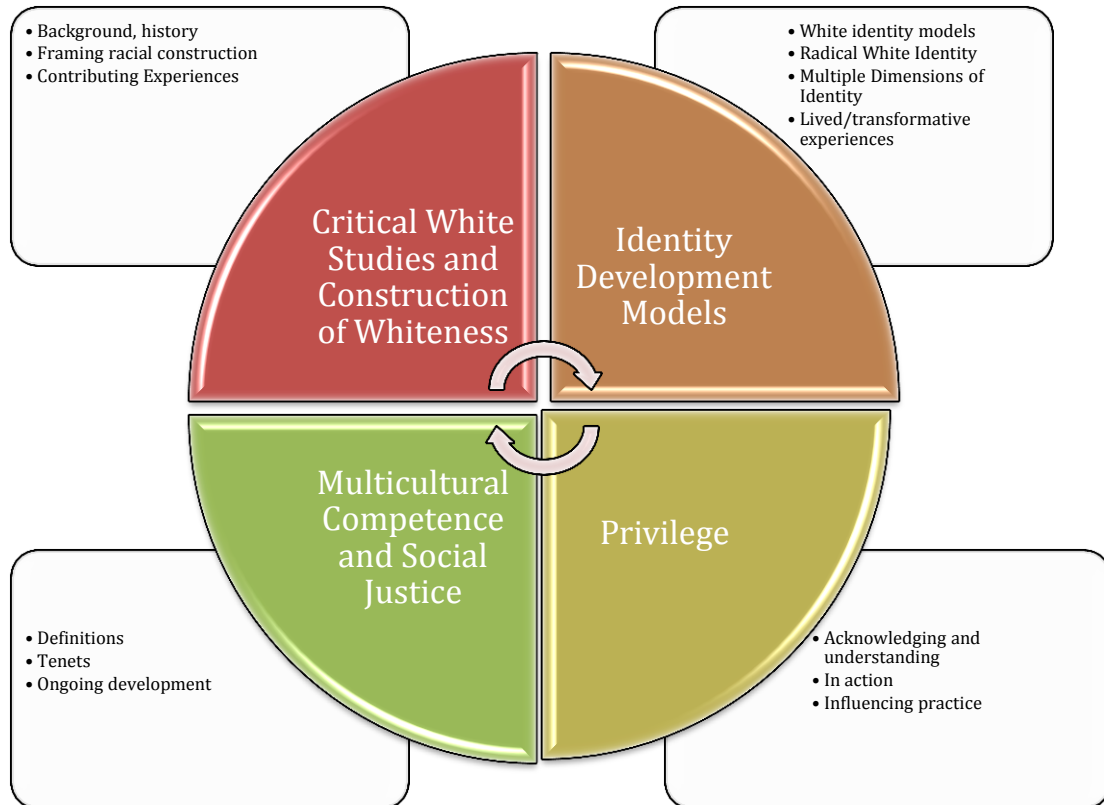Rath, T. (2007). *Strengths finder 2.0*. New York: Gallup Press.

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APPENDIX A: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Background, history
- Framing racial construction
- Contributing Experiences

- White identity models
- Radical White Identity
- Multiple Dimensions of Identity
- Lived/transformative experiences

Critical White Studies and Construction of Whiteness

Identity Development Models

Multicultural Competence and Social Justice

Privilege

- Definitions
- Tenets
- Ongoing development

- Acknowledging and understanding
- In action
- Influencing practice

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Colorado State University
Knowledge to Go Places

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: February 08, 2012

TO: Davies, Timothy, School of Education

Oltjenbruns, Kevin, 1588 School of Education, Webb, Leslie, School of Education

FROM: Barker, Janell, , CSU IRB 1

PROTOCOL TITLE: Making Meaning of Whiteness: Life Experiences that Inform Culturally Competent Leaders

FUNDING SOURCE: NONE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 12-3204H

APPROVAL PERIOD: Approval Date: February 08, 2012   Expiration Date: January 25, 2013

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Making Meaning of Whiteness: Life Experiences that Inform Culturally Competent Leaders. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

Janell Barker, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1655 Janell.Barker@Colostate.edu
Evelyn Swiss, IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381 Evelyn.Swiss@Colostate.edu

Barker, Janell

Barker, Janell

Includes:
Approval is for 6 participants using the approved consent form to obtain consent. If focus groups will be implemented, please submit the details and questions for IRB review and approval prior to contacting the participants.

Approval Period: February 08, 2012 through January 25, 2013

Review Type: EXPEDITED

Page: 1

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Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Making Meaning of Whiteness: Life Experiences that Inform Culturally Competent Leaders

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: TIMOTHY DAVIES, PHD, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, TIMOTHY.DAVIES@COLOSTATE.EDU

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: LESLIE J WEBB, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, ABD, LESLIEWEBB@BOISESTATE.EDU

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? You are invited to participate in this study because you fit the following profile: you identify as white; you currently work in a PWI of higher education; you acknowledge privilege and power dynamics; and, you are able to articulate a basic understanding of cultural competence. Additionally, you are willing to participate in three in-depth interviews over the course of three to four months.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? The researcher is a PhD student at Colorado State University and a practitioner in higher education. Dr. Tim Davies is the advisor and supervisory faculty member on this research project. As a researcher, I am interested to discover why some administrators take it upon themselves to intentionally incorporate social justice into their roles as educators? Additionally, how do administrators' experiences influence their administrative practice as social justice or anti-racism educators? What does this practice of active engagement look like?

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this study is to develop personal narratives of white social justice and anti-racism educators who have increased their understanding of social justice and made meaning of their roles in higher education. More research is needed to understand the experiences of white educators who choose to immerse themselves in social justice and anti-racism work.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? This study will take place at mutually agreed upon location. Three interviews over the course of three to four months will occur. A fourth interview is a possibility if we agree after the third interview that more time is needed to delve into the themes and key issues. The first interview will ideally take place at your work environment. Subsequent interviews may take place in person, via Skype or telephone. Each interview will last between 60-120 minutes (with the exception of the third interview which might go over 120 minutes to address any outstanding topics).

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
You will be asked to contribute to three in-depth interviews. The initial interview will focus on your background and life history. Influential experiences and people in your formative years will be explored. Identification of critical incidents and memorable experiences that shaped your world views and perspectives will be examined.

Second interview questions will delve more deeply into the descriptions and meanings of privilege, cultural competence, and social justice. The goal of the second interview is to dig into the actual practical examples of how privilege, cultural competence and social justice activism manifest themselves in practice. How you are actively participating in anti-racism or social justice work will be explore more thoroughly.

The third interview will focus on emerging themes from the first two interviews. In advance of the third interview, I will provide to you via email the manually coded transcriptions, analyses, and interpretations for your reflection, input, and verification. Follow-up on areas that warrant expansion in thought or clarification in content will take place. This interview might be longer than 90-120 minutes to allow time to accomplish the goals which include examining

together key issues, core categories and themes that have surfaced throughout the previous interviews. Finally, we will spend time during this interview discussing emerging themes as well as analyzing the meaning derived from the themes and key issues. During the latter part of the interview process, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in a focus group with at least two of the other participants. This will be explored if you articulate a desire to continue and expand these conversations in a setting mutually agreed upon. If at least three participants express interest in a focus group discussion, you will be notified and invited via email or phone after the individual interviews have concluded. The focus group would take place via web using Skype (or webinar technology) or in person at a mutually agreed upon location (such as a regional or national NASPA conference). If this comes to fruition, the focus group will address and analyze themes and meanings that emerged from the study.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? If you are not interested in the aforementioned topics, this might not be an appropriate study in which to participate.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
There are no known risks. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known benefits, however we hope our dialogue together will increase self awareness and reflexivity about the role and responsibility for addressing inequities at institutions of higher education. Additionally, our hope is to uncover some of the challenges white social justice educators face and strengthen the commitment to change and action oriented practice in Student Affairs and Higher Education.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WILL THIS SESSION BE TAPED? This session will be digitally audio taped and used for the sole purpose of the researcher. You will either choose or be given a pseudonym for this study. After the session is transcribed using only the assigned pseudonyms the digital recording will be erased/destroyed.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. As mentioned, pseudonyms will be used.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Leslie Webb at lesliewebb@boisestate.edu or 208-891-6458 or Timothy Davies, co-investigator and Advisor at timothy.davies@colostate.edu or 307-631-1112. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Consent Form, Page 3

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on February 8, 2012.

Your signature acknowledges you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing two pages.

_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____
Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____
Signature of Research Staff

APPENDIX D: LETTER TO GATEKEEPERS

Greetings Colleague;

My name is Leslie Webb, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Colorado State University. I am conducting a study with white identified social justice and anti-racism educators. The purpose of this study is to develop personal narratives of educators who have increased their understanding of social justice and made meaning of their roles in higher education. More research is needed to understand the experiences of white educators who choose to immerse themselves in social justice and anti-racism work.

I am requesting your assistance to help identify practitioners who fit this profile. If you can think of someone who comes to mind, please consider sharing this information with them or nominate them by contacting me directly. I will follow up with the nominated individual.

Specifically, I am interested in practitioners in the field of Student Affairs. Ideal participants will fit the following profile: participants identify as white; participants currently work in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) of higher education; participants acknowledge privilege and power dynamics; and, participants are able to articulate a basic understanding of cultural competence. Although participants' formal higher education position need not solely focus on social justice as a functional area, it must be a component in how they address their area of responsibility in their work. Participants will engage in three 90-120 minute long interviews over the course of a few months. This is a narrative inquiry and I will be employing a dialogic, co-constructed approach which means both the participant and researcher will engage in the process of discovery and meaning making. Participants' information will be confidential and pseudonym's will be used.

Please let me know if I can provide more information or if you would like to talk more about this opportunity. I can be reached at lesliewebb@boisestate.edu or (208) 891-6458. With appreciation,

Leslie J. Webb

Note: Dr. Tim Davies is the supervisory faculty member for this research project and can be reached at timothy.davies@colostate.edu or 307-631-1112.

APPENDIX E: INTEREST SURVEY

Colorado State University -- Research Study – Interest Survey

Title: Making Meaning of Whiteness: Life Experiences that Inform Culturally Competent Leaders

Greetings,

Please take some time to respond to the questions below in no longer than a one page narrative.

1) Describe the progression of your professional experiences and how you were led to your current position?
2) Why did you become engaged in social justice or anti—racism education? What makes this a reality for you?
3) Share your perspective (briefly) on power and privilege dynamics in the communities in which you work.
4) How does cultural competence play a role in your work?
5) Are you willing to share your thoughts and perspectives through three in depth interviews during January and February or March 2012?

Please share your responses by emailing me at lesliewebb@boisestate.edu . If you have any questions or would like to discuss the parameters surrounding this study please contact me at (208) 891-6458. I appreciate your interest in this important topic.

Please note: Dr. Tim Davies is the supervisory faculty member for this research project and can be reached at timothy.davies@colostate.edu or 307-631-1112.