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The Role of Student Identity in Upward Bound Graduates Persistence in College

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THE ROLE OF STUDENT IDENTITY IN UPWARD BOUND GRADUATES

PERSISTENCE IN COLLEGE

by

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The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand the role of Upward Bound graduates' identities as students in their decision to persistence in college. The central research question for the qualitative case study was: What role do Upward Bound graduates' identities as students play in their persistence in college? Theories of persistence (Astin, 1984; Bean, 1980; Tinto, 1975) and identity development (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000) particularly, student identity centrality (Bowman & Felix, 2014), framed this study.

A multiple case study design was used. Four Upward Bound graduates who were currently enrolled in their second year of college were the cases in this study. Interviews, observations, and documents were collected and analyzed. Individual case studies were explored using rich, thick description.

The findings of this study included four convergent themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis. The themes included: (a) *being a student is one identity among many,* (b) *being a student is a means to an end,* (c) *students persist in the face of challenges,* and (d) *Upward Bound provides an environment conducive to forming a*

student identity. The most significant finding was that although student identity was important to all of the participants, high student identity centrality was not a critical component to persistence. In light of the findings, several recommendations are offered for college personnel, including: (a) recognize the multiple identities of students and provide opportunities for students to express their multiple identities; (b) help students discover and articulate their particular purpose or end goal for enrolling in college; (c) provide opportunities for exploration; (d) create small learning communities on campus and provide an environment where these students can study, work on homework, and utilize tutors; (e) provide students with mentors. Recommendations for Upward Bound staff, and others who work with college access programs, were also included: (a) help participants identify their motivations for pursuing a college degree, (b) provide opportunities for exploration, and (c) provide opportunities for participants to develop strong student behaviors.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Four and a half million low-income, first-generation students are currently

enrolled in post-secondary education (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Although enrollments have

been increasing over the past forty years (Jones, 2013; Desilver, 2014), Engle and Tinto

(2008) pointed out that "although there have been improvements in terms of access,

equality in the attainment of four-year college degrees remains elusive for low-income

and first-generation students" (p. 5). In fact, only 11% of low-income, first-generation

students earn a baccalaureate degree after six years (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Over the last

five years, my experience with low-income, first-generation students who participated in

an Upward Bound program provided the anecdotal stories that put a face and voice to the

reality of access, but too rarely success, for low-income, first-generation students. The

unacceptably low persistence and graduation rates of low-income, first-generation

students is alarming, both to me personally, as I watch students struggle to navigate in a

society that benefits those with a college degree (McCabe, 2000), and to me

professionally, as I try to figure out what can be done to increase the success of the

students I work with and care deeply about.

Considerable research has been conducted on low-income, first-generation

students' experiences in college (Arzy, Davies, & Harbour, 2006; Engle & Tinto, 2008;

Engle & O'Brien, 2007; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Gerardi, 2006; Pascarella, Pierson,

Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Terezini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001), but

despite all the research there continues to be significant achievement gaps for low-

income, first-generation college students. The challenges facing this population are

complex, and I share the view of Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek (2011), in that

we recognize "that students do not come to postsecondary education tabula rasa. Rather, they are the products of many years of complex interactions with their family of origin and cultural, social, political, and educational environments" (p. 3). Understanding the complexity of low-income, first-generation students' college experiences is essential to close the college completion gaps in the United States.

Context of the Study

The United States has set an ambitious goal to once again have the highest percentage of citizens with a postsecondary degree by 2020 (White House, n.d.) in the world. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (2010), 42% of Americans between the ages of 25-34 hold an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. A generation ago, this made the United States the most educated country in the world. However, other countries have since outpaced the United States; now, the U.S. is tied for ninth in the world for educational attainment. The U.S. federal government, as well as many private foundations, states, and postsecondary institutions, have put significant resources into increasing college completion rates.

Due to changing demographics in the U.S., there will continue to be an increase in the numbers of low-income, first-generation students going to college (Kim & Rury, 2007). Engle and Tinto (2008) expressed the importance of studying this population by stating,

> In order to increase degree attainment rates in this country, there must be a major effort to improve both postsecondary access and success among those populations who have previously been underrepresented in higher education, namely low-

income and minority students, many of whom will be the first in their families to go to college. (p. 6)

Bragg (2013) validated Engle and Tinto (2008) by stating, "the country will not achieve any completion goal without addressing the postsecondary needs of nontraditional learners, including ethnic and racial minorities and low-income, first-generation college students" (p. 35). Thus, research on low-income, first-generation students is important and timely as we get closer to the year 2020, but not closer to the goal. Upward Bound, a federal program in the Department of Education, is one such program designed to increase the rates of degree attainment for low-income, first-generation students. The research on the effectiveness of Upward Bound, however, is limited due to contradictory and controversial findings (Calahan & Goodwin, 2014).

In order to more deeply understand the college experiences of low-income, first-generation students who participate in an Upward Bound program, this study is framed within the current literature on theories of persistence and identity development. It is essential to understand the theoretical conceptual framework of persistence and the extensive literature that has examined and refined persistence theories throughout the last several decades. The common persistence factors that have been studied, which will be discussed in-depth in the following chapter, "have a surprisingly modest effect on persistence" (Bowman, 2014, para. 1). Effective practices, as identified by the research, have not resulted in a closure of the college completion gap, as evidenced by persistence rates that continue to be significantly lower for low-income, first-generation students compared to higher-income students with college-educated parents.

In light of the little empirical support for common factors that impact persistence, Bowman and Felix (2014) considered the concept of identity centrality and found that student identity centrality was associated with a greater commitment to persist. Identity centrality "refers to the chronic tendency to define oneself in terms of that identity" (Bowman & Felix, 2014, p. 5). Bowman and Felix (2014) used the concept of identity centrality in their persistence research because previous studies on identity centrality found that individuals with high identity centrality were more likely to engage in behaviors associated with that identity (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). In the case of student identity centrality, Bowman ad Felix (2014) hypothesized that individuals with high student identity centrality would be more likely to "socialize with other college students, participate in campus events, interact with faculty and staff, and spend substantial time studying and completing class assignments" (p. 7). Student identity centrality is a new concept to be applied to college persistence, and thus, the concept itself has not been well-defined or conceptualized. However, the findings from Bowman and Felix (2014) provide evidence that identity centrality does have a role in persistence, but since little research has looked at the interaction between student identity centrality and persistence, two major questions remain unanswered: (a) what does it mean to have a high student identity, and (b) how is student identity centrality formed? These questions can best be answered by exploring the students' experiences. Without the students' voices, it is unclear what high student identity centrality looks like and how educators can help students form a high student identity. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to include the missing students' voices in order to understand what it means to

have a high student identity centrality and how the Upward Bound program can facilitate the formation of student identity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand the role of student identity in Upward Bound graduates' persistence in college and if Upward Bound contributed to the development of student identity in any way. The central research question for the qualitative case study was: What role do Upward Bound graduates' identities as students play in their persistence in college? Additional research questions were:

1) What does it mean to have an identity as a student?

2) How do Upward Bound graduates describe their identities as students?

3) How central to their overall concepts of self are their identities as students?

4) How does their student identity intersect with other social identities?

Definition of Terms

Throughout the literature and this research study the term "student success" is used frequently. Student success has been defined in many ways. Kuh et al. (2011) dealt with defining "student success" and found multiple different measures of success in the literature. The researchers note that, traditionally, college success has been defined as student attainment, in the form of college GPA, persistence from freshmen to sophomore year, and degree completion. However, student success can also be measured in numerous ways beyond academic achievement, although they are harder to quantify. A few examples Kuh et al. (2011) provided include student satisfaction, personal development, knowledge acquisition and use, critical thinking, employment and post

college income, and civic engagement. For the purpose of this research study, student success was defined as persistence in college. Persistence has been extensively researched and is consistently used as a measure of student success in the literature (Upcraft, Lee, Gardner, Barefoot, 2004). Furthermore, persistence was selected as the outcome measure in this study because low-income, first-generation students are four times more likely to leave school after the first year than traditional students (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Persistence is also an outcome that mediates other outcomes, such as graduation (Wapole, 2007). *Persistence* is defined as "a student's postsecondary education continuation behavior that leads to graduation" (Arnold, 1999, p. 5). Therefore, students who completed one year of college and are currently enrolled were selected for this study.

The participants in the research study were graduates of a TRIO Upward Bound program. TRIO is a group of eight federal programs that originated in Higher Education Act of 1965 (Upward Bound Program, n.d.). The programs are designed to increase college enrollment and graduation rates for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities. Upward Bound works specifically with low-income and/or first-generation high school students in 9th to 12th grade. The goal of the Upward Bound program is to increase the rates at which these students enroll in and graduate from postsecondary institutions. Upward Bound programs provide academic instruction, tutoring, mentoring, cultural enrichment, financial literacy, and college preparation activities (See Appendix G). In 2013-2014, there were over 800 Upward Bound projects serving almost 60,000 students across the United States (Upward Bound Program, n.d.).

Many of the research articles in this literature review study low-income students or refer to low socio-economic status (SES) of students. SES is defined by the American Psychological Association (n.d.) as the "social standing or class of an individual or group" (para. 1). An individual's education, income, and occupation are measured together to determine SES. The term low-income will be used in the research study. *Low-income* can be defined in different ways, but for the purpose of this research study, low-income is defined as family income that does not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level, as established by the federal income guidelines and used by Upward Bound programs when determining eligibility (Office of Post-Secondary Education, 2014).

The term first-generation college student is also used frequently in the literature. First-generation can be defined in different ways, such as a student whose parents never went to college or students whose parents do not have any type of degree or certification. For the purpose of this research study, *first-generation college student* refers to a student whose parents or legal guardians have not earned a Bachelor's degree (Engle & Tinto, 2008). This does not preclude students whose parents are currently enrolled in college or students whose parents have a certificate or Associate's degree. This definition of first-generation was selected because it is the definition used to determine entry in to an Upward Bound program, as established by the Department of Education (Upward Bound, n.d.).

Significance

In this study, I explored the identities of Upward Bound graduates, the centrality of those identities, and the impact of identity on college persistence. Student identity centrality, the guiding framework for this study, is a new concept in the persistence

literature that has not yet been studied extensively. Thus, this study builds on the emerging student identity centrality research by applying this concept to Upward Bound graduates. Understanding the role of identities and how programs like Upward Bound can help form and develop students' identities provides implications for Upward Bound program staff and college personnel that may help increase persistence for this population.

Overview of the Study

In order to understand the experiences of Upward Bound graduates, their multiple identities, and the role of student identity on college persistence, a multiple case study was conducted. Each student was considered a "case" and the phenomenon was the role of identity in relation to persistence in college. After analyzing each case separately, cross-case analysis was conducted to discover convergent and divergent themes. By conducting a multiple case study, several perspectives on the same phenomenon were revealed, thereby, creating a deeper, more complete picture than a single case-study would have allowed. A multiple case study was an appropriate methodology for this research project because it allowed for a deep, holistic understanding of the participants' experiences.

The sampling frame for this study was a single Upward Bound program located at a small, private college in the Midwest, which is referred to as Midwest College. The cases in the study were selected based on the following selection criteria: (a) students who have graduated from the Midwest College Upward Bound program, (b) students enrolled in a four-year college or university, (c) students who completed one year of college, and (d) students who were identified as both low-income and first-generation at

time of entry in to the Upward Bound program. Four participants were selected from the pool of eligible students. Maximal variation sampling was pursued, but of the seven potential participants, only four were willing and able to participate.

The case studies were developed from two interviews, an observation, and review of several documents. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with ongoing data collection in order to identify emerging themes and refine questions. Finally, data analysis across all the cases was conducted and convergent and divergent themes were explored. Figure 1 provides a visual diagram of the study, adapted from Creswell (2011); a more detailed diagram is found in the Case Study Protocol in Appendix A.

Figure 1. Visual Diagram

Data Collection
Types of data:
Interviews (2)
Field Observations
Documents

Case Selection:
Four Cases based on established criteria

Data Analysis (individual cases):
Memoing, coding, theme development, constant comparison method

Data Analysis (cross-case):
Matrix of findings from each case; look for convergent and divergent themes
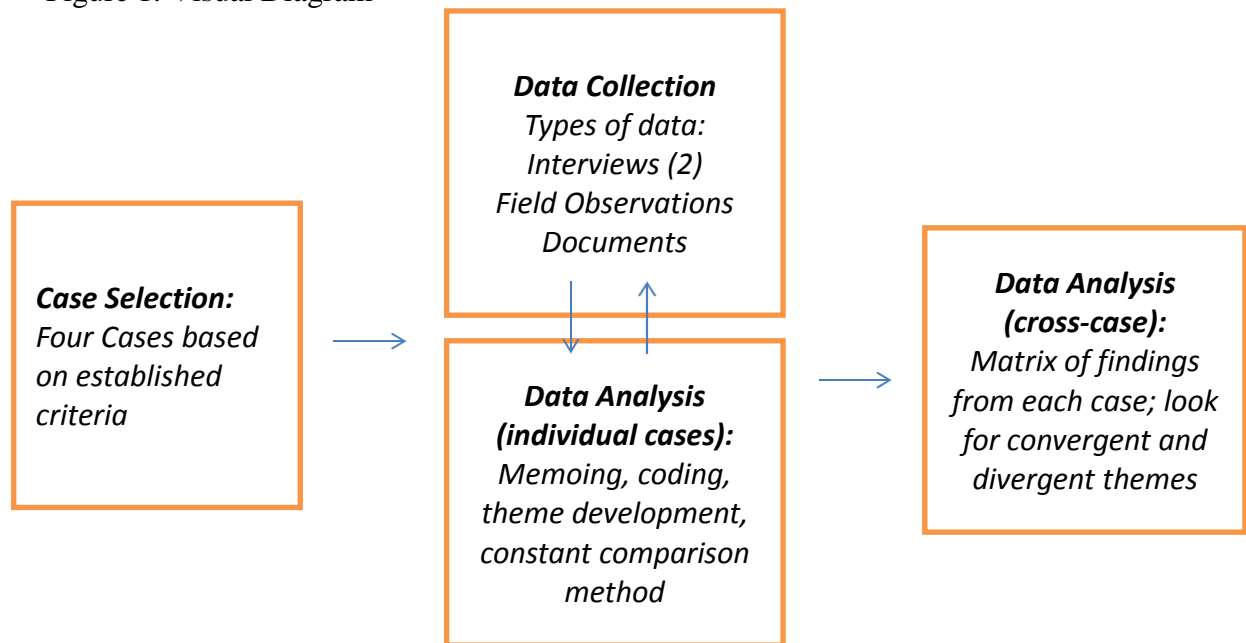
Delimitations

This study was limited in its scope to low-income, first-generation college students that participated in an Upward Bound program. Although there are many other identities that intersect with income status and parental education level, such as race and gender, I limited this study to low-income, first-generation students. Race and gender

were not selection criteria, however, race and gender identities emerged in the case studies and were discussed.

Limitations

I selected a multiple case study as the methodology for this research and made purposeful decisions regarding the research process that will be outlined in the subsequent chapters, but there are limitations to this methodology. The limitations of this study include: the small number of cases, the selection of participants from a single Upward Bound program, the social desirability bias due to the personal relationships with the participants, and the retrospective nature of the study.

I selected four case studies because of the small pool of potential applicants. Four case studies were within the recommended number established by Stake (2006) and I was able to achieve data saturation (Merriam, 1998) with this number. However, a small number of cases makes transferability more limited. Secondly, all of the case study participants were graduates of the same Upward Bound program. I selected participants from the same program in order to understand the role a specific Upward Bound program played in identity development and to minimize the differences that may arise due to different programming components in different Upward Bound programs. Yet, selecting participants from only one Upward Bound program, again, limits the transferability of the findings. The potential pool of participants included students that I had a personal relationship with. This is a limitation due to the potential social desirability bias that may have existed. Participants may have responded to questions in a particular way that they thought would be acceptable to me, which could have skewed the findings. Additionally, potential participants who did not have a good experience with Upward Bound or had a

negative things to say might not have agreed to participate in the study. Thus, those voices may be missing from the study. Lastly, I asked the participants to reflect back on their experiences in Upward Bound that occurred one to four years ago. The retrospective nature of this study relied on participants' recollection of their experiences in the past. This is problematic because research has shown that retrospective memories can be inaccurate (Schwarz & Sudman, 1994). Although this study was retrospective in nature, it was necessary because I was interested in the experiences of students who have persisted in college. In order to minimize the amount of time that had lapsed since participants' involvement in Upward Bound, the participants in the research study were second-year college students.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction by identifying the problems facing low-income, first-generation college students, explaining key definitions, outlining the purpose of the study, providing a brief overview, discussing the significance of the study, and detailing the delimitations and limitations of the study. The theoretical frameworks guiding this study and a review of relevant literature will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are a number of bodies of literature that must be examined in order to position this multiple case study on Upward Bound graduates' experiences of identity in college. First, one must understand the population being studied-- low-income, first-generation college students, and more specifically, Upward Bound graduates. Second, the purpose of this study grows out of the low persistence rates of low-income, first-generation students. Thus, it is important to review the theories of college persistence, and more specifically, the factors that contribute to persistence of low-income, first-generation students. Third, it is essential to understand how students' identities impact their decision to persist in college. Therefore, identity development theories will be reviewed, paying particular attention to multiple identity theories and identity centrality. A review of the extant literature reveals a major gap in our knowledge about Upward Bound graduates experiences of identity, the centrality of their identities as students, and the role their identities play in their decision to persist in college.

Low-Income, First-Generation College Students

Low-income, first-generation students have unique characteristics and experiences that are important for researchers to recognize and understand. However, low-income and first-generation students have typically been studied in the literature as separate populations. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education is one organization that has specifically studied students who are both low-income and first-generation. The Pell Institute recognizes that low-income, first-generation students differ from traditional college students (students from families with higher income and with at least one parent with a Bachelor's degree) in several ways including:

demographic characteristics, types of institutions attended, need for remedial education, and financial need. These factors have been identified as risk factors for dropping out of college (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The unique characteristics of low-income, first-generation students will be discussed below.

Low-income, first-generation students are more likely to be older, female, and minority. They are also more likely to have dependent children, financial independence from their parents, a disability, and a General Education Diploma (GED) (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The demographic characteristics outlined above contribute to an increase in the number of risk factors that low-income, first-generation students possess. Berkner, He, and Cataldi (2003) identified the following risk factors for attrition for this population: delayed entry into college, being a part-time student, working full-time, being financially independent, having dependent children, being a single parent, and having a GED. As is evident, many of the demographic characteristics of low-income, first-generation students mirror the risk factors identified by Berkner et al. (2003). The average low-income, first-generation student had three risk factors, whereas 83% of students with higher family incomes and parents with more education had fewer than three risk factors (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Another difference between low-income, first-generation students and traditional college students was the type of post-secondary institutions attended. Low-income, first-generation students were more likely to attend community colleges or for-profit institutions (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). In 2003-2004, 75% of low-income, first-generation students started their post-secondary education at a two-year college or for-profit institution; low-income, first-generation students represented 40% of the students

attending a for-profit institution in 2003-2004 (Engle & Tinto, 2008). This is a concern because persistence rates at two-year colleges and for-profit institutions were substantially lower than four-year colleges and universities; persistence rates were 59% at two-year colleges, 51% at for-profit institutions, and 79% at four-year institutions (Department of Education, 2014). Additionally, since community colleges and for-profit colleges are more likely to be commuter campuses, it is not surprising that 93% of low-income, first-generation students lived off-campus (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Low-income, first-generation students were placed in remedial courses in greater numbers than their traditional peers, which has been attributed to lower academic preparation (Perna & Kurban, 2013). Engle and Tinto (2008) found that 47% of low-income, first-generation students at two-year institutions, and 35% at public four-year institutions, took at least one remedial course in college. The rates were significantly lower for more traditional college students—only 28% of students who were neither low-income nor first-generation were required to take remedial courses across both two-year and four-year institutions (Engle & Tinto, 2008). This is particularly alarming, as Adelman (2004) found that 70% of students who enroll in remedial reading did not earn a degree within eight years.

An additional barrier for low-income, first-generation students was financial need. Low-income, first-generation students had an average expected family contribution (EFC) of $981, compared to an average EFC of $16,415 for more traditional students. Low-income, first-generation students had an average remaining need of $5,880. Due to low EFC and high unmet need, low-income, first-generation students had higher cumulative loan debt; the average fourth-year, low-income, first-generation student who

attained a credential had over $22,000 in student loan debt (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

However, other researchers found that low-income students were less willing to use loans

to pay for college expenses than their higher-income peers (Perna, 2008), which impacted

their decision whether or not to enroll in college and where to enroll.

Due to the multiple risk factors, the types of colleges attended, need for remedial

coursework, and high financial need, low-income, first-generation students had lower

persistence and graduation rates than their peers with higher incomes and parents with

more education. Low-income, first-generation students returned to college for the second

year at a rate of 66%, whereas 79% of more traditional students returned after the first

year (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The lower persistence rates resulted in lower six-year

graduation rates for this population as well. Only 11% of low-income, first-generation

students earned a Bachelor's degree and 32% earned a certificate or Associate's degree in

six years. Furthermore, low-income, first-generation students were less likely to enroll in

and complete a graduate degree. Only 37% of low-income, first-generation students with

a Bachelor's degree enrolled in a graduate program, and of those that enrolled, only 50%

completed their graduate degree (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Upward Bound

Although Upward Bound graduates make up a small portion, less than 1%, of the

low-income, first-generation students enrolled in college each year (Upward Bound, n.d.;

Engle & Tinto, 2008), they are an important subset to study. Upward Bound is a

federally funded program that receives approximately $250 million annually and serves

close to 60,000 high school students (Upward Bound, n.d.). The Upward Bound program

was developed in 1965 as part of the Higher Education Act to address the low college-

going rates of low-income, first-generation students. The purpose of Upward Bound has remained the same: to increase the rates at which low-income, first-generation students enroll in and graduate from post-secondary education (Upward Bound, n.d.).

The research on Upward Bound students, graduates, and programs can be grouped into three categories: program evaluation (Myers & Schirm, 1997; Myers & Schirm, 1999; Myers, Olsen, Seftor, Young, & Tuttle, 2004; Seftor, Arif, & Schirm 2009), quantitative research on Upward Bound current students or graduates (McClure & Child, 1998; Fashola & Slavin, 1998, Laws, 1999; Walsh, 2011) and qualitative research with Upward Bound participants or graduates (Anderson & Larson, 2009; Carson-Warner, 2003; Owens, 2013). The literature in each category will be reviewed and the strengths and limitations will be discussed.

Program evaluation.

The first type of research on Upward Bound programs comes from the program evaluation that is conducted by the federal government each year. Upward Bound programs are required to submit an annual report with detailed information on each student served in the program, as well as graduates of the program (Upward Bound, n.d.). This information is used by the federal government to evaluate individual programs and plays a role in future funding decisions. In addition to the annual report data that is collected annually, the federal government contracted with Mathematica Policy Research Inc. (MPR) to conduct a thorough program evaluation of Upward Bound. MPR collected data from 1991-2008 and published four reports (Myers & Schirm, 1997; Myers & Schirm, 1999; Myers et al., 2004; Seftor et al., 2009). Two of the major findings of the evaluation were: (a) "Upward Bound had no effect on overall enrollment or total credits

earned at postsecondary institutions" (Myers et al., 2004, p. xvii) and (b) "Upward Bound… had no detectable effect on the likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree or the likelihood of earning an associate's degree" (Seftor et al., 2009, p. xv).

There has been significant controversy over the findings of these reports; some have contested that the findings were "seriously flawed" (Calahan & Goodwin, 2014), whereas others have used the findings to advocate for a complete overhaul of the federal pre-college preparation programs (Haskins & Rouse, 2013). Calahan and Goodwin's (2014) critique is based on the auditing process of the MPR reports conducted by the Department of Education's Policy and Program Studies Services (ED-PPSS). ED-PPSS conducted a review of all MPR's data files and a replication of the analysis. The statistical experts found serious flaws in the data analysis, and after correcting these statistical errors found statistically significant positive impacts of the Upward Bound program (Calahan & Goodwin, 2014).

Quantitative research on Upward Bound participants.

In addition to program evaluation commissioned by the federal government, other researchers have quantitatively studied the impact of Upward Bound on different academic outcomes, including college attendance rates, high school achievement, college attitudes, college GPA, college drop-out rates, and math and English college performance. Fashola and Slavin (1998) evaluated the Upward Bound program in their review of several college preparation programs. Fashola and Slavin (1998) found an increase in college attendance rates for Upward Bound participants. McClure and Child's (1998) study examined data regarding Upward Bound participants' high school achievement and college attitudes. The major findings of this study showed that the

Upward Bound students' educational outcomes were as high as those in the control group and that Upward Bound participants were more likely to seek assistance with academic concerns (McClure & Child, 1998). Walsh's (2011) analysis found that participation in a precollege intervention program, such as Talent Search and Upward Bound, decreased the gap in college attendance rates between African American and Latino students and their White counterparts. Laws (1999) looked at the impact of Upward Bound on graduates' freshmen year experiences, including GPA, drop-out rates, and math and English performance. The findings of this study revealed there was no difference in GPA and drop-out rates between Upward Bound graduates and the control group.

The quantitative literature on Upward Bound reviewed above, while having some benefits, including using longitudinal, national datasets with large sample sizes and identifying nuances in the type of student that is most likely to benefit from the program, is limited in a number of ways. The limitations include contradictory findings between a number of research studies, controversy surrounding the statistical methods used in the MPR reports, the lack of college graduation as an outcome measure in most of the studies, and the difficulty of establishing correlation because Upward Bound is a voluntary program that students self-select. Additionally, the nature of quantitative research misses out on the voices and experiences of the individual Upward Bound students. Next, qualitative research studies will be reviewed and their strengths and limitations will be discussed.

Qualitative research on Upward Bound participants.

There is a minimal amount of qualitatively research on Upward Bound participants, but the qualitative studies do provide a more personal look at the Upward Bound program. Anderson and Larson (2009) conducted a case study with several Upward Bound males and found that many dropped out of the program because it focused too exclusively on academics, without considering the social and emotional needs of students. Owens (2013) study looked at the leadership contributions of members of a group and used Upward Bound participants to explore leadership concepts. Owens (2013) found that Upward Bound students provided valuable input to the leaders of the organization and helped the leaders meet the goals of the organization. Carson-Warner (2003) conducted a case study which focused on the motivating factors that compelled Upward Bound graduates to enroll and persist in college. The findings indicated that parental involvement, relationship with peers, and positive interaction with teachers and staff were the main motivators for success (Carson-Warner, 2003).

Although all three qualitative studies provide insight in to the experiences of Upward Bound participants, the studies by Anderson and Larson (2009) and Owens (2013) do not contribute to the literature on persistence of Upward Bound graduates. Carson-Warner's (2003) study is helpful in identifying motivational factors for college persistence, but identity was not discussed or explored in her research. Furthermore, the most glaring limitation of the qualitative research is simply the lack of studies.

Summary of Upward Bound research.

Understanding Upward Bound participants, their experiences, and their academic outcomes is an essential first step in order to create services and policies that increase

persistence and graduation rates for this population. However, the review of the literature

on the Upward Bound program reveals inconsistent findings and controversy regarding

the efficacy of the program. Additional research needs to be done on Upward Bound

participants and graduates in order to better understand what works and does not work for

these students concerning college persistence.

Theories of Persistence

Although several prominent theoretical perspectives have been developed over

the past forty years (Astin, 1984; Bean, 1980, Tinto, 1975), they were developed with the

general student population in mind. However, it is important to understand these major

theories, as they are often used in empirical research on low-income, first-generation

students as well (Kuh et al., 2011). The three major traditional theories of persistence

will be discussed, followed by a critique of the traditional theories. Next, a review of the

factors that influence persistence will be discussed. The factors that influence persistence

will be divided in to two sections—general population and low-income, first-generation

student population. The reason for separating this research is because it is not only

important to know what has been found to contribute to persistence for students in

general, but to also understand the findings on low-income, first-generation student

persistence, in particular, and the differences that emerge.

Traditional persistence theories.

Theory of Student Departure.

One of the most prominent persistence theories is Tinto's (1975) Theory of

Student Departure. Tinto's (1975) purpose was to develop a theoretical model to

understand the interaction between students and the institution that led to dropping out.

Tinto (1975) theorized that students must go through the processes of separation, transition, and incorporation in order to be successful in college. Students first separate from their family and peers, then during transition, begin to interact and form new relationships in their new college setting, and finally, they incorporate and adopt the new values and behaviors of the college. Students who successfully integrate form "institutional commitment," and thus, are more likely to persist at the institution (Tinto, 1975, p. 93). Tinto (1975) hypothesized that failure to integrate may be due to a lack of institutional fit or isolation. In Tinto's (1975) theory, individual characteristics (race, sex, academic ability), pre-college experiences (high school GPA), and family background (family income, value and expectation climates) contributed to institutional commitment and commitment to the goal of earning a degree. Ultimately, Tinto (1975) theorized that the higher the student's commitment to degree completion and/or commitment to the institution, the greater the likelihood the student would persist.

Student Involvement Theory.

Tinto's (1975) theory of student dropouts highlighted the importance of social integration in to the institution for persistence. Building from Tinto's (1975) theory, Astin (1984) explored how student involvement contributes to social integration and institutional commitment. Astin (1984) developed the Student Involvement Theory based on the extensive research that had been conducted on student development for decades. The theory postulated that "the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program" (Astin, 1984, p. 519). Astin (1984) described student involvement as the amount of time and energy devoted to the

academic experience, which can include a multitude of activities, such as studying, reading, extracurriculars, athletics, fraternities and sororities, student-faculty interaction, student government, living on campus, part-time employment on campus, participation in an honors program, and many others. Astin (1984) reflected on his previous research (Astin, 1975) on college dropouts and found that "the factors that contributed to the student's remaining in college suggested involvement, whereas those that contributed to the student's dropping out, implied a lack of involvement" (p. 523). Thus, in Astin's (1984) theory, students who were more involved were more likely to persist.

Astin's (1984) Student Involvement Theory has implications for college administrators, faculty, and staff. Astin (1984) suggested that educational policies and practices at postsecondary institutions should be developed and evaluated based on how the policy will encourage student development. The Student Involvement Theory requires students to take a more active role in their educational experience and requires faculty, staff, and administrators to proactively create opportunities for students to be involved in campus.

Model of Student Attrition.

Another prominent theory in the persistence literature is Bean's (1980) Model of Student Attrition. Bean (1980) was motivated to conceptualize a different model on student attrition due to his critique of Tinto's (1975) theory. Bean's (1980) analysis of Tinto's (1975) theory concluded that the variables used in the model were not suitable for path analysis and unable to determine casual relationships. Therefore, Bean (1980) developed his own Model of Student Attrition by testing the theories utilized in research on turnover in work organizations (Price, 1977) to see if they were relevant for student

attrition. Bean's (1980) model contained four categories of variables, including: dropout (dependent variable), satisfaction and institutional commitment, organizational determinants, and background variables. Furthermore, Bean and Metzner (1985) reconceptualized a model of student attrition for non-traditional students, many of whom were low-income and/or first-generation, and found that non-traditional students were more affected by the external environment, which led them to dropout, whereas traditional students were more impacted by social integration variables.

Institutional commitment was the most important variable related to dropout in Bean's (1980) Model of Student Attrition, which supported Tinto's (1975) theory. Bean (1980) also found that men and women left college for different reasons; women were more likely to drop out of college if they had poor academic performance in high school, whereas men were more likely to leave due to a poor college GPA. An additional finding in Bean's (1980) theory supported Astin's (1984) Student Involvement Theory; involvement in campus organizations was a strong predictor of persistence for college women. Involvement, however, was not a statistically significant factor for college men. Bean's (1980) Model of Student Attrition contributes to the literature on student persistence and corroborates the major findings from Tinto (1975) and Astin (1984).

Critiques of Persistence Theories.

Although Tinto's (1975) landmark research has been cited over 4,000 times in the literature, it has also been critiqued by a number of researchers. Museus (2014) outlined the four major criticisms of Tinto's (1975) theoretical model, which includes the cultural foundations critique (Tierney, 1992), the self-determination critique (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000), the integration viability critique (Hurtado and Carter, 1997), and the

psychological dimension critique (Hurtado and Carter, 1997). Understanding the critiques of Tinto's (1975) theory is important, especially when studying low-income, first-generation students and students of color.

The cultural foundations critique is especially relevant when studying students from diverse socio-economic and racial backgrounds because it challenges Tinto's (1975) premise that students must separate themselves from their family culture in order conform to the values of the institution. Separating ties from their culture and home communities disadvantages students of color, in particular, since they are more likely to come from cultures and communities that are vastly different from the culture of their college or university (Tierney, 1992). Museus (2014) explained that "expecting undergraduates of color to sever ties with their cultural heritages places an unfair burden on these students to dissociate from communities of the past that are important in their lives and assimilate into the cultures of predominantly White institutions" (p. 196). Researchers have found that, rather than separating from their families, maintaining these relationships with their families was essential for first-generation and minority students' success (Cheng, Ickes, & Verhofstadt, 2012; Guiffrida, 2005b). Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) also found that Tinto's (1975) model did not account for other complex environmental factors that impacted persistence.

The self-determination critique is similar to the cultural foundations critique in that it places too much emphasis on the student's behaviors, and not enough emphasis on the responsibility of the institution to help students succeed. The result of this belief is that low-income, first-generation students and students of color are often blamed for their failures in college, rather than acknowledging that the college environment may also be

hindering their ability to succeed. Researchers have found evidence for specific practices

and policies that institutions can implement that can impact student success, especially

for racially diverse students (Benjamin, Earnest, Gruenewald, & Arthur, 2007; Kuh,

Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004;

Guiffrida, 2005a).

  The integration viability critique examines the reliability of using academic and

social integration constructs to predict college success; the support for these constructs

was modest in the research (Museus, 2014). Most importantly, social integration

constructs often did not include the types of participation that students of color were most

likely to participate in, such as cultural organizations and activities (Museus, 2014). The

final critique is the psychological dimension critique. Tinto's (1975) theory does not

incorporate the psychological dimension, in terms of the students' perceptions of their

academic and social integration. Rather, research utilizing Tinto's (1975) model focuses

solely on the behaviors of students, and does not capture the students' perceptions of their

involvement (Museus, 2014)Factors that influence persistence.

  Tinto (1975), Astin (1984), and Bean (1980) have made significant contributions

to the field of higher education and, specifically, to the research on student persistence in

college. Considerable research has been conducted over the past forty years that has

increased our knowledge of student success and helped to expand upon these theories.

The research often looks specifically at persistence as the measure for college success,

but other measures of student success are also studied in the literature. This literature

review includes studies that use persistence as a measure of student success, as well as

studies that employ other measures of student success, such as college GPA and

graduation rates. The research on persistence is separated in to two sections: First, the research that examines factors that impact persistence for the general student population will be discussed, followed by a review of research that explores persistence specifically for low-income, first-generation students.

Factors that influence persistence.

Factors that influence persistence: General population.

Much of the research on student persistence is conducted with the general student population. Background characteristics, such as race, income, and parental education, may be variables that are included, but the purpose of the research is to understand student persistence in general. The persistence research on the general student population is important to review in order to provide the context for the research on low-income, first-generation students and to be able to recognize the differences that emerge for the low-income, first-generation student population. The factors that impact persistence can be organized in to the three categories: student background characteristics, postsecondary experiences, and postsecondary institutional conditions (Kuh et al., 2011). These categories will be used to organize the research.

Student background characteristics.

Studies that look at student background characteristics make up the preponderance of research on persistence. The majority of studies measure the impact of a number of different variables on academic outcomes, including persistence, graduation rates, and GPA. The student background characteristics that have been studied include: race, gender, parental education, and parental income (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008), high school GPA (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; Kitsantas,

Winsler, & Huie, 2008; Kuh et al., 2008; Sparkman, Maulding, & Roberts, 2012), high school academic preparation (Prevatt et., 2011), motivation (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005; Kim, Newton, Downey, & Benton, 2010; Prevatt et al., 2011), academic control (Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, Clifton, & Chipperfield, 2005), and support (Cheng et al, 2012, DeBerard et al, 2004; Guiffrida, 2005b; Kim et al., 2010; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012).

Kuh et al. (2008) found students' background characteristics, such as race, gender, parental educational level, parental income, and precollege GPA, accounted for 29% of the variance in first-year grades in college and was a strong predictor of persistence. Several other research studies found that high school GPA was a significant predictor of persistence (DeBerard et al., 2004; Kitsantas et al, 2008; Sparkman et al., 2012). In addition to high school GPA, students' test scores have also been shown to predict persistence (Sparkman et al., 2012) as well as general academic skills (Prevatt et al., 2011).

General academic skills and academic preparation prior to college have been found to impact success in college, but studies also show that students' beliefs and attitudes about college and the amount of family and social support can impact student success. Perry et al. (2005) studied perceived academic control and failure occupation. Perry et al. (2005) defined perceived academic control as "a student's beliefs in his/her capacity to influence and predict achievement outcomes" (p. 536) and failure occupation as "the amount of attention students devote to monitoring the successes and failures of their goal-striving efforts" (p. 538). The researchers found that students with higher perceived academic control had higher 3-year GPAs and withdrew from fewer classes.

Students who were more concerned about failing also had higher GPA's and were more likely to persist (Perry et al., 2005).

Students' motivation to learn has been found to contribute to student academic success in college (Glynn et al, 2005; Kim et al., 2010). Kim et al. (2010) developed the College Learning Effectiveness Inventory to identify variables that impact student success. Three of the six variables on the survey dealt with student background characteristics: motivation, self-confidence, and support. The variable of support has also been found to lead to student success in other research studies (Cheng et al., 2012; DeBerard et al., 2004; Guiffrida 2005b; Kim et al., 2010; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012;). Interestingly, Guiffrida (2005b) found that support from family was a predictor of persistence for high-achieving students, but did not impact lower achieving students.

Postsecondary experiences.

The second category of factors that impact persistence is postsecondary experiences. The experiences students have while in college have an impact on their academic outcomes. Several researchers have studied numerous postsecondary experiences and activities to determine what impact they have on student persistence and graduation rates. The types of postsecondary experiences and activities that have been studied include: college grades (Hu, McCormick, & Gonyea, 2012), faculty interactions (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Guiffrida, 2005a; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012), faculty validation (Barnett, 2011), involvement (Kim et al, 2010; Kuh et al., 2008), commitment to major (Grauke & Woosley, 2005; Prevatt el al., 2011), perceived instructor efficacy and socializing

(Prevatt et al., 2011), time management, peer role models, and study skills (Kitsantas et al., 2008), and study approach (Kim et al., 2010).

Similar to the studies that found high school grades to impact college persistence, research also found that college GPA had the largest explanatory power for student persistence among the variables tested (Hu et al., 2012). Since high GPA is a strong predictor of persistence, understanding what contributes to students' GPA is essential. Graunke and Woosley (2005) found that the most significant positive predictors of college GPA were commitment to an academic major and interactions with faculty. Commitment to a major was found to predict persistence in college as well (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Prevatt et al., 2011).

Interaction with faculty has been found by many researchers to positively impact students' success in college (Dayton et al., 2004; Guiffrida, 2005a; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012). The importance of having positive interactions and developing relationships with faculty has been found to be true amongst both African American students (Guiffrida, 2005a) and Latino/a students (Dayton et al., 2004; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012). Guiffrida (2005a) went on to discuss the type of faculty that had the most positive impact on students, which he defined as "student-centered" (p. 707). Student-centered means that faculty go above and beyond their normal duties to support and advocate for students and hold the students to high expectations. In addition, student-centered faculty provide comprehensive advising on academic, career, and personal issues (Guiffrida, 2005a). Prevatt et al. (2011) also found that perceived instructor efficacy was important for students' success. In a study by Barnett (2011), the researcher found that validation from faculty, in terms of feeling known and valued, was

a significant predictor of students' intent to persist. Rios-Aguilar and Deil-Amen (2012) recommended mentoring programs for faculty and students to encourage this positive interaction.

Essential college skills, such as time management and study approach, have also been found to predict academic performance in college (Kim et al., 2010; Kitantas et al., 2008). In fact, time management skills during the first and second year of college were better predictors of academic performance than prior ability measures (Kitantas et al., 2008). Researchers have found that student engagement on campus impacted both college GPA and persistence (Kim et al., 2010; Kuh et al., 2008). Additionally, the findings revealed that low-ability students and minority students benefited the most from effective educational practices, such as student engagement on campus (Kuh et al., 2008).

Postsecondary institutional conditions.

Student persistence has typically been associated with who the students are when they get to college (background characteristics) and what they do while in college (postsecondary experiences). However, additional research has been conducted on postsecondary institutions' programs, services, and policies to determine their impact on academic outcomes as well. The institutional conditions that impact student success include: using data and scholarly research to design programs (Gonzalez & Ballysingh, 2012), focused first-year programming and new student orientation (Benjamin, Earnest, Gruenewald, & Arthur, 2007; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010), coaching and peer mentoring programs (Kuh et al, 2010), learning communities (Dayton et al., 2004; Kuh et al, 2010), and hiring and training diverse and quality faculty (Dayton et al. 2004; Guiffrida, 2005a; Hyun, 2009).

Gonzalez and Ballysingh's (2012) study of Hispanic-Serving Institutions revealed effective practices by the administration that contributed to student success, specifically Latino students. The four effective practices included: utilizing formal evaluation data, using longitudinal and disaggregated data by cohort, using scholarly research, and collecting and using local data from the specific institution on the experiences and challenges of Latino/as.

Kuh et al. (2010) reviewed research on student success in college from across the U.S. and identified 20 Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) institutions. The findings revealed that DEEP institutions utilized effective educational practices, such as First Year Seminars, academic advising, peer mentoring, summer bridge programs, learning communities, living-learning centers, and research programs (Kuh et al., 2010). Orientation and "Welcome Weeks" were also found to contribute to student persistence (Benjamin et al., 2007), as well as learning communities (Dayton et al., 2004). Hiring diverse, high-quality faculty and providing training was another practice that was found to contribute to student success in a number of studies (Dayton et al., 2004; Guiffrida, 2005a).

Factors that impact persistence: Low-income, first-generation students.

The literature discussed above provides the foundation for what is known about student persistence. However, the literature on low-income, first-generation students' persistence elucidates the different needs this population has when they arrive on campus. In this section, the same categories will be used to organize the research on low-income, first-generation student persistence: student background characteristics, postsecondary experiences, and postsecondary institutional conditions. The research will be reviewed

by paying close attention to the differences that emerge between low-income, first-generation students and the general student population.

Before the research on this population is discussed, it is important to note that all of the research studies included in this section do not include only low-income, first-generation students. Low-income, first-generation students are part of a diverse population and a number of different identities intersect. Literature in this section will include studies with low-income students only and first-generation students only. Additionally, researchers study subpopulations, such as academically at-risk low-income students (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008), or study multiple identities of students in a single study, such as first-generation minority students (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). There are intersecting identities that impact student success in different ways. It is important to understand the existing literature on all of the different types of students that may fit in to this population to form the most complete picture of their college experience.

Student background characteristics.

In a study of first-generation, minority students, Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) found that, in addition to high school GPA as a predictor of college GPA, personal and career-related motivation to attend college was a positive predictor for college success. Similarly, Blackwell and Pinder (2014) found that first-generation, minority students' motivation to be the first in their family to graduate college was a driving force that impacted their decision to persist in college. These findings reflect similar results in the literature that indicate motivation is a predictor of college success (Glynn et al, 2005; Kim et al, 2010; Prevatt et al, 2011). In addition to motivation, Gerardi (2006) found that a positive attitude had an impact on college success for low-income, minority students.

Family and social support was found to be an important factor for student success in many of the studies conducted on the general student population (Cheng et al, 2012, DeBerard et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2010; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012). Guiffrida (2005b) found that for high-achieving African American students, emotional, academic, and financial support from their families were the most important factors leading to their success. On the contrary, low-achieving students and students who had dropped out did not discuss receiving this type of support from their family. Although Guiffrida's (2005b) study was specifically about African American students, many of the students in the study identified as low-income and/or first-generation.

Much of the research on student background characteristics focuses on which factors are the best predictors of college success, but another area of research reveals several background characteristics that inhibit student success. Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal's (2001) research indicated that low-SES students had lower educational and occupational expectations, which resulted in lower persistence and graduation rates. Terenzini and his colleagues' review of the literature also found that low-SES students relied more heavily on their high school counselor for information, were most sensitive to tuition costs and financial aid, and were less likely to enroll in postsecondary education immediately after high school. Research by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006) found that low-income students were less academically prepared, which was attributed to attending schools with fewer resources and less experienced teachers.

Postsecondary experiences.

One of the common findings in the research on the general student population was the importance of faculty interaction (Dayton et al., 2004; Graunke & Woosley, 2005;

Guiffrida, 2005a Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012). First-generation students were also found to benefit from faculty interaction (Pascarella et al., 2004). However, Arzy et al. (2006) found that low-income students were reluctant to initiate and interact with faculty on campus, thus, missing out on the potential benefits of establishing relationships with faculty. Additionally, Collier and Morgan (2008) found differences between first-generation and traditional students in regards to faculty interactions and expectations. The researchers, Collier and Morgan (2008), suggested that first-generation students would benefit from positive faculty interactions if college expectations were explained more clearly. Arzy et al. (2006) and Collier and Morgan's (2008) findings helps practitioners better understand the potential difficulties and issues that may arise for this population.

Pike and Kuh (2005) conducted a quantitative study with 39% of its sample population being first-generation students. They were interested in the differences in the college experience between first-generation and second-generation students. The findings indicated that first-generation students were less engaged, less likely to integrate, and perceived the campus environment as less supportive. Pike and Kuh (2005) attributed most of the differences in their experiences to living off-campus and having different educational aspirations, which would support Terenzini's et al. (2001) finding that low-income students had lower educational aspirations.

Based on Pike and Kuh's (2005) findings, they recommended that first-generation students should be encouraged to live on campus. Other researchers have found that not only living on campus, but in learning communities, impacted student success for low-income, first-generation students (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini,

2005). In Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) review of the literature, they also found that other first-year experiences, such as summer bridge courses and orientation, increased academic outcomes for this population.

Student involvement on campus is a hallmark of the theories on persistence (Astin, 1984; Bean, 1980; Tinto, 1975) and empirical research has confirmed this (Kim et al, 2010; Kuh et al, 2008). However, Paulsen and St. John's (2002) study revealed an important finding, which is that low-income students were less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities on campus. Lack of involvement was attributed to the fact that many low-income students worked more hours and did not live on campus (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). Recognizing that campus engagement is an important predictor in college persistence, one of Engle and Tinto's (2008) recommendations in their report on low-income, first-generation students was to "encourage engagement on the college campus" (p. 29).

Postsecondary institutional conditions.

Engle and Tinto (2008) provided recommendations for college administrators, faculty, and staff in order to increase the college completion rates for low-income, first-generation students, which included: providing additional financial aid for college, increasing transfer rates to four-year colleges, assisting students with the transition to college, and promoting (re)entry for young, working adults (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 28-29).

Engle and O'Brien (2007) pointed out that although the institutional practices outlined above are important, low-income, first-generation students will not benefit unless these efforts are centrally coordinated and mandatory for all students. Due to lack

of knowledge, the need to work and live off-campus, and the fear of asking for help due to potential stigmatization, low-income, first-generation students may not access or benefit from the programs being offered by the institution unless they are made mandatory for all students. Thayer (2000) also cautioned that "strategies that are designed for general campus populations without taking into account the special circumstances and characteristics of first generation and low income students will not often be successful for the later" (p. 3). Engle and O'Brien (2007) and Thayer's (2000) guidance to post-secondary institutions highlights the importance of recognizing the unique background experiences and needs of low-income, first-generation college students when they arrive on campus.

Summary.

As indicated above, considerable research has been conducted on college students, both in general, and particularly with low-income, first-generation students, and the findings provide valuable information for college personnel, educational researchers, and policy makers. However, despite the extensive research, there is still much unknown about low-income, first-generation students, their experiences in college, and what factors result in persistence (Bowman, 2014). Another area of research in higher education may be able to provide additional insight in to the experiences of low-income, first-generation students and college persistence: student identity development.

Theories of Identity Development

Student identity development is of great interest to researchers and practitioners that work with college students. The concept of identity development originates with Erickson's (1963) series of psychosocial crises, but has been studied extensively in the

field of higher education because late adolescence is the prime time period in which individuals explore and reflect upon their identity (Tatum, 2000). In this section, several of the major theories of student identity development are discussed (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2004; Erickson, 1963; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Josselsen, 1996; Marcia, 1993). Particular attention is focused on the concept of identity salience (Sellers, et al., 1998; Stryker & Serpe, 1994) and identity centrality (Bowman & Felix, 2014; Sellers et al., 1998).

Erickson's theory of identity development.

Erikson (1963) is the leading psychologist who studied identity and the stages of identity development. Erikson (1963) outlined eight stages of psychosocial crises that he deemed part of normal development and that each person must confront. He labeled the psychosocial crisis during adolescence as "identity vs. role confusion" (Erickson, 1963). Njus and Johnson (2008) described this stage of development as the "struggle to find an integrated sense of self; identify their roles, values, talents, and beliefs; and blend them into a cohesive and unique sense of who they are" (p. 646). If individuals successfully resolve this identity crisis and find an integrated sense of self, they reach identity achievement, but failure at this stage leads to role confusion, or diffusion (Erickson, 1963). Role confusion may result in aimless drifting with lack of purpose. The psychosocial stage of identity development and the process of discovering one's identity, as articulated by Erickson (1963), are fundamental to student identity development theories that have emerged. Identity achievement is critical for the development of a normal, healthy ego and the successful transition into adulthood (Erickson, 1963).

Marcia's identity statuses.

Marcia (1993) elaborated on Erikson's psychosocial theory of "identity vs. role confusion" by proposing four identity statuses to explain the process of identity formation: moratorium, foreclosure, identity diffusion, and identity achievement. Marcia (1993) explained that one's identity status is based on the degree to which one has committed to his or her sense of self and the degree to which one has experienced a crisis, also referred to as identity exploration. Individuals who have undergone identity exploration and commitment achieve the status of identity achieved. Individuals who have neither experienced exploration nor commitment are said to be identity diffused. The individuals who have committed to an identity, but have not undergone identity exploration are referred to as identity foreclosed. Lastly, the moratorium identity status refers to individuals who have experienced an identity crisis, but have not committed to an identity. Although the moratorium status can be unsettling for individuals, it is a healthy stage of normal identity development. One must undergo identity exploration before one can reach identity achievement.

Marcia's (1993) theory of identity statuses and the role of exploration and commitment in identity development was an expansion of Erickson's psychosocial theory. College is a key time period in which late adolescents undergo identity exploration and commitment. Thus, it is important for researchers interested in higher education to understand how to encourage students to engage in exploration and commitment during the college experience.

Josselson's women's identity development.

Josselson (1996) adapted Marcia's (1993) theory of identity statuses in her research on women's identity development; a visual diagram of the framework is provided in Figure 2. Josselson (1996) renamed the four identity statuses in order to describe the identity formation process for female college students. Identity achievers were called "Pathmakers." Josselseon (1996) described their orientation to their identity as, "I've tried out something, and this is what makes most sense for me" (p. 35). Individuals who had an identity diffuse status were labeled as "drifters" by Josselson (1996). Drifters have neither explored their identity nor have they made any commitments and may feel lost or without purpose. The individuals who had foreclosure statuses were labeled "guardians" in Josselson's (1996) framework. Guardians have identity commitments, but the commitments were based on parental expectations, not individual choice through exploration. Lastly, Josselson (1996) named those with moratorium statuses "searchers." Searchers were actively exploring their identity or experiencing a crisis, but had not yet made a commitment.

Josselson (1996) found that these four groups were reliably tested and individuals in each group shared predictable characteristics. Josselson's (1996) research with female students sheds light on the identity formation process of exploration and commitment during the college years.

Figure 2. Identity exploration and identity commitment. Adapted from "Revising herself: Women's identity from college to midlife," by R.E. Josselson, 1996, p. 35. Copyright 1996 by Oxford University Press. Adapted with permission.

Jones and McEwen's Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity.

Through their research on identity development, Jones and McEwen (2000) recognized the need to develop a more complex understanding of identity that recognized the multiple dimensions of identity. The Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity was developed from a qualitative study using grounded theory. The purpose of the study was to "understand the influence of multiple dimensions of identity on an evolving sense of self" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 407). The visual model (Figure 3) illustrates the core sense of self surrounded by externally defined identities, such as race and gender. The model shows the circles intersecting in order demonstrate that all of the identities interact with each other and cannot be understood separately. The model also revealed that different identities were more or less important, or salient, depending on outside contextual influences and were likely change over time.
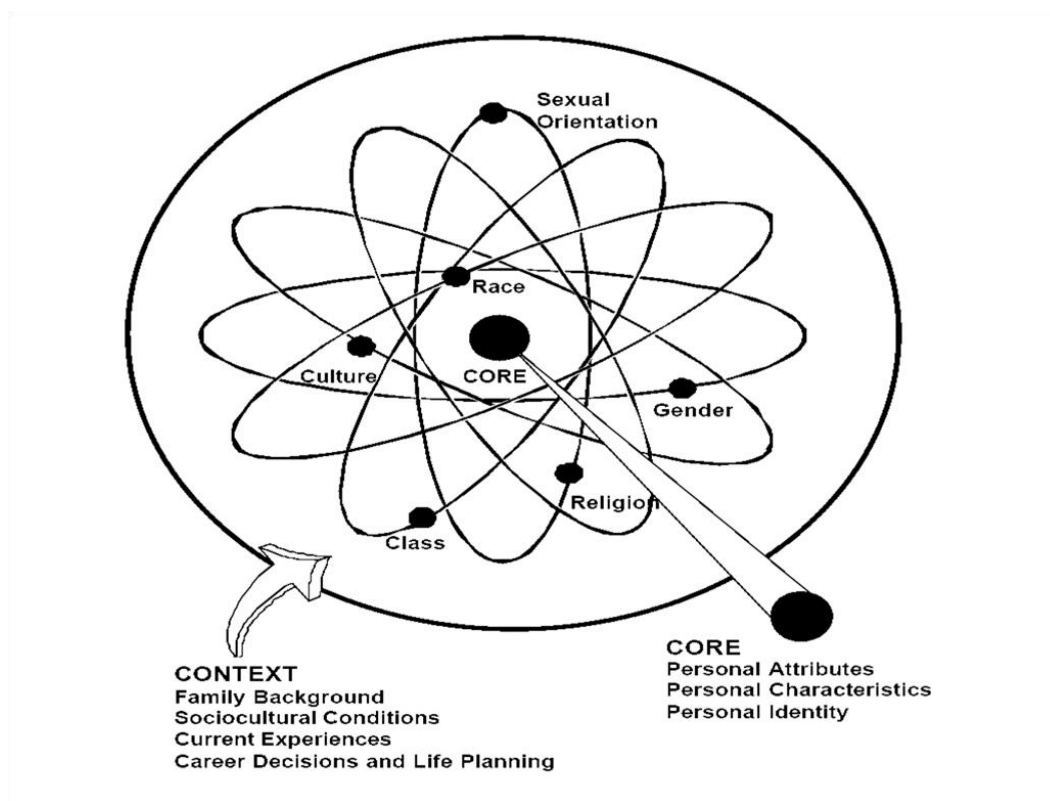
Figure 3. Model of multiple dimensions of identity. Reprinted from "A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity," by S.R. Jones and M.K. McEwen, 2000, *Journal of College Student Development, 41,* p.409. Copyright 2000 by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Reprinted with permission.

Abes, Jones, McEwen's Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity.

Jones and McEwen's (2000) model was reconceptualized in a study by Abes et al. (2007) to include the concept of meaning-making in light of their research with lesbian college students. The inclusion of the concept of meaning-making revealed how and to what extent individuals' identities were influenced by outside contextual influences. Figure 4 is a visual of the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity.

Self-Perceptions of Multiple Identity Dimensions, such as race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, religion

Meaning-Making Filter
Depending on complexity, contextual influences pass through to different degrees

Contextual Influences, such as peers, family, norms, stereotypes, sociopolitical conditions
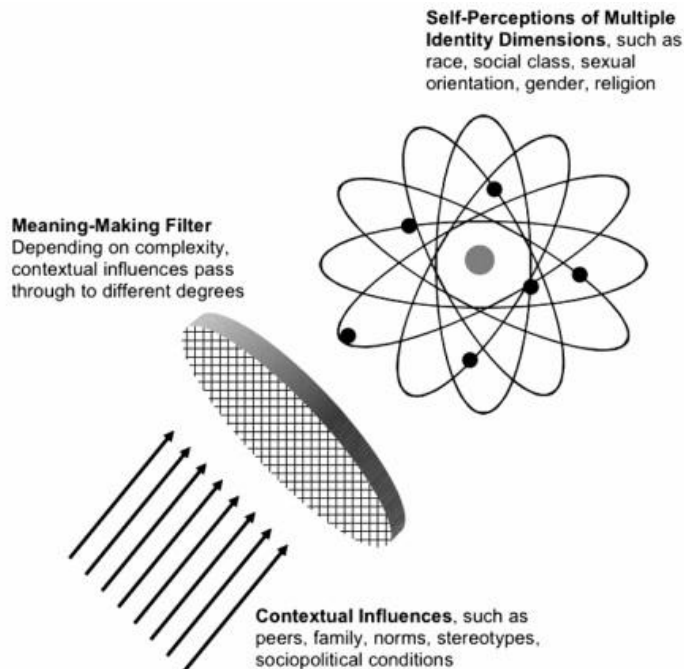
Figure 4. Reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity. Reprinted from "Reconceptualizing the model of multiple dimensions of identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of multiple identities," by E.S. Abes, S.R. Jones and M.K. McEwen, 2007, *Journal of College Student Development, 48,* p. 7. Copyright 2007 by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Reprinted with permission.

The new model included the concept of meaning-making and was depicted as a filter. The depth and permeability of the filter represents to what extent contextual influences impact one's identity. A deep filter with small openings signifies that an individual is able to filter contextual influences more easily, whereas a narrow filter with large openings shows that the individual has less capacity for meaning-making. Abes et al. (2007) described the three types of meaning-making: formulaic, transitional, and foundational. Individuals who engaged in formulaic meaning-making had minimal filtering and were easily influenced by contextual influences. Transitional meaning-making reflected the shift from formulaic to foundational. Individuals in transition were

beginning to recognize the limitations of stereotypes and labels, but were still not able to filter out these influences completely. Lastly, individuals engaged in foundational meaning making had a complex filter and were able to understand their multiple identities without being influenced by stereotypes and be true to their identities in all situations.

The reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes et al., 2007) was influenced by several other theoretical frameworks, including social constructionism (Weber, 1998), which states that identity is constructed by one's social, historical, political and cultural context. Social constructionism suggests that social identities are constantly changing and being constructed and reconstructed based on social, historical, political, and cultural contexts (Abes et al., 2007, p. 2). Feminist theory (McCann & Kim, 2002) also influenced Abes et al. (2007) model with the understanding that identities are not hierarchal, but rather, people experience multiple identities simultaneously. Another theoretical influence on the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions was queer theory (Talburt, 2000). Queer theory recognizes that identities are fluid and changing, but also acknowledges that identity is formed through repeating behaviors, which is referred to performativity. Abes et al. (2007) model tried to balance both the fluidity of identity and the predictable patterns of performativity and stated that "the revised model should be interpreted as one possibility of identity construction rather than an orderly, predictable pattern" (p. 15).

The models developed by Jones and McEwen (2000) and Abes et al. (2007) are important developments in the literature on college students' identity development and are based on empirical research conducted with many different groups of students over

several years. The models help explain how students experience multiple identities, how they intersect with each other, the extent to which they are influenced by outside influences, and the salience of certain identities depending on the context. The concept of identity salience and identity centrality has been explored by several other researchers as well (Sellers et al., 1998; Stryker & Serpre, 1994; Tatum, 2000) and will be discussed in the following sections.

Tatum's complexity of identity.

In Tatum's (2000) article on the complexity of identity, she explained that certain aspects of one's identity were more salient at particular times in one's life, which supports the research by Jones and McEwen (2000) and Abes et al. (2007). Tatum (2000) suggests that the most salient identities for an individual are those that are targeted. The seven most common categories by which people are defined in the United States are race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical or mental ability (Tatum, 2000, p. 11). In each of these categories, there is a dominant group and subordinate group; those identities that are targeted, or part of the subordinate group, are more likely to be salient for individuals. Tatum (2000) provided an example by stating, "women usually mention being female, while men don't usually mention their maleness" (p. 10). It was also true that students of color mentioned their racial identity, whereas White students did not mention being White, and gay students mentioned their sexuality and heterosexual students did not. Tatum (2000) suggests that most individuals have both dominant and subordinate identities, and by recognizing one's experiences with a targeted identity one may be better able to relate to and understand the oppression others experience.

Tatum's (2000) discussion of identity salience contributes to the literature on identity development by recognizing that certain types of identities are more targeted, and thus, more likely to be salient for individuals. Tatum (2000), Jones and McEwen (2000), and Abes' et al. (2004) concept of identity salience refers to identities that are more or less noticeable to oneself, depending on the context. This understanding of identity salience builds from the research by Stryker and Serpe (1994) and Sellers et al. (1998).

Stryker and Serpe's identity salience.

The literature on identity and how multiple identities are organized within the self is clouded with different terms and theories to explain these concepts. Stryker and Serpe (1994) reviewed the theories of salience and centrality in the literature to come to a better understanding of the two concepts, how they were related, and how they were different. The terms salience and centrality will be defined in this section in order to understand how these terms are used in subsequent literature.

Based on the readings of several psychologists, Stryker and Serpe (1994) explained that salience is "defined as a readiness to act out an identity as a consequence of the identity's properties as a cognitive structure or schema" (p. 17). In other words, salience is how easily or likely an individual is to enact the behaviors attached to a particular identity and how much time is devoted to these behaviors. An example of salience provided by Strkyer and Serpe (1994) is that of a professor who finds herself lecturing her children and grandchildren. In this example, the identity of professor is salient, and thus, a behavior associated with that identity—lecturing—is easily drawn upon in certain situations. Stryker and Serpe (1994) stressed that salience is situational; different identities will be more or less salient depending on the contextual situation.

Psychological centrality, or centrality, is defined as that which is "identified with what a person regards as desirable or preferred from his or her own point of view" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 19). Centrality, therefore, describes the identity that is most important to the individual's sense of overall self and does not change depending on the situation. Both identity salience and centrality were explored and tested in Sellers et al.'s (1998) research on racial identity and will be discussed in the next section.

Sellers et al.'s Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity.

Sellers et al.'s (1998) research focused on the racial identity of African Americans. The researchers developed the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) in order to combine both the "significance of race in the self-concepts of African Americans and the qualitative meanings they attribute to being members of that racial category" (Sellers, 1998, p. 19). The MMRI has four dimensions of racial identity: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. Sellers et al. (1998) differentiated between the concepts of salience and centrality by explaining that salience is how important a particular aspect of one's identity is in a particular situation, whereas centrality is how one normatively defines himself or herself across all situations.

Sellers et al. (1998) contended that Stryker and Serpe's (1994) research was limited because it assumed there was a consensus regarding the behaviors associated with a particular identity. According to Sellers et al. (1998), there was great variability in what it qualitatively means to be Black in America and what behaviors were associated with being Black. Due to the limitation of the concepts of identity centrality and salience, Sellers et al. (1998) included "Ideology" as one of the dimensions of the MMRI. Sellers et al. (1998) defined the ideology dimension as "the individual's beliefs, opinions,

and attitudes with respect to the way she or he feels that the members of the race should act" (p. 27). Recognizing that the beliefs and behaviors about a certain identity will be different for each individual is an important improvement from Stryker and Serpe's (1994) research.

Identity development of low-income students.

As evidenced above, a great deal of research has been done on identity development with college students. Yet, little research has looked at the role of identity development specifically in low-income students (Aries & Seider, 2007; Thomas & Azmitia, 2014); sex, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation have received much more attention. The limited research is focused on the role one's social class plays on individuals' identity development. Researchers who have studied social class identity with college students looked at the impact of social class on students' experience of college (Ostrove, 2003); the events and experiences that led to social class awareness (Thomas & Azmitia, 2014); the centrality of social class (Aries & Seider, 2007; Thomas & Azmitia, 2014), and the level of engagement in exploration of social class as part of identity (Aries & Seider, 2007).

With an increased number of students from lower-class backgrounds entering college campuses, understanding the role social class plays on the college experience is vital. In a study with women from an elite university, the findings revealed that one's social class background had implications for how students felt about their college experience (Ostrove, 2003). Ostrove (2003) found that the college experience was described much differently by students, depending on class background. Working class and middle class students did not experience the same sense of belonging that upper class students reported. Furthermore, working class and middle class students shared feelings

of social segregation and academic unpreparedness, which was not reflected in the upper

class student responses. Ostrove (2003) explained that her study,

> …highlights and complicates the role that class background played in women's
>
> experiences of college, and makes particularly salient the role that class
>
> background plays in shaping feelings of belonging and alienation. It suggests that
>
> class is an important and consequential marker of social identity at college for
>
> women from all class backgrounds. (p. 783)

Ostrove's (2003) study revealed that social class was a significant component of student's

identity and impacted their college experience, but the study did not explore how

individuals develop awareness of social class or the importance of social class, in relation

to other social identities.

Social class plays a role in student's feelings about their college experience, but

social class identity research is also concerned about the interaction between social class

and identity development. Thomas and Azmitia (2014) study explored two research

questions: (a) what events and experiences of college students led to their awareness of

social class and (b) how important and central was social class to their identity, in relation

to race and gender. This study found that peer comparisons were the predominant way

that students became aware of their social class. Secondly, the researchers found that

social class was more important than race and gender for all three social classes—

working class, middle class, and upper class.

Several researchers found that social class was more salient for upper class

students than working class or middle class students (Aries & Seider, 2007; Seider, 2008;

Thomas & Azmitia, 2014). This finding is particularly surprising since social identity

theory, as well as Tatum's (2000) theory of targeted identities, suggests that social class would be more salient for individuals from working class backgrounds. Aries and Seider (2007), and a follow-up study by Seider (2008) studied affluent students and lower income students at a highly selective institution, as well as lower income students who attended a state college. The researchers found that affluent students rated social class as more important to identity than the lower income students.

Another important component of identity development is exploration (Josselson, 1996; Marcia, 1993). Aries and Seider's (2007) research found that the lower income students at the selective institution were the most likely to have explored social class as part of their identity development, more so than upper-class students at the elite university and the lower income students at the state college. Aries and Seider (2007) explained that exploring social class was more likely to occur when students interacted with individuals from substantially different social class backgrounds; the lower income students at the selective university were exposed to students of different class backgrounds, more so than the students at the state college.

The studies described above reveal the importance of social class on identity development of college students. However, these studies look at the student's college experiences, perceptions, and the role of social class on identity development, but not the impact on college outcomes. Few researchers have combined theories of identity development and theories of persistence to examine the role of identity on low-income, first-generation students' decisions to persist. Bowman and Felix (2014), however, did combine these two areas of research in their study on student identity centrality, which is discussed below.

Bowman and Felix's student identity centrality.

Bowman and Felix (2014) most recently applied the concept of identity centrality, as defined by Sellers et al. (1998), to college students. Student identity centrality refers to how essential being a student is to one's self-definition. Bowman and Felix (2014) hypothesized that college students who had high student identity centrality would be more likely to persist in college. Additionally, the researchers believed that high student identity centrality would serve as a buffer to potential challenges that traditionally lead to a student dropping out of school, such as financial stress or family problems. According to Bowman (2014), if being a student was central to one's identity, one would find a way to handle these challenges and remain in school.

To test this hypothesis, Bowman and Felix (2014) distributed a questionnaire to undergraduate students that included typical measures of student success, such as GPA, as well as student identity centrality measures (Appendix E). The four measures were designed to assess how important being a student was to individual's self-worth and self-image and included the following statements: (a) Overall, being a student has very little to do with how I feel about myself; (b) being a student is an important reflection of who I am; (c) Being a student is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am; (d) In general, being a student is an important part of my self-image. Initial research confirmed that there was a positive relationship between high student identity and commitment to earn a degree and intent to persist (Bowman & Felix, 2014). Bowman (2014) provided several recommendations for increasing student identity centrality, including student engagement and providing opportunities for low-income, first-generation students to

serve as peer leaders, mentors, tutors, and student government officers, as these positions may reinforce the importance of their student identity.

In addition to increasing student identity centrality through activities once students arrive at college, Bowman (2014) suggested that, "incoming undergraduates may be predisposed toward student identity centrality through various socialization processes that involve family members, peers, schools, neighborhoods, and media exposure" (para. 8). The Upward Bound program is one program that can predispose low-income, first-generation students before college to the concept of student identity centrality by helping them see themselves as students and encourage them to see their student identity as a core aspect of who they are.

Upward Bound's Role in Identity Development.

There are over 800 Upward Bound programs in the United States. Although there are federal regulations that require every program to provide specific activities (see Appendix G), there is an opportunity for each program to supplement their program with additional activities. The Midwest College Upward Bound program includes opportunities for identity development through identity exploration (Josselson, 1996; Marcia, 1993), including exploratory seminars and workshops.

One of the signature components of the Midwest College Upward Bound program is the exploratory seminars. According to the Midwest College Upward Bound Student Handbook (Midwest College, 2013), the purpose of the exploratory seminars is to provide an opportunity for students to explore their interests, discover their talents, and reflect on their values and beliefs. These activities are essential components of identity discovery (Njus & Johnson, 2008) and are part of the identity exploration phase that is required to attain identity achievement (Marcia, 1993).

The Midwest College Upward Bound program hosts several speakers and workshops throughout the year. One of the most popular workshops, titled "Creating Inclusive Communities," is an interactive human relations program in which "participants examine personal and society stereotypes, biases and prejudices and gain the knowledge and skills to forge meaningful intergroup relationships" (Inclusive Communities, 2014, para. 7). During the workshop, Upward Bound students are asked to reflect upon their multiple identities, the ways in which they interact and intersect, and the ways in which stereotypes influenced their understanding of self, which is similar to the exercise conducted by Abes et al. (2007) in their research on multiple dimensions of identity. This workshop is a meaningful experience for the students and they walk away with a greater understanding of their own identity and the ways in which individuals experience oppression due to their targeted identities. The "Creating Inclusive Communities" workshop is another example of how the Midwest College Upward Bound program provides opportunities for students to participate in identity exploration.

The Midwest College Upward Bound program provides opportunities for identity development through exploratory seminars and workshops. Through these activities, Midwest College Upward Bound may predispose students to student identity centrality. Bowman (2014) recommends predisposing students to high student identity centrality prior to college.

Conclusion

This literature review examined research conducted on low-income, first-generation college students, which provides a deeper understanding of who these students are, their challenges, their needs, and their unique experiences. A subgroup within this

population is Upward Bound graduates; a review of the literature on Upward Bound was conducted to better understand the impact of the program, as well as the students' experiences. Next, literature on college persistence was reviewed in order to understand the predominant theories on persistence and factors that contribute to persistence. Finally, the areas of identity development, multiple identities, and identity centrality were explored with the purpose of understanding the role identity may play in college persistence. The opportunities for identity exploration that the Midwest College Upward Bound program provides were also discussed.

The literature reveals many important findings that shed light on the experiences of low-income, first-generation college students. The theoretical perspectives that were examined, most specifically, identity centrality, provides a framework for understanding why low persistence and graduate rates still plague low-income, first-generation students. However, there is still relatively little known about the role of identity centrality on the experiences of low-income, first-generation college students. Furthermore, there is nothing specifically known about Upward Bound graduates' identities as students and its impact on their persistence.

Chapter 3: Methods

Purpose Statement

Low-income, first-generation students are less likely to earn a college degree than peers with higher incomes and more parental education (Engle & Tinto, 2008), and this gap has grown by 50% over the past 30 years (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). The percentage of low-income students who earn a college degree increased four percentage points from 1979 to 1997; during this same period of time, graduation rates for high-income students increased 18 percentage points (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). The college completion gap has severe consequences for the United States, including an increase in the unemployment rate, a decrease in global competitiveness, and a decrease in the socioeconomic stability of the country (Vernez & Mizell, 2001).

In order to understand the college completion problem, considerable research has been conducted on low-income, first-generation college students and persistence in college (Kuh et al., 2008; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Dennis et al., 2005; Terenzini et al., 2001), but still much is unknown about why the college completion rate remains so low for low-income, first-generation students (Bowman, 2014). The Upward Bound program is one federal initiative that has addressed this issue for the past several decades, but the research on Upward Bound programs is limited. The purpose of this multiple case study was to (a) understand the role Upward Bound graduates' identities play in their persistence in college and (b) determine whether the Upward Bound program contributes to this identity development. Understanding how students' identities influence and shape their college experience and exploring the role Upward Bound plays in identity development reveals recommendations that may be more effective at increasing

persistence for low-income, first-generation students, and ultimately, helping to close the college completion gap.

The central research question for this qualitative case study was: What role do Upward Bound graduates' identities as students play in their persistence in college? Additional research questions included:

1) What does it mean to have an identity as a student?

2) How do Upward Bound graduates describe their identities as students?

3) How central to their overall concepts of self are their identities as students?

4) How does their student identity intersect with other social identities?

Theoretical Framework

The guiding theoretical framework for the multiple case study was the concept of student identity centrality (Bowman & Felix, 2014). The concept of identity centrality emerges from the study of identity development and multiple identities in social psychology. The father of identity development, Erickson (1963), discussed the stages of identity development and stated that one's first identity is developed during late adolescence. Thus, researchers interested in college student development have conducted substantial research on the identity development of college students (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Josselson, 1996).

The research on identity development has revealed that individuals experience multiple identities; understanding how these multiple identities interact, intersect, and emerge was the purpose of research by Jones and McEwen (2000) and Abes et al. (2007). Sellers et al. (1998) also explored the idea of multiple identities in their research on racial identity. In Sellers et al. (1998) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity, racial

salience and racial centrality were explored in order to understand the importance of racial identity, in relation to other identities that were present. Bowman and Felix (2014) applied the concept of identity centrality to college students in order to determine the impact of student identity on college persistence.

The concept of identity centrality, as applied by Bowman and Felix (2014) framed this multiple case study by providing the lens through which data were collected and analyzed. In this multiple case study, I explored Upward Bound graduates' identities as students in order to understand how central being a student was to their overall sense of self and the impact this identity had on persistence in college.

Epistemological Paradigm

Qualitative research is inductive and builds theories (Merriam, 1998). However, the role of theory in case studies can be useful as a type of "blue print" to guide the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009, p. 36). In this research project, a balance of both post-positivist and constructivist worldviews was sought. Post-positivism describes a worldview that believes "knowledge and reality are universal and measurable" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 6). Post-positivism worldviews are typically associated with quantitative research that is interested in predicting, quantifying, and generalizing results. On the other hand, constructivism sees knowledge and reality as created and influenced by human interaction (Jones et al., 2006). Constructivism is more fitting with qualitative research where the aim is to understand complex phenomena, rather than diagnosis and predict.

In this research study, I was interested in understanding the complexity of the human experience through the eyes of four Upward Bound graduates. This approach fits

within the constructivist worldview. However, I also framed the study within the theoretical framework of identity centrality, and used this theory to guide the case study analysis. Although some may see these two purposes as contradictory, I found a middle ground that enhanced the case study by providing a focus to both narrow and deepen the research. Stake (2006) summed up the importance of finding this middle ground by stating,

> Many inexperienced case researchers, wanting to be open-minded, seek to avoid forcing the study to be about their own interests, and begin observations without a plan. But to be sensitive to the meanings of activities as perceived by different people, they should anticipate what some of those perspectives might be. (p. 13)

I remained open-minded throughout the research study as evidence was collected and analyzed. I used student identity centrality theory as a guide to prime my observations, but also listened for and sought alternative explanations that allowed me to better understand the personal experiences of the case study participants. I attempted to find the right balance between "underanticipating and overanticipating" (Stake, 2006, p. 13).

Rationale for Qualitative Methods

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the role Upward Bound played in the development of participants' identities as students, I conducted a qualitative multiple case study. Qualitative research is an open-ended, inductive method that seeks to understand, on a deeper level, a particular issue, situation, or population (Creswell, 2011; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative methods were the best technique for the study since exploring the participants' experiences allowed for a deep, holistic understanding of identity.

Rationale for Case Study Methodology

The case study methodology allowed for the study of a complex, bounded system and encouraged development of a rich, thick, holistic understanding of each case. Case study methodology is unique in that the term "case study" refers to both a "process" and a "product" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). Although there are many definitions for a case study, the essential characteristic that defines this methodology is the "bounded system" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). Furthermore, Gerring (2005) described a case study, "as an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (p. 342). When an individual is the unit in case study research, the person is observed at a single point in time (Gerring, 2005). In this study, the "units" were individual students during their fall semester of their sophomore year.

Case study methodology encompasses both single case studies and multiple case studies. Multiple case studies are explained by Stake (2006) as single cases within a quintain. The quintain is the phenomenon being studied and it is the "umbrella for the cases being studied" (Stake, 2006, p. 6). In order to understand the quintain, the researcher selects single cases that are examples of the quintain. The quintain in the study was the identity development of Upward Bound graduates in college. Individual students were selected as the cases because the students themselves and their experiences were the best sources of information to answer the research questions. Studying the individual students allowed for exploration and understanding of the complexity of their experiences and their identities. Each case is "to be understood in depth" and "studied to learn about their self-centering, complexity, and situational uniqueness (Stake, 2006, p. 6). However, by conducting a multiple case study, I was also able to look across cases

for convergent and divergent themes that allowed for a better understanding of the quintain. Multiple case studies are advantageous since the researcher is able to analyze, compare, and contrast findings from multiple cases, which strengthens the research (Yin, 2009).

Role of Researcher

In qualitative research, and specifically, case study research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Merriam, 1998). Due to the nature of qualitative research and the role of the researcher as the primary instrument, Merriam (1998) outlined three essential skills that are required for researchers: tolerance for ambiguity, sensitivity to context and data, and good communication skills. In addition to these three qualities, Yin (2009) explained that conducting case study research is demanding and requires researchers to have extensive experience and skills due to the nature of the case study methodology. Case study research is not routinized, and researchers must constantly be aware of the interaction between the theoretical framework and the data collected (Yin, 2009). There is not a step-by-step procedural list to follow in qualitative research, and thus, researchers must be able to adapt to the information that emerges throughout the study and remain flexible throughout the research process.

I had the necessary skills to conduct a quality case study because of my education and experience. My doctoral program prepared me to conduct rigorous research and in my professional role, I was a part of several research teams. My professional experience as Director of an Upward Bound program taught me how to accept and embrace ambiguity and remain flexible amidst new ideas and information. As a Program Director serving students and families from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, I also

had the sensitivity necessary to conduct this study. Lastly, I honed my communication skills through both my educational and professional experiences. I was able to establish rapport easily with this population, listen intently, and ask thoughtful, probing questions.

Although I had the skills and experience needed to successfully conduct a multiple case study, there were two important aspects of my role as a researcher that needed to be confronted: (a) I personally knew all of the participants in the selection pool. I served as the Director of the Upward Bound program while the participants were in high school and I stayed in contact with all of the participants after graduation; (b) I identify as a Caucasian female and all of the participants in this study were from a different racial and ethnic background. Furthermore, I do not come from a low-income household, and I was not a first-generation college student.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to both of these concerns. First, in regards to my personal relationship with the participants, the advantage was that I had already built rapport and trust with the participants over the past five years and they felt comfortable opening up to me. On the other hand, the potential disadvantage was that they may feel compelled to answer the questions in a certain way, due to my role with Upward Bound in the past. I handled this concern by being forthright with the students and clarifying upfront that they could be open and honest regarding their Upward Bound experiences. I explained to the participants that there would be no negative consequences for their responses and I would not be disappointed or offended by their comments.

Second, experts disagree on whether an individual from a different racial group can conduct a credible study (Merriam, 1998). I understood that there were limitations because I have a different background from the participants in this study. However, I

have over ten years of experience working with low-income individuals from different

racial backgrounds. In order to address this limitation, I tried to remain nonjudgmental

and sensitive to race and class issues that arose. I addressed potential biases that arose

due to our different racial and socioeconomic contexts by keeping a personal journal and

memoing throughout the data collection. I also discussed biases with a professional peer

who has a similar background to the participants in this study.

My interest in studying Upward Bound graduates stemmed from my role as

Upward Bound Director from 2009-2013. Although I no longer serve as Director of

Upward Bound, I continued to serve as a program evaluator for an Upward Bound

program and one of my main responsibilities was tracking and following up with alumni.

Over the past five years, I noticed a disturbing trend in the program; although high

percentages of students enrolled in college immediately after high school, the persistence

rate from freshmen to sophomore year was low. In 2012, 82% of Upward Bound

graduates enrolled in post-secondary education; only 29% persisted to sophomore year

(Bolden, 2014). Since the goal of Upward Bound is not only to help students enroll in

college, but persist and graduate from college, the high dropout rate was concerning.

Although the dropout rate was high, there were Upward Bound graduates who went to

college and persisted. I had a personal and professional interest in understanding what

role Upward Bound played in helping these students persist in college.

Participants

In constructing this study, I intended to use purposeful sampling (Creswell,

20011). Purposeful sampling is most appropriate in qualitative case studies in order so the

researcher can select "information-rich cases" that can provide the greatest amount of

information regarding the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). However, during the recruitment phase, only four of the seven potential participants agreed to the study. Although I was not able to purposefully select the individuals, the four participants were information-rich and were able to provide insight on the research questions.

Sampling frame.

The participants were selected from the pool of graduates of an Upward Bound program located at a small, private college in the Midwest. The college will be referred to as Midwest College in order to protect the identity of the participants in this study. Midwest College is a special focus, four-year institution with a high undergraduate population (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.). The Midwest College Upward Bound program was funded by the Department of Education in 2007. The program serves 55 high school students. The criteria used to select participants included: (a) graduate of the Midwest College Upward Bound program, (b) identified as low-income and first-generation upon entry in to Upward Bound, and (c) enrolled as sophomore at a four-year college or university. I established this criterion for three reasons: (a) I used graduates of the same Upward Bound program in order to minimize potential differences that may arise due to different programmatic issues; (b) I selected students who were currently enrolled in a four-year college or university because I wanted to limit differences that may arise due to different institutional type; (c) I selected students who were currently sophomores and completed one year of college because I was interested in how their student identity impacted their persistence in college, and persistence is commonly defined as "students who return to any institution

for their second year" (Newbaker, 2014, para. 2). I used sophomore students in order to minimize differences in student identity development that occurs through the natural maturation process while in college.

Seven students met the initial criteria. The sampling pool included six females and one male. The racial background of the sampling frame included four African Americans, one Caucasian, and two bi-racial students. Three four-year universities were represented in the sampling frame, including a public state university in a large urban city, a small private university in a mid-sized city, and a large, public research university. All of the universities were located within the same Midwestern state.

I selected four individuals from this pool for the multiple case study. I intended to use maximal variation sampling (Creswell, 2011) to allow for different perspectives from each of the individual cases. Maximal variation sampling is defined by Creswell (2011) as selecting diverse individuals "who are expected to hold different perspectives on the central phenomenon" (p. 174). In order to gain the deepest understanding, I wanted to gather information from diverse students. During the recruitment phase, I invited individuals to participate using maximal variation sampling. I asked both female and male students, as well as individuals from each of the racial background represented in the pool: African American, Caucasian, and bi-racial. However, the four individuals who agreed to participate in the study were all female. In terms of race, three were African American and one was bi-racial.

Data Collection

In order to ensure a rigorous case study, multiple sources of evidence were collected (Yin, 2009). I collected evidence through the following three sources:

interviews, observations, and documents. In order to collect and organize multiple types of evidence from four different cases, I developed a case study protocol (Appendix A) for the data collection phase of the study (Yin, 2009). I followed the same protocol for each of the four case studies in order to increase the trustworthiness of the research by ensuring the same data collection steps were followed in each case study.

Interviews.

I conducted two in-depth interviews with each participant. In the first interview, individuals were asked a series of questions, completed the Student Identity Centrality survey, and discussed their responses to the survey. The second interview was after the field observations and included follow up questions to gain information that was missing.

The purpose of the one-on-one interviews was to provide a safe, confidential environment for students to share openly about their experiences. The first interview was a semi-structured interview in which the students completed the Identity Centrality Survey and discussed their responses to the questions (See Appendix B for the entire Interview #1 Protocol).

The second interview was less formal and was left open for participants to share what was most important to them. The second interview also included questions that I developed while reflecting on the first interviews and the themes that started to emerge. During the field observations, I made notes about the participants' activities, behaviors, and interactions. I used the second interview to share these notes with the participants and ask for their feedback to make sure I captured their experience accurately. The second interview was intentionally designed to be more open-ended in order to allow for participants to share what was most important to them. I was, however, prepared with

questions and prompts, if the participants did not have much to share (Appendix C Interview #2 Protocol). All of the interviews were audio-recorded.

Observations.

I collected observational data through field observations. I observed each participant during a two to four-hour time frame in their school environment, depending on their schedule and availability. During the first interview, I asked the participants to describe what a typical day on campus looked like. Then, I selected a week during the end of the fall semester to observe the participant during a time in which they were engaged in activities they associated with being a student. I asked them to provide me with their schedule for that week in order to find the best time frame that included class time and other activities they participated in on-campus. The entire observation took place on the college campus in which each student was enrolled.

The purpose of the observations was to observe the participant in the environment that is typically associated with their identity as a student. I wanted to understand what it means to be a "student" through their daily activities. Stake (2006) stated that "sometimes the most direct answers come from observing the activity" (p. 27). I was able to gain valuable data through direct observations. Furthermore, a signature component of case study research is the study of each "case" as it operates in real life. Observing participants in their student environment provided me additional insight in to each case. The Observation Protocol is included in Appendix D.

Documents.

The third type of evidence collected was documents. The documents that were analyzed included the participants' college transcript, class schedule, identity centrality

survey (Appendix E), and digital photos. I notified participants at the time of selection that I would be collecting these documents. I asked participants to provide me with a copy of their college transcript and class schedule; participants either emailed this information or brought a copy to the first interview. The identity centrality survey and digital photo documentation was discussed with the participants during the first interview.

I used four measures from Bowman's (2014) Identity Centrality Survey (Appendix E) to assess the participants' "student identity" score. These measures were previously validated (Bowman, 2014) and I received permission from the author for use in this research project. Participants were asked to complete the identity centrality survey during the first interview and we discussed their responses.

During the first interview, I explained the digital photo project with the participants. I asked participants to take pictures of "what it looks like to be a student" between the first and second interview. Participants were asked to take the pictures with their phone or camera and to bring to them to the second interview. During the second interview, students discussed the photos, why they took the photos, and how closely they identified with the pictures.

The purpose of collecting the documents was to provide evidence to support the overall case. Participants' transcripts displayed their college GPA and credits earned. These two measures provided a deeper of understanding of what it meant to be a "successful" college student for each individual participant. The class schedules were used to understand what being a "student" looked like for each participant. The class schedule also helped in determining a time for the campus observations. The identity

centrality survey document provided me with the participants' scores, which allowed me to understand the centrality of their student identity, according to the measures established by Bowman and Felix (2014). Lastly, the purpose of the photo exercise was to see whether the participants saw themselves in the photos showcasing what it means to be a student and to what extent. However, participants took only one or two photos and the exercise did not provide new or valuable data for the case study.

Data Analysis

Yin (2009) recommended that the case study researcher identify an analytical strategy prior to beginning the research process. Since I used a guiding theory to frame the study, I utilized the analytical strategy, "relying on theoretical propositions" (Yin, 2009, p. 130). The guiding theoretical propositions were that the Upward Bound program helps students develop their identities as students and individuals with a high student identity are more likely persist in college. Therefore, I analyzed all three types of evidence collected for each case in light of this theory. Although relying on theoretical propositions may be seen as contrary to the constructive nature of qualitative research, I addressed this concern by remaining open to and seeking alternative theories and ideas as they emerged from the cases.

The process of data analysis began immediately with the first interview and was ongoing throughout the case study. Merriam (1998) highlighted the benefits of ongoing data analysis by stating, "data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating" (p. 162). Throughout the research process, I utilized the technique of memo writing (Lempert, 2007). Lempert (2007) defined memos as "the narrated records of a theorist's analytical conversations with him/herself about the

research data" (p. 247). Memos are to be written throughout the data collection and

analysis phases in a spontaneous manner in order to capture important thoughts in the

moment (Charmaz, 2006). Memo writing is a technique usually employed in Grounded

Theory research; however, it was useful in this case study research as a way to capture

my thoughts, reflections, inclinations, and emerging themes throughout the research

process.

In order to organize the data throughout the data collection and analysis process I

developed a Case Study Database (Yin, 2009). The Case Study Database was an

electronic database where I stored transcribed interviews, field notes, copies of

documents, and memos. This database was stored in DropBox, a password protected

online storage program. Immediately after the completion of each interview, field

observation, and document collection, I read the transcriptions and documents, wrote

memos, refined questions, and generated potential themes.

All interviews were transcribed by a hired transcriptionist for timely analysis. I

then used QDA Minor Lite to upload the interview transcriptions, my field notes and

memos, and documents. In order to manage and organize all of the information, I coded

all of the data as it was collected. Merriam (1998) defined coding as "assigning some

sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily

retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p. 164). I used the codes to begin the process of

category construction (Merriam, 1998) and identifying themes. In order to begin

constructing themes, I used the constant comparative method, which is the process of

comparing each unit of information (codes) to the others in order to find recurrent ideas

(Merriam, 1998). From comparing the codes and grouping like-codes together, I

formulated themes. Consistent categories emerged across the cases and I organized each

participant's themes within these categories. In order to ensure efficacy of themes, I

followed the guidelines by Merriam (1998) which include making certain that the themes

provide answers to the initial research questions, are exhaustive, and mutually exclusive.

Based off the themes that emerged, I formulated the major findings for each case.

After completing the process of coding, utilizing the constant comparative

method, and developing themes for each individual case, I began cross-case analysis. I

utilized an adapted form of a worksheet created by Stake (2006) (Appendix F) to

organize the findings and compare findings across cases. This process allowed me to

find similarities, differences, and interesting interactions between and among the four

cases. Several convergent and divergent themes emerged in the cross-case analysis.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research presupposes different ontological and epistemological

worldviews, research questions, data collection and analysis methods, and therefore, the

standards for assessing qualitative research must also be different. However, the

language used to describe the assessment of qualitative research is still disputed. Some

researchers continue to use terms that are typically associated with quantitative research,

such as validity and reliability (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2011). Other researchers insist

that the terms trustworthiness and goodness are more appropriate when discussing

qualitative research (Jones et al., 2006; Morrow, 2005). Although there is not a

consensus on what terms should be used to assess qualitative research, there are several

strategies or techniques that can be employed by qualitative researchers that can enhance

the trustworthiness of research findings. I used the following techniques to ensure

trustworthiness:

1) Triangulation – This was achieved by collecting and comparing multiple

sources of data to confirm findings. Stake (2006) suggested that triangulation

occurs throughout the course of the data collection and analysis phases and

requires the researcher to be reviewing findings with skepticism to be sure the

emerging picture is clear and meaningful.

2) Member Checking – Transcripts were shared with participants and their

feedback was sought to ensure their ideas were adequately expressed. After

writing the case summary, I asked participants to review it and provide feedback.

However, I did not receive any comments from the participants.

3) Peer Debriefing – The process of peer examination is regularly checking in

with colleagues and seeking their feedback throughout the research study. I asked

one of my colleagues who has a similar background to the participants in the

study for feedback to ensure I was not missing valuable evidence due to my

limitations and potential biases.

Through the use of triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, I

participated in the process of communal assessment with the participants in the study and

other researchers in the field (Jones et al., 2006). The ongoing communal assessment

was another way to ensure goodness of the research.

Another aspect of trustworthiness is providing evidence that supports the findings.

Showing how the raw data is linked to the researcher's interpretations and findings

provides credibility, plausibility, and applicability (Jones et al., 2006). In qualitative

research, the question is not whether the study can be replicated to produce the same findings, but rather, whether the results of the particular study are consistent with the evidence collected (Merriam, 1998). In order to ensure that findings were consistent with the evidence, I provided an audit trail (Merriam, 1998). An audit trail or chain of evidence refers to a detailed description of the data collection and analysis procedures throughout the study. Providing this information demonstrates credibility and plausibility and allows for independent researchers to go back to understand my procedures and how I came to my findings. The Case Study Protocols, as well as the specific Interview and Observation Protocols, are essential components of the audit trail.

In quantitative research, one of the main verification procedures is examining the generalizability of a study. Qualitative research is not concerned with generalizability; qualitative research is not conducted for the purpose of generalizing to a bigger sample or population. However, readers of qualitative research are interested in the transferability of a particular study. I employed the strategy of rich, thick description in order for the readers to determine if the situations of the participants in the cases are similar enough to another particular situation to be transferable (Merriam, 1998).

Perhaps the most important quality of good qualitative research is the creation of "action-sensitive knowledge" (van Manen, 1990 in Jones et al., 2006, p. 132). Jones et al. (2006) advised that research should not be conducted in a vacuum; rather, the findings of research should provide "applicable recommendations" for the real world (p. 132). From this multiple case study, I provided recommendations for Upward Bound staff and college faculty, staff, and administration based on the lived experiences of the participants in the study. I strived to provide meaningful and relevant recommendations

that can aid in the improvement of college persistence for low-income, first-generation students.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting research in an ethical manner is extremely important in all types of research, even more so in case study research where the researcher becomes intimately involved in the lives of the participants. The first step to ensuring the research project is conducted in an ethical manner is to obtain permission to involve participants in the study through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The IRB process was expedited because all of the individuals that participated in the study were 19 years or older and were not categorized as a vulnerable population.

The ethical considerations in the data collection phase involved how interviews and observations were conducted. Interviews and observations can cause ethical dilemmas due to the invasion of privacy and sensitive issues that may emerge. In order to conduct the interviews and observations in an ethical manner, I revealed my intentions for the study, reminded participants that they only have to answer questions they felt comfortable with, remained sensitive to the intrusiveness of the interviews, and provided referrals for other resources when issues arose during the interviews (Merriam, 1998). Although there are fewer ethical dilemmas associated with the collection of documents, I did ask for documents that contained sensitive personal information. Participants voluntarily provide these documents and no other documents were sought without their consent (Merriam, 1998).

Since the researcher is the primary instrument of both data collection and analysis, data is collected and analyzed through the lens of the researcher. Thus, there is

the potential for data that contradicts the researcher's worldview to be omitted (Merriam, 1998). Due to this potential ethical dilemma, I attempted to remain as nonbiased, open-minded, and honest as possible through each phase of the research study. I used memo writing, peer debriefing, and member checks to help recognize potential biases.

Lastly, ethical considerations were attended to during the dissemination of the findings. Anonymity cannot fully be guaranteed in a qualitative case study and it was important not to make promises to participants that could not be delivered (Jones et al., 2006). In multiple case study research, anonymity is not possible because identifiable information will be collected from each of the participants. Rather, the important ethical consideration is being clear with the participants regarding confidentiality. During the selection of participants, I informed them of the type and amount of information I would be collecting for the case study. I explained that I would be using pseudonyms, but was clear that it may be possible for readers to still identify the participants. Participants read and signed an Informed Consent Form during the initial interview which detailed the role of confidentiality in this study.

Since I asked for considerable amount of identifiable information, I allowed the participants to read through their case study and the findings to make sure they were comfortable with the information I shared. Jones et al. (2006) described the "process of negotiation between the researcher and participants" regarding the type of identifiers that are shared about the participants (p. 158). I viewed the participants in the case study research as collaborators and they were invited to have a voice in how identifiable information was presented (Jones et al., 2006).

There are two other important aspects of confidentiality: protection of the data and disclosing sensitive information to the proper authorities. In regards to protecting the data that was collected as part of the case study, I implemented several strategies. First, the audio files of the interviews were only shared with a transcriptionist and were uploaded to DropBox. Once they were transcribed, the audio files were saved on a password protected file on a laptop. The interview transcriptions were uploaded to DropBox by the transcriptionist and then saved as documents on a laptop, along with the field observations and memos. The hard copies of written notes were saved in a locked filing cabinet. All documents that were collected, including Informed Consent Forms, college transcripts, course schedules, and the Identity Centrality Survey, were stored in a locked filing cabinet as well. The data collected was shared with a peer expert through the peer debriefing process and the transcriptionist; both individuals were informed not to share this information.

The final issue of confidentiality arose from my role as a mandatory reporter, due to my professional position as an educator. I informed all participants before the data collection process that I was required to report any information of abuse or neglect that may be revealed during the case study research (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014). It is important to notify participants of this in advance so that participants do not feel that their trust was betrayed. In this study, however, this was not an issue.

Chapter 4: Findings

Kim: "I am a student because that's what I have always been"

Student background.

Kim was a nineteen year old sophomore transfer student at a large Research I university in the Midwest, which will be referred to as "Research University." She transferred to Research University after her freshman year from a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) located in the south. Kim was studying biological systems engineering with an emphasis in biomedical engineering. One of the predominant reasons Kim transferred to Research University was because her former school did not have a biomedical engineering program.

Kim was African American, came from a low-income, single-parent household, and was a first-generation college student. She had three older siblings, one of whom was also in college. Kim was raised in a large urban city located about an hour from Research University and attended a large public high school. She joined Upward Bound as a sophomore and was an active participant in the program through the summer following graduation. In addition to Upward Bound, Kim was active in sports, clubs, and student government in high school. Kim's cumulative high school GPA at graduation was 4.10. Her college GPA was 3.63.

Institutional description.

Research University is a large, public, state university located in a mid-sized city in the Midwest. Total student enrollment in the fall of 2013 was 24,445. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), Research University has a high undergraduate population and is primarily residential. It is a more

selective institution and has a higher transfer-in population. It is a comprehensive doctoral university with high research activity.

Identity.

Kim's strongest identity was that of an African American female biomedical engineering student. It was important to Kim that she was an African American female pursuing a degree in engineering because there were so few African American females in her career field. When asked to describe important characteristics about herself, she included race, gender, major, and her role as Vice President of the National Society for Black Engineers. When asked about her involvement on campus, Kim stated, "I'm really active with showing people I'm a Black engineer so that's what I mostly do."

Although being an African American female engineering student was her predominant identity, Kim also mentioned the fact that her mother did not go to college played an important role in her identity development. Kim shared that her mother received a full-ride scholarship to a major state university, but then got pregnant and never returned to school. Kim asserted, "She always wanted me to be better than what she did." Just days before the second interview, Kim's aunt was very sick and in the hospital. She drove home, about an hour away, to spend a day with her family and had just returned to campus the morning of our second interview. When asked if there were any other parts of her identity that had become more or less salient since the first interview, Kim shared that being a daughter and a sibling were especially important to her, in light of the illness in the family. Kim explained, "Just being around my family through hard times. It made you realize you're a piece of the puzzle that needs to be there. I felt like I was helping out a lot."

The second interview with Kim took place about a week after demonstrations were held across the country to protest police violence against African Americans. Kim shared that due to the events in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City, she felt more connected to her African American identity. Kim participated in a silent protest held on Research University's campus with other college students. She stated, "I thought it was pretty cool to do that... It wasn't all African Americans but just being heard... Being a student."

Kim shared that being a low-income, first-generation student was an important aspect of her identity as well. Being a first-generation student was important to Kim because it was a source of accomplishment and pride for her. She asserted, "I feel like when you're first generation, that's a success in itself. Obviously no one else has gone to college but you made it happen even with no one knowing around you in your family." Being a low-income student was important to Kim because it meant she was eligible for additional financial aid and support services. As a low-income student, a college degree was important to her because it meant financial security in the future. She explained, "I see that people without college degrees are struggling and they're working at bare minimum jobs trying to make it by. When you have a degree, you get a lot more money. You get a lot more opportunities."

Student involvement.

Kim described herself as a "needy" student. She stated, "I always go to office hours if I have questions I need to ask, but I don't really ask in class. I do it one-on-one basis. I always go to office hours or study sessions." Kim attended "Study Stops" on a weekly basis to receive tutoring assistance as well, participated in student success

seminars, and set up an appointment with a success counselor because she felt she needed help with procrastination. Kim prided herself on getting involved with activities that supported her student identity, which is why she participated in several student groups within her major. She also was involved with the multicultural center on her campus. When asked why she was involved on campus she replied,

> Because I feel like, first I feel it's good to network. I want people to see my face a lot to know that I'm involved in campus. Second, I feel like I can always learn something even if I feel like the thing is going to be really general, there's always some fact that you're not going to know everything. I feel like giving an hour or two to a discussion will give you some insight.

During the observational period, Kim exhibited her involvement on campus. She spent time in the multicultural center, student union, the on-campus bank, student health center, and at her work-study job. She also met with several students to work on a group project. Her utilization of resources on campus during the observational period reflected a statement made during one of her interviews: "I like how any resources they have here. The stuff is just available to everyone and it's always here. I feel like they're really supportive of people doing whatever they want to do and they have the money to do it."

Kim's typical day as a student was comprised of going to class, going to student organization meetings, going to work, and studying. She also exercised daily and prepared and cooked her own meals in her off-campus apartment. When asked what she did in the evenings she stated, "Study, I pretty much just study." Kim was asked to submit a time journal of her activities for two evenings during the observational period and her journal confirmed her comment that she spends the majority of her time in the

evenings studying. Studying clearly is an important part of Kim's experience as a

student. When asked to describe a recent experience in which she felt most like a student

she shared, "When just recently I found out I did really good on a test . . . I changed up,

because the first test I did not do too hot on but then I changed up my study habits--I

started studying periodically instead of trying to cram."

When asked what events in her life made an impact on her identity development,

she asserted, "Probably Upward Bound did a lot because they showed us lots of

opportunities you can do as a low income African American." Her identity as an African

American engineer was influenced by her involvement with the National Society for

Black Engineers. Kim explained,

> When you go to conferences you see a bunch of people that you did not know
>
> were engineers and were Black... just going to those conferences and seeing that
>
> there are successful Black engineers in the field, it makes me push harder."

Her identity as a student was influenced by her mother, for whom education was a

major priority. Kim's older siblings would teach her what they were learning at school

and her mom would do educational activities with her at home, as she was a stay-at-home

mom for Kim's early years. Kim was never allowed to miss school because Kim's

mother believed education was essential for a better life. Kim shared this about the role

her mother played in her student identity development:

> I guess when you're pushed to... when your parents tell you that school is the only
>
> thing that's going to get you through, instead of ending up where they're at, it's
>
> going to get you through to be successful. I guess being a student is the only thing
>
> you have when there's nothing else.

Kim also mentioned that she was identified at a young age as being strong in math and science. She declared, "Once you're in that field, they push you to do extra things. I guess ever since I've been getting pushed, I always join programs that will help me succeed. I never just didn't do anything, I was always involved."

Role of Upward Bound.

As an Upward Bound student, participants earned a stipend for meeting the expectations of the program, such as earning a certain GPA, attending tutoring, and participating in college preparatory activities. Kim shared that the stipend was a major incentive because she had a goal of saving her stipend in order to purchase a laptop for college. Through the stipend, Upward Bound provided a meaningful incentive for Kim to participate in activities that were typically associated with high student identity.

Kim also saw her involvement in Upward Bound as a time for exploration and trying new things. Through exposure to new activities and concepts, Kim learned about herself and felt empowered. She shared,

> We always had something new to learn. I feel like that just made us realize there's so many things we can do and we're not limited. So, I feel all the crazy things like juggling class and hula hooping or something you never thought you'd be able to do, Upward Bound let us be able to do it.

Kim saw Upward Bound and her college experience as important outlets for exploring her identity. Kim stated, "I feel like being a student you get so many different options and you can explore what you want to explore. I feel like it gives you time to figure out who you are."

Encouragement from staff also contributed to the positive influence of Upward Bound. Kim explained, "You had people who cared about you; Just having encouragement to say that you could do it. Even if people didn't think that people could do it, you guys found a way." In addition to positive relationships with staff and encouragement, Kim found the after-school tutoring program to be helpful in the development of her student identity. She asserted, "having a study area was really helpful because you saw everybody else doing their homework so you're like, 'Okay, I probably should just do my homework with everyone else.'"

Kim participated in the Upward Bound Senior Bridge Program, which was an opportunity for students during the summer after high school graduation. Students lived in campus housing, took college courses, attended study hours, and participated in social activities. When asked what role the Senior Bridge program had on her student identity, she stated, "you have to actually do work and they're not going to be guiding you each step of the way like in high school. So it did help to know what college was going to be like."

Motivation.

Kim received support and motivation from her mother. She explained, "I feel like when I set goals my mom is very encouraging. She's like, 'You can do it.' It's also helped to have a support system. I feel like I set goals because I knew somebody would be behind me." Her mom was a constant support for her and let her know she could do it. Kim stated that she received compliments from her mother, such as, "You're doing so good. I'm so proud of you." Her mother was not only her cheerleader, but the fact that

her mother did not finish her college degree was motivating to Kim. Kim shared, "She always wanted me to be better than what she did."

Kim was also motivated by the high expectations she sets for herself. One of her goals was to graduate from Research University with at least a 3.5 GPA and be a member of the Transfer Honor Society. Good grades were not the only thing that mattered to Kim, however. Kim explained that college was also about getting involved.

> I agree that grades are really important, but sometimes I don't agree that it reflects what kind of student I am... I do get involved with things that I think are important to me. So, I think if they look at somebody, they can get a 4.0 but they're not doing anything that will help them further who they are or further their knowledge of what they're trying to do...I feel like just looking at the overall person makes a difference.

Kim's background and experiences growing up were a source of motivation for her. Negative experiences in her past made her realize she wanted something greater for herself. She stated,

> People are set in bad situations and people can either go towards the bad situation or they can realize that bad situation can set them up for something greater. I feel like I wasn't in a horrible bad situation but seeing certain things around you and you just realize that I can either be that person or I can be somebody completely different."

Kim certainly wanted something greater for herself and the world; she stated that her goal was "trying to make a new medicine to cure disease." High expectations and ambitious goals motivated Kim to continue her path towards a college degree.

Commitment.

Persisting in college was important to Kim and an important reflection of her student identity. When asked how she would feel if she were no longer in college, she asserted, "I feel like I would definitely down myself all the time because I wasn't doing my goals or what I set to do in life." Although she encountered challenges in college, including transferring schools and dealing with family illnesses, she never considered dropping out of school. She stated,

> No, I don't think I've ever felt the need to put a pause on school. My mom is always like, 'Kim you need to . . . it's okay, everything will work out. Just stay in school and we'll figure everything out.'

Her commitment to college and to being a student provided a buffer to the challenges of transferring schools and dealing with family issues.

Kim was committed to pursuing a college degree because she believed it was necessary in order to make the type of impact she wanted to in the world. She shared,

> You can work and make money but I feel like I wouldn't be impacting people who I want to impact. I can talk to people through McDonald's window and tell them to have a good day. I might make their day brighter, but that wouldn't from what my goals are in trying to make a new medicine to cure disease or something, that wouldn't be the same level of where I'm trying to be.

Part of Kim's commitment to college was because she wanted to make a significant contribution to the world, and she believed she could achieve this through earning a degree in biomedical engineering.

Student identity.

Kim had a high student identity and being a student was an important reflection of who she was. Her identity as a student was formed at a young age due her mother's insistence that education was a top priority. Kim was identified as smart early in elementary school and provided opportunities to be involved in special educational programs. Kim took advantage of these programs, which reinforced her student identity. During high school, Kim joined Upward Bound, which furthered her student identity by providing incentives to focus on school and she interacted with staff that were encouraging and supportive of her educational journey. For Kim, identifying as a college student was important because Kim believed that a college degree was required to achieve the goals she set for herself. As a college student, her high student identity contributed to her persistence in college in two significant ways. First, in Kim's words, "being a student is everything I've always been." Going to college, persisting in college, and graduating in college were paramount for Kim because it was how she identified herself for most of her life. Second, her strong identification with being a student contributed to her choice to participate in activities and behaviors that were strongly associated with being a student, such as campus involvement, interacting with faculty, and spending significant amounts of time studying. Kim's student identity had been central to her sense of self since she was a young child and continued to be nurtured and supported throughout her educational journey.

Shannon: "I don't want to be a statistic; I want to prove a statistic wrong."

    Student background.

    Shannon was a nineteen year old sophomore student at a small, liberal arts university in the Midwest, which will be referred to as Liberal Arts University. Shannon was studying Social Work and was also interested in African American studies. She was African American, but also identified as "mixed" as she had several other racial and ethnic backgrounds in her family. Shannon came from a low-income, single-parent household, and was first-generation. She had an older sister who was enrolled in college and a younger brother in high school. Shannon was born and raised in a large urban city located about an hour from Liberal Arts University and attended a large public high school. She joined Upward Bound as a sophomore and was an active participant in the program through the summer following graduation. In addition to Upward Bound, Shannon was involved in sports, drill team, and musical theatre in high school. Shannon's cumulative high school GPA at graduation was 3.01. Her college GPA was 2.62.

    Institutional description.

    Liberal Arts University is small, private, religiously-affiliated, liberal arts university located in a mid-sized city in the Midwest. Student enrollment is about 2,100. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), Liberal Arts University has a very high undergraduate population and is highly residential. It is a more selective institution with low transfer student population. It is primarily a baccalaureate degree granting institution.

Identity.

Shannon strongly identified as African American, and her experience of racial identity was strongly framed by her experience at a predominately white institution (PWI), with an African American student population of three percent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Shannon explained,

> I come from a school where it was super diverse so it was like . . . this is a whole new atmosphere to me. I never noticed my color, honestly, when I was in high school. Here, it's like, 'My gosh, I'm the only Black person here, this is really nerve wracking. I don't want to be here.'"

Shannon had negative experiences with classmates who used the "N" word and perpetuated racial stereotypes in a class project. Shannon described the impact these experiences had on her college experience, "I just deal with a lot of race things. Sometimes I am not comfortable here because of that... I didn't want to come back here because of the whole, not diversity."

Shannon's experience at Liberal Arts University made her more aware of her African American identity and impacted her career choice. Shannon explained,

> Race has become something that's very important to me, which is funny because race was not something I had to deal with in high school. I guess it's a good thing that I came here because I learned to love my race even more...African American people were once a strong people. People do not know that. People do not know that...In Social Work, I want to do something with African American children or minorities.

Although the lack of diversity was challenging for Shannon, she appreciated her experience at Liberal Arts University because it made her more aware of and proud of her African American heritage. She shared, "Just being here makes me . . . makes me love my heritage, my background even more." Shannon also mentioned that the recent events in Ferguson, Missouri influenced her African American identity because she saw the African American community coming together and she wanted to be a part of that movement. A strong African American identity was significant and central to Shannon.

In addition to racial identity, Shannon identified as a low-income, first-generation student. Shannon related strongly to being a low-income student because she experienced financial difficulties. She explained, "It's really hard not being able to be as fortunate as others who were fortunate enough to have money all the time and be able to afford things. Times are hard." Financial difficulty was not new to Shannon, however. She shared, "I guess it's not really that bad because I didn't grow up having a lot of things anyway. But, you need money...Money is kind of important if you want to get the things you need to get to get to where you need to go." When asked why being a first-generation student was important to her sense of identity, she responded,

> Because maybe it's a generational curse...A lot of people I know, their parents didn't graduate with bachelor's degrees. I guess once you break the generational curse, you start something new. My kids are going to have parents that graduated from a four year college."

Shannon's identity as a low-income, first-generation student was important because it motivated her to accomplish her goals. A college degree was an important goal for

Shannon because she wanted financial security and she wanted her future children to have parents with college degrees.

Student involvement.

Shannon's involvement in college changed significantly from freshmen year to sophomore year. Shannon explained, "last year, I was more excited to be here because it's a new environment, it's a smaller school...I studied a lot..." However, during her sophomore year, Shannon described herself as "lazy." She shared that she was not motivated and was performing poorly on tests, even when she would study. When asked if she had sought out help for these issues, she responded, "Gosh, if Upward Bound could come to Liberal Arts University, then I would be an A and B student instead of having C's sometimes. It would be easier if there was an Upward Bound here." Shannon felt that she lacked support and encouragement, which led to less motivation and engagement at Liberal Arts University.

Shannon explained that she was more involved in campus activities, including musical theatre and a diversity club, during her freshmen year. Shannon performed in a musical her freshmen year and was planning to perform in a second production during the fall of her sophomore year. However, she decided to drop out because she wanted to get a job, which was difficult with the rehearsal schedule. Shannon was involved with the diversity club and participated in campus events about racism and stereotypes sponsored through Student Affairs her freshmen year as well.

She became less engaged sophomore year and explained, "This year is different for me just because I didn't want to come back here." Shannon decided to return for her sophomore year because "my dad wanted me to come here...my friends wanted me to

come back, so me being the type of person I am to make everybody happy, I came back."
However, after returning for her sophomore year and continuing to be unhappy, Shannon
decided to transfer to the state university in her home town for second semester.

Although Shannon was not active in campus organizations her sophomore year,
she did maintain a strong relationship with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, who
was responsible for diversity issues. Shannon shared, "Whenever I have a problem or
when I feel like releasing my stress I go there [to the Dean]." During the observational
period, Shannon stopped in to the Associate Dean's office because she was upset about a
conversation that took place during her Race Relations class. The Associate Dean
listened to Shannon and let her share about the experience. He responded by saying, "I
am proud of you for how you handled the situation." Shannon shared that she felt
supported and empowered by the Associate Dean and that he had been a positive person
she could go to while at Liberal Arts University.

Involvement outside the classroom was an important component of being a
student for Shannon, even though she was less engaged during her sophomore year. She
explained, "Not only is success about all the good grades, it's about making friends and
changing lives while you're here. That's success to me. Coming out not the same way
you came in." Although Shannon wanted to make a difference and get involved at
Liberal Arts University, her negative experiences on campus with race caused her to be
dispirited. In the conversation with the Associate Dean, he encouraged her to stay at
Liberal Arts University and help change the racial climate. She responded, "I am just not
strong enough right now." Shannon wanted to be engaged, but felt she could not do so in
the environment at Liberal Arts University.

As a freshman, Shannon's typical day consisted of going to class, attending musical rehearsals, working at her off-campus job, studying and doing homework. During her sophomore year, she was unable to keep her off-campus job because she did not have transportation and she no longer participated in theatre. She explained, "now that I'm not in a musical, I don't know what to do with life." When asked about an experience in which Shannon strongly identified as a student, she shared,

> Yesterday, I was so tired, I did not want to get up out of bed. I was thinking about
>
> skipping actually. I was considering skipping class. Then I was like, 'No. You
>
> can't do that.' I actually got up and went to class."

Shannon dealt with lack of motivation and engagement, which stemmed from her negative experiences with racism on campus, but was still committed to pursuing her education.

Role of Upward Bound.

Upward Bound made a significant impact on Shannon's identity as a student. Shannon shared that the encouragement from staff made the strongest impact on her. She explained,

> The staff, they was always very helpful...y'all made it seem like college was fun
>
> so I was like, 'Okay, I'm going to college. I'm definitely serious about college.'
>
> The way y'all stressed it so much. All the time. Which is a good thing because a
>
> lot of people need that. I know I needed the push sometimes. There was days I
>
> didn't want to do nothing. But the staff said, 'Nope...hour of studying and do your
>
> homework first then do whatever you want.'

This encouragement and support was something Shannon felt was lacking from her experience at Liberal Arts University and one of the reasons she decided to transfer back to a college closer to home. She said, "I will have more people on my back about, 'You really need to get your stuff done. You really need to get your stuff together.' Once I'm home, people are really going to be on me and I want that. I want that... Someone who believes in me." Shannon felt she needed this type of support to be successful in college.

In addition to the support from Upward Bound staff, Shannon shared that exposure to colleges through Upward Bound played a significant role in her identity as a college student. She described, "The college tours really helped me out because that helped motivate me to be like, 'I want to come here. I want to go to college.'" The other significant Upward Bound activities for Shannon were tutoring and the Senior Bridge program, where graduated seniors lived on a college campus and took college courses. Shannon explained, "It did help me prepare for what classes would be like, what living with other people would be like and being independent... that helped a lot."

When asked if Upward Bound had an impact on her decision to go to college Shannon stated, "I've always wanted to go to college, but Upward Bound pretty much put it into motion. It got me motivated to actually go...I guess Upward Bound pushed the start button." Upward Bound provided Shannon with the encouragement and support she needed, the exposure to colleges through campus visits, and motivation and tools to put her college dream into motion.

Motivation.

Shannon had several sources of motivation in her life, but the strongest motivation came from not wanting to be a statistic. The desire to prove stereotypes and

statistics wrong was referenced several times during the interviews and during a
conversation she had with the Associate Dean during the observation period. Shannon
was discussing a conversation that took place in her Race Relations class. She explained
that she was upset by another student's comment. The Associate Dean asked her how she
responded and she said she did not confront the student and explained, "I could have
gone off like they expect Black girls to do, but I am not a stereotype." The Associated
Dean replied, "you have never been a stereotype," to which Shannon stated, "I like to
prove stereotypes wrong." Shannon did not want to conform to stereotypes, nor confirm
the negative statistics about low-income, first-generation, African American students
dropping out of college. When asked to describe what she meant by proving the statistics
wrong, she explained,

> When I read that not a lot of Black people actually go to college and finish
> through with it, I think, 'I don't want to be a statistic.' I want to prove a statistic
> wrong. That's actually my motivation, not to be a statistic...and not to shame baby
> mama's or anything, but I don't want to be a baby mama. I want to be married and
> I want to have kids then. I want to establish my career first and then have a
> family in the future.

Shannon's strong desire not to be a statistic motivated her to stay in school and work
towards her goal of a college degree.

Defying the statistics was not Shannon's only motivation. Shannon was
motivated by learning and gaining more knowledge while in college in order to make a
change in people's lives. She explained why a college degree is important to her by
stating,

Just because I want the knowledge. Knowledge is power. The more knowledge

you have, the more you can do. When you know about situations and things

going on in the world you can . . . the more you can try to change things.

Her desire to make a positive impact in people's lives through a career in social work

motivated her to stay in school and pursue her degree.

Lastly, Shannon was motivated by financial security, not just for herself, but her

family.

She described, "I just want to give back to show my appreciation of her taking care of me

by herself for 19 years. That motivates me, taking care of my mom. Take care of my

family." Financial stability was important to Shannon because of the stress that

accompanied not having enough money. Shannon explained,

It's tiring, it's very stressful... But, that motivates me. I want to be financially

stable. Growing up. . . I'm not going to say we had it all, we didn't. We had some

struggles, a lot of struggles. My mom made it. I don't want to have to struggle.

Shannon's motivation for a more financially secure future was a driving force behind

her desire to get a college degree.

Commitment.

Shannon was strongly committed to graduating from college, which was reflected

in her statement, "Dropping out is not an option for me. If I want to be somebody I have

to do the work." Despite facing challenges in college, including the lack of diversity on

her campus and financial stress, Shannon never considered dropping out of college. She

decided to transfer to a more diverse campus that was less expensive, but never

considering dropping out altogether. She explained, "If I was to drop out of school and

just work I would be a statistic and that's my whole thing, I don't want to be a statistic."
Staying in school was also important to Shannon because she wanted to be able to support herself financially. She stated, "I don't want to rely on other people. I want to be able to make my own way and to be able to provide for myself and my family or whatever in the future." Shannon's commitment to college was evident throughout the interview in her passion and energy.

Shannon was also committed to earning a degree because she wanted to be able to give hope to younger generations. She explained, "I can give hope to people younger than me, like, 'This is where I came from. I came from a struggle. I came from where you come from. I understand where you come from, but look where I'm at now.'" Her commitment to being a college student was because she wanted to be a positive example for those who come after her.

Being committed to earning a college degree meant waking up every day and doing what is required. Shannon described,

> It's actually waking up and being determined to do what you got to do, get it done even though you don't want to get it done, even though you're too lazy to get anything done, just doing it though and not quitting.

Shannon had experienced a lack of motivation, engagement, and support during her sophomore year at Liberal Arts University, but still woke up every day, doing what she had to do to earn a college degree. Shannon's commitment to college was reflected in her perseverance.

Student identity.

Being a student was important to Shannon; she was strongly motivated and showed deep commitment to persisting and graduating from college. However, when asked how important being a student was to her overall sense of self, Shannon replied, "I don't know how to answer that just because I feel great about myself. Being a student doesn't make me feel great about myself...my self-worth is still going to be up here regardless [of being a student]." When asked how she identified herself, Shannon stated, "I don't technically identify as a student. I'm just Shannon." She continued by saying, "It's [being a student] a part of me, it's not me." Shannon asserted that her self-worth did not come from being a college student, but rather just being herself. Being a student was important to her though, because it was a step along the journey to accomplish her goals. Being a student was a path to financial stability for her and her family, to becoming a Social Worker who changed people's lives, and to being a strong African American female who defied the statistics.

Shannon's identity as a student was influenced by her parents. Although Shannon was raised by her mother, her father played an important role in Shannon's life. She stated, "college is very important to my dad so he stressed that to me." Her father was also one of the main reasons she decided to attend Liberal Arts University and return for a second year; he wanted her to attend a private school. In talking about the role her father played in her life, she explained, "I don't know why I value his opinion so much, but he's my dad though. I love him dearly. I got to make him proud." Shannon's mother made a significant impact on Shannon's student identity development as well. When Shannon was in elementary school, her mother went back to school and earned her

Associate's degree as a paralegal. Shannon described the impact of this experience, "Seeing my mom go to college as a full time mom...I'm like, 'If she can go to college and do all that I can go to college too.'" Shannon's sister was also a college student and was one of Shannon's role models growing up. She shared,

> I always looked up to my sister and I always wanted to be like her...She was my role model. She's been in college. So, I'm like, 'I want to be like my sister and I want to go to college too.'"

The importance of college that was exhibited by Shannon's family played a strong role in her student identity development.

Carrie: "It's like my identity is split in half"

Student background.

Carrie was a nineteen year old sophomore student a large state university in the Midwest, which will be referred to as "State University." Carrie was an elementary education major. Carrie identified as Guyanese, with a mixture of several other ethnicities including Portuguese, West Indian, Cherokee, and Caucasian. Carrie came from a low-income, single parent household, and was first-generation. She had two older sisters and several nieces and nephews. Carrie lived in the same large urban city in which State University is located. She joined Upward Bound as a freshman and was an active participant in the program through the summer following graduation. In addition to Upward Bound, Carrie was involved with sports and school clubs throughout high school. Carrie's cumulative high school GPA at graduation was 3.66. Her college GPA was 2.20.

Institutional description.

State University is a large, public, state university located in a large, metropolitan city in the Midwest. In fall 2014, total student enrollment was 15,227. According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), State University has a high undergraduate population and is primarily nonresidential. It is a selective institution with high transfer-in population. It has both doctoral and professional graduate programs, but professional degrees are dominant over doctoral degrees.

Identity.

Carrie identified strongly as being an aunt and daughter. Family was the most important part of Carrie's life. She talked about her two nieces and nephew and shared that she spends most of her weekends and some evenings with them. Carrie's family heritage was also important to her. She shared, "it's important that I'm half Guyanese...on my dad's side, he's part Guyanese and then part Portuguese and West Indian. On my mom's side, my grandma, she was half from India and her dad was Cherokee and Caucasian." When asked why her family heritage is important to her, Carrie responded that her parents "always say it's important to know where you came from. Just family in general is important."

Because being an aunt, sister, and daughter was important to Carrie, she spent a considerable amount of time with them. She would give her sister a ride to work or appointments and spend time with her mom and extended family regularly. Carrie cared deeply for her family and helped them in any way she could. Her mother and father had been separated since she was a young child, but her father used to still help with family bills. Carrie shared that the past few months her father was not paying the rent at her

mother's house. This created a great deal of stress for Carrie and she was emotional

discussing the situation. Carrie worked two part-time jobs while going to school so that

she could help pay the bills for her mother, in addition to her own groceries and gas.

Carrie said that her mother "always feels bad. The last time I told her that my dad paid

me back, but he didn't." Carrie's strong family identity was reflected in the amount of

time she spent with her family and the financial support she provided.   When asked

about other aspects of her identity, Carrie explained that her race and gender were not

significant for her. In Carrie's classes that were observed, she was often one of only two

or three African American students. When asked if this impacted her in anyway, she

responded, "I don't think I've ever even noticed." Carrie, however, did identify with

being a low-income, first-generation student. Being low-income was important to Carrie

because it served as a motivator to earn a college degree. She shared, "It makes me want

to have a job or career." Her first-generation status was important to her because of her

parents; Carrie explained, "My mom and dad, neither one of them went to college, and

they wanted me and my sisters to."

Student involvement.

Carrie lived on campus at State University, but she was not involved in campus

activities or organizations. She explained that she did not participate because she did not

have time with her work schedule. Carrie was involved in athletics, school clubs, and

Upward Bound during high school, but felt that, due to her work schedule, she did not

have time in college. Carrie worked two days per week at Arby's and had recently taken

a new job with a daycare four afternoons a week. With her work schedule and her desire

to spend time with family, she did not have time to be involved in campus activities.

Carrie, however, decided to quit her job at Arby's, so she would have more time to focus on school.

During the observational period, Carrie was an engaged student, took notes in class, followed along with in-class discussions, and completed in-class activities and exercises. However, she did not talk to any of her peers before, during, or after class. When walking to and from class, she did not speak to anyone. When asked how often she talks to faculty members, she said "very rarely." In response to how often she talks to her advisor, she said, "just once a semester." She stated she "almost never" attended campus events because she did not have time or she did not want to go by herself. In Carrie's time journal, she reported that she attended church with her cousins off-campus one evening. The second evening, she ate dinner in her dorm room, watched TV, did homework, and went to bed. The observations and time journal confirmed what Carrie shared in the interview; her limited time outside of class and work is spent with family or by herself.

Role of Upward Bound.

Carrie shared that Upward Bound played a positive role in her student identity development. She stated, "When I was in high school there was Upward Bound, I would always go over there and do homework. Now, there's really not anywhere for me to go and just do my homework." Having a consistent place to go every day to do homework and having access to tutors was important to Carrie. She explained, "tutoring helped me a lot. A lot of times if I was at home I would not do it [homework] and I mostly only needed a tutor to help with math." Carrie did not feel like she had a place like this at State University and was not aware of programs on her campus where she could receive

tutoring help. Carrie was struggling in her math course. When asked why, she responded, "It's a combination of not knowing how to do some of it and not really trying very hard." Upward Bound provided an environment for Carrie in high school that could address both these issues through access to math tutors and providing incentives and motivation.

In addition to tutoring, Carrie found the college visits to be an important aspect of Upward Bound that helped her see herself as a college student. The Senior Bridge program was an opportunity for Carrie to live on campus and take college courses during the summer after high school graduation. Carrie shared that the Senior Bridge program played a significant role in her student identity development; the Senior Bridge program "prepared you for starting college." Carrie, however, did not elaborate on how the program prepared her for college. Carrie believed that Upward Bound was important for her student identity development, but she had a difficult time remembering the specific Upward Bound activities or events that were most impactful.

Motivation.

Carrie was motivated to earn a college degree for her family. It was important to Carrie's parents that she graduated from college. Carrie also saw herself as a role model for her nieces and nephew. She explained, "It's so important to get a degree for my nieces and nephews...I don't want them to grow up to be discouraged." Carrie's family supported her by reminding her to do her homework when she spent time with them on the weekends. Carrie's family was a strong source of motivation.

Carrie's desire to be a teacher also served as a strong motivation. Carrie knew from a young age that she wanted to be a teacher; in high school she participated in Future Educators of America and her current job was working with children at a daycare

and preschool. Her reason for pursuing a college degree was so she could become a teacher. She shared, "I've always wanted to be a teacher. I like seeing people learn."

Commitment.

Graduating from college was important to Carrie. Carrie shared that she never considered quitting because, "I feel like if I wasn't in school I'd be not ever going to do anything. I don't know...Like I wouldn't become anything good." Even though Carrie faced academic difficulties with her math class and was on academic probation, she never considered dropping out. Carrie's family also experienced financial hardship with her mother unable to work and her father not paying the bills. Even with the financial stress, Carrie was committed to staying in school. She believed that graduating from college would lead to a better job and more financial security for her and her family in the future.

Student identity.

Carrie's identity as a student was formed at a young age when she was identified as a "smart" by her teachers. She was invited to participate in an academic enrichment program in elementary school. She shared that participating in this program was important to her because, "I think I just liked feeling smarter than people." School was important to Carrie's parents and they encouraged her to do well so she could go to college, but Carrie was also intrinsically motivated to do well in school. She shared, "I think it really is part of my personality...I remember when I was little I used to cry if I had to miss school, even if I was sick." For Carrie, being a student meant getting good grades, doing homework, and studying, but she also was in college in order to "learn stuff that's actually important."

Carrie did not exhibit the behaviors of a typical individual with high student identity. Although she stated that being a student was an important reflection of herself, when asked what she most strongly identified as, she responded with "an aunt." Carrie was a college student because she believed it would help her family. By going to college, she was making her parents proud, providing a good example for her nieces and nephew, and earning a degree that would allow her to make a better living for herself and family. Because her family played such a large role in her life, Carrie was not able to participate in many of the typical college activities, such as student clubs, attending campus events, meeting with faculty, or socializing with other college students. Carrie did, however, take her school work seriously because getting good grades was what it meant to be a student for Carrie, rather than campus involvement or faculty interaction.

Carrie stated, "It's like my identity is split in half." Carrie was a college student who wanted to do well in the classroom and "actually learn things that are important," but she was also an aunt, sister, and daughter that was loyal to her family. Carrie felt pulled in both directions. Her identity as a family member and identity as a student were not always at odds, but when her family needed her, she had less time to dedicate to her school work, which created stress for Carrie. Despite the stress of being "split in half," Carrie was committed to pursuing her education because being a student was best for her family.

Heather: "I have to try to be the best student I can be"

Student background.

Heather was a nineteen year old sophomore student at a large state university in the Midwest, which will be referred to as "State University." This is same institution that

Carrie attended. Heather was originally a political science, pre-Law major, but was now studying Criminal Justice. Heather was bi-racial (Caucasian and African American). She came from a low-income, single-parent household, and was first-generation. She had one younger sister in high school. Heather lived in the same large urban city in which State University is located. She joined Upward Bound as a freshman and was an active participant in the program through the summer following graduation. In addition to Upward Bound, Heather was involved in school clubs and worked throughout high school. Heather's cumulative high school GPA at graduation was 2.85. Her college GPA was 1.70.

Institutional description.

State University is a large, public, state university located in a large, metropolitan city in the Midwest. In fall 2014, total student enrollment was 15,227. According to the Carnegie Classification for Higher Education Institutions (n.d.), State University has a high undergraduate population and is primarily nonresidential. It is a selective institution with high transfer-in population. It has both doctoral and professional graduate programs, but professional degrees are dominant over doctoral degrees.

Identity.

Heather identified as a college student. When asked why being a student was an important aspect of her identity, she shared, "That's my main focus right now. I have to try to be the best student I can be so I can graduate, get my degree and start a career." Heather, however, did not identify with being a typical college student. She felt that she had to grow up and become more mature faster than her peers due to her family situation. She explained,

> When my parents split up, my dad was out of the picture so I was forced to be like
> a second parent. My sister, she stated rebelling, not going to school, messing with
> drugs and alcohol. It put stress on my mom, so I felt like I had to be a second
> parent and I had to grow up faster, I guess, and have more responsibility.

Heather's experience with her parents' divorce and dealing with her sister's behaviors had a profound impact on Heather. When asked to share significant life events that impacted her identity, Heather responded by saying

> I think getting a full ride scholarship, because during that time when I was
> applying for scholarships, my family situation at home, it was kind of rocky and
> hard to focus, but I feel proud that during that I was still able to apply and get a
> full ride scholarship.

The family challenges Heather faced during her adolescent years shaped the type of student she became.

Heather stated that she strongly identified with being a daughter and girlfriend. Her relationship with her mother and boyfriend were important to her. She explained her relationship with her boyfriend and the role he played in her identity as a student,

> My boyfriend, he's a big part of it. He pushes me. He's currently not in school
> and didn't want to go to school. But, he sees, I tell him, you need a degree to have
> a successful job. I've tried to get him interested, have him talk to people at State
> University, so now he's enrolled to go next semester.

Heather's relationship with her boyfriend positively impacted her identity as a student because he supported her in her education, but she also shared that the times she felt least like a student were when she would choose to spend time with him over doing

homework. She described, "I started slacking because my boyfriend came back home from boot camp so I would be like, 'Let's hang out' or whatever. Let's go out instead of studying when I knew I should have been studying." Heather's identity as a girlfriend had positive and negative influences on her identity as a student.

Student involvement.

Heather lived on campus for the first semester of her freshmen year, but moved back home with her mother after one semester. The full-ride scholarship that Heather received was part of a large student support program. Heather participated in the scholarship program's events a couple of times per semester and utilized the tutoring services and computer lab. She also was a member of a TRiO Student Support Services program on her campus. Heather attended informal events on campus as well, such as hockey games, dance parties, and events in the Campus Recreation Center. Although she was involved on campus, her time was limited due to employment. She explained, "I've got a lot of jobs so it's hard for me to do extra stuff."

Off-campus, Heather held two to three part-time jobs. She worked a retail job during the holiday season, worked the front desk at a local fitness center, and was an assistant for an after-school program. Her work responsibilities meant she was not on campus, other than for class, most days. During her observational period, she drove to campus just prior to class. After class, she stopped by the computer lab that was part of her scholarship program and then left for her off-campus job at the after-school program. Although Heather had several work responsibilities, her student involvement came first. She described a recent situation,

I had to go to a dinner [for the Student Support Services program] and I forgot

about it last minute so I told my supervisor that I have to leave early tonight

because I have to go to this . . . it's part of my commitment, I agreed to it when I

joined the program so it was like, 'I have to leave early tonight to do that.'"

Heather's involvement in her scholarship program and Student Support Services program

took precedence over work obligations.

Heather's typical day included going to class, going to work, working out at the

gym, and spending time with her boyfriend. The observational period and time journal

also reflected these activities. Heather explained that her courses this semester did not

necessitate significant study time, but finals week required a great deal of studying. She

described, "I'm more tired and stressed out because of dead week and next week is

finals...I'm constantly studying this week to prepare for my finals."

When asked to describe herself as a student, Heather explained she has learned

how to manage her time much better now as a college student. With school, family, work,

and extracurricular activities, Heather has learned a system to stay organized. She

explained,

I make sure I have what I need for my classes, I have done what's due, and I am

prepared and know what we're going be discussing in class or what's coming up.

Make sure I have everything written down on my agenda or on my phone. I have

a paper due next Thursday or this needs due by Tuesday. Just being organized.

Heather's involvement included on-campus activities through the scholarship program

and Student Support Services program, as well as off-campus employment. Her campus

involvement helped her as a student by providing support services and her part-time work responsibilities provided financial support to stay in school.

Role of Upward Bound.

Heather shared that Upward Bound was significant in her student identity development. She explained that the chance to explore different opportunities through activities, job shadow, and career exploration was the most helpful aspect of Upward Bound. Heather stated that Upward Bound was "eye-opening" and helped her come out of her shell. She stated,

> I feel like Upward Bound really helped with that because I was really quiet and shy. Sometimes it was good just to take in information and then as I became a junior and senior I was more open and active in the program so I felt like then I was more comfortable to ask questions about stuff and ask for help when I needed it.

Through being exposed to new opportunities in Upward Bound, Heather gained confidence and became more comfortable seeking out additional information, as well as help, when she needed it.

The mentoring component of Upward Bound was also significant for Heather. Heather still kept in touch with her Upward Bound mentors and stated, "I still keep in contact with them, see them daily. They're still making sure I'm doing what I need to do. If I need help with essays or anything, they're always saying they'll read over them for me." The relationships Heather formed with Upward Bound staff were meaningful and provided motivation for her to continue in college. She worked as an assistant in the same after-school program as several of her Upward Bound mentors. Heather explained,

"I spend a lot of time here at work so obviously you guys [Upward Bound staff] know me, so you're a big part of it because you guys got me on track for all that." The mentor relationships Heather formed while in Upward Bound contributed to her student identity development.

Several other Upward Bound programs were formative for Heather's student identity development. She described the influence tutoring had on her student development,

> Tutoring was one of the biggest things. At the time I was like, 'Oh my God, I don't want to give my hours up.' Now it's really paid off. I use it as a study skill now. At least for an hour, I do homework like we did there in homework time.

The consistency of the tutoring program and staff was important to Heather. She stated, "You guys always knew what we needed to do or what we needed help with just because we're there daily." Heather also commented on the importance of Senior Seminar, which was a monthly program for students during their senior year to help them complete the necessary steps toward college enrollment. She explained, "Senior seminar...it just prepared us and any questions we had, you guys were there to answer them right then." Lastly, Heather shared that the Senior Bridge Program, which was an opportunity for graduated seniors to live on campus and take college courses, was important to her student identity development. She stated,

> It [Senior Bridge] was like, 'This is real. This is what it's going to be like in the fall.' You're on your own, you have to pick what you need for groceries, when you need to do your homework, when you need to study. Obviously you guys were there but it was up to us to plan our schedule."

Motivation.

Heather was motivated by her desire to earn a college degree and get a good job. She described how taking courses in her major served as motivation because it meant she was closer to earning her degree. Heather explained,

I see that I'm starting to get into the criminal justice classes and it's more interesting and exciting. It's like, 'Okay. I'm one step closer. I'm one year . . . another year into my getting my degree.' It's exciting thinking, 'In two years I could be graduating and looking for a job.' It's knowing that you're always a step closer to having a degree.

Earning a degree was important to Heather because she believed it would lead to a successful job. She stated, "Today you're not promised a job just because you have a degree, but with a degree you're one step ahead of everyone else…I feel like you have to have a degree to have somewhat of a successful job." Earning a degree and getting a good job motivated Heather to pursue her education, despite not knowing exactly what type of career she wanted in criminal justice. She explained, "I don't really know exactly what I want to do. I just know I want to do something in criminal justice field. I'm in there trying to explore what I want to do." Even though she was uncertain of her specific career path, she was motivated to earn a criminal justice degree in order to attain a job in that field.

Commitment.

Heather articulated a strong commitment to graduating from college, despite facing challenges. Heather detailed, "I was on academic probation because last semester

I didn't do so well. I had to drop a class and I didn't get such a good grade on the other one." When asked why she persisted, she stated,

> I have a full ride scholarship. It would be dumb to just give up and then have to pay out of pocket or be in debt with a bunch of loans. I have so many people that were so proud, so to tell them, 'Yeah, I didn't do so hot this semester I'm going to just quit.'

Heather did not consider quitting because she did not want to lose the scholarship opportunity she received. Additionally, she did not want to have to tell her family and friends who were proud of her accomplishments that she was dropping out.

Although Heather was committed to earning a college degree, she recognized the hard work required. She explained, "Just going and being there and having to put the effort in. I think the hardest part sometimes is just getting up and going." Heather was not only committed to graduating from college, she believed she would graduate from State University. Her commitment to the university was attributed to the fact that she had a full-ride scholarship to State University and it was conveniently located near family and work. She stated, "I have the scholarship here, I have a good thing. It's close to home and work and everything." Heather's scholarship contributed a great deal to her commitment to college, and specifically State University.

Student identity.

Heather introduced herself as a student and stated that being a student was one of her most important identities. However, when asked if being a student was an important reflection of herself, Heather responded, "I guess when you think of college you think of

everyone there's a student...I feel like being a student is just a title." Heather saw herself as a student, but being recognized and known for being a student was not important.

Being a student did not mean good grades or a high GPA for Heather. Rather, trying one's hardest and putting in the effort was most important. Heather described what college success meant to her by stating,

I feel like trying your hardest. I've tried my hardest in a couple classes and it's just not good enough. I've had to drop a couple of classes because they were just like, I can try as much as I want but at the end of it I wasn't going to pass so I knew I had to . . . in order to be successful it was best to drop it at the time and retake it later.

For Heather, being a student meant trying your best, but also recognizing that dropping a class may be necessary. High grades were not important to Heather as a student; rather, earning the degree in order to attain her desired career was most important.

Heather's identity as a student was influenced by her mother. She stated, "My mom always pushed me. Always, you need to go to college. You need to do good in high school and middle school because it's going to carry on to affect how you get into college." Heather shared that, although her mother always pushed her to go to college, at first, she did not want to go. She explained, "I was like, 'I don't know what I want to do so what's the point of going to school for four years when I could be working?'" Heather described how Upward Bound changed her mind and made her realize that her mother was right. She said,

I feel like when I joined Upward Bound it was more eye opening. I could see

different opportunities. You don't have to decide right away what you want to be.

You can go and explore different fields and job shadow people or ask questions.

Heather's mother, as well as Upward Bound, contributed to Heather's strong student

identity.

Ultimately, being a student was Heather's focus because it lead to her goals of a

degree and job. She explained, "it's [school] like that's my main priority at the time. So I

need to put that before going out, before work or doing anything else because without

that there's no way I'm going to get a degree without being a student." Being known as a

student and having the title of student was irrelevant to Heather; instead, Heather's

identity as a student was important because it was a necessary step on her journey to

achieve her goals of a degree and successful job.

Cross-Case Analysis

Each of the four cases described above provide insight into the role of student

identity on college persistence for Upward Bound graduates. However, analyzing the

cases together provides a deeper and more complete understanding. By utilizing a

multiple case study approach, one can examine the phenomenon of student identity

centrality and persistence by exploring the similarities and differences across cases. The

next section will include the convergent and divergent themes that emerged through

cross-case analysis.

Convergent themes.

Through cross-case analysis, four convergent themes emerged. The themes were:

being a student is one identity among many, being a student is a means to an end,

students persist in the face of challenges, and *Upward Bound provides an environment conducive to forming a student identity.*

Being a student is one identity among many.

All four students described themselves as students when asked to state their identities. However, all four students listed being a student as just one identity among many. In addition to being students, the participants listed several identities, including their race, gender, family relationships, major, involvement in student organizations, religion, and socioeconomic and first-generation status. When asked what identities were most important to them, Kim stated, "Definitely being an African American Woman," Shannon stated, "Black," Carrie stated, "Being an aunt," and Heather stated, "a student, a girlfriend, and a daughter." Case study participants also identified themselves by listing important personality characteristics, such as "I'm very optimistic," (Kim), "I'm goal driven when I need to be. I'm motivated when I need to be. I'm a perfectionist" (Shannon), "quiet, responsible" (Carrie), and "hardworking and always respectful and dependable" (Heather). Although all of the participants expressed their student identity as just one of several identities that were important to them, the centrality of their student identity varied greatly between participants. These differences are highlighted in the section on divergent themes.

Being a student is a means to an end.

Being a student was important to all four case study participants. When asked how they would feel if they were no longer students they described feelings of disappointment due to not achieving their goals. Kim shared, "I feel like I would definitely down myself all the time because I wasn't doing my goals or what I set to do in

life." Shannon explained, "If I was to drop out of school and just work I would be a statistic and that's my whole thing, I don't want to be a statistic." Carrie described, "I feel like if I wasn't in school I'd be not ever going to do anything… Like I wouldn't become anything good." Heather stated, "I'd probably feel like I'm not really accomplishing anything... there's no way I'm going get a degree without being a student." The participants' responses to this question revealed that being a student was important to them because it was a means to their end goals.

Kim's goal was to become an African American female engineer that discovers a cure for cancer; being a student was her means to achieving this goal. Shannon was determined not to become a statistic, therefore, remaining a student and completing her degree was her way of defying the low graduation rate statistic for low-income, first-generation, minority students. Carrie's goal was to become a teacher, and being a college student was a required step to making this dream a reality. Lastly, Heather's motivation was to get a successful job and she believed being a student was the pathway to accomplishing her goal. Although each participant's goal was unique, they all shared the same belief that being a student was the means to get where they wanted to go. The participants, however, differed greatly in terms of what it meant to be a student. These differences are explored in the section on divergent themes.

Students persist in the face of challenges.

Although each of the participants experienced challenges in college, including academic, family, and financial challenges, all of the participants stated that they never considered dropping out. When asked why they continued in school, despite the challenges, they had the following responses:

I don't think I've ever felt the need to put a pause on school. My mom is always like, 'Kim you need to . . . it's okay, everything will work out.' (Kim)

Dropping out is not an option for me. If I want to be somebody I have to do the work. (Shannon)

It's so important to get a degree and also for my nieces and nephews, so they don't grow up discouraged. (Carrie)

I have a full ride scholarship. It would be dumb to just give up and then have to pay out of pocket or be in debt with a bunch of loans. I have so many people that were so proud. (Heather)

The participants' responses revealed that student identity centrality alone was not the reason for persisting in the face of challenges. The participants persisted, not only because of strong goal commitment, which was explored in the previous section, but also for additional personal reasons. Kim persisted because of the support she received from her mother; Shannon persisted due to her belief that a college degree was her path to "be somebody"; Carrie persisted because she wanted to be a role model for her nieces and nephew; and Heather persisted because of the financial support she received from her scholarship program. The reasons for persistence were more complex and multifaceted than student identity centrality. Having a student identity was important, but high student identity centrality did not adequately explain the participants' reasons for persistence; rather, goal commitment, support from family, and financial support through scholarships also played a role in persistence.

The typical challenges that may lead individuals to drop out of school, such as failing a course, family illness, and financial worry, did not deter the participants from

persisting, but it did lead to transferring for two of the participants. Kim transferred to a less expensive school with a larger focus on her major and closer to home after her freshmen year and Shannon transferred to a school with more diversity during her sophomore year. Yet, none of the participants dropped out.

 Upward Bound provides an environment conducive to forming a student identity.

 Upward Bound played a role in the development of student identity through the environment that was created. The Upward Bound environment was important to the participants in three key ways: it provided an opportunity for exploration, it provided an opportunity to create positive student behaviors, and it provided support and encouragement.

 The participants explained that Upward Bound provided them with an opportunity to explore their personal, academic, and career interests, as well as explore potential colleges. Kim explained,

> We always had something new to learn. I feel like that just made us realize there's so many things we can do and we're not limited. So, I feel all the crazy things like juggling class and hula hooping or something you never thought you'd be able to do, Upward Bound let us be able to do it.

When Heather was asked what Upward Bound activities helped develop her identity as a student, she stated, "I'd say the different Saturday College things we did like when we explore different careers or you plan what university you want to go to and you look and see what classes and stuff they have." Heather continued by saying,

I feel like when I joined Upward Bound it was more eye opening. I could see

different opportunities. You don't have to decide right away what you want to be.

You can go and explore different fields and job shadow people or ask questions.

Upward provided an opportunity for these participants to explore their interests, try new

things, and discover new talents. This exploration is a critical component to identity

formation.

Secondly, Upward Bound provided an environment where the participants could

develop strong student behaviors. The daily after-school program consisted of a

mandatory study hour. Providing this environment to study was important to Carrie and

was something that was missing once she started college. She explained, "I think, for me

it's harder because when I was in Upward Bound, I would always go over there and do

homework. Now there's really not anywhere for me to go and just do my homework."

Carrie continued by saying, "A lot of times if I went home I would not do it

[homework]." Shannon described how the mandatory tutoring program served as a

motivator, "There was days I didn't want to do nothing. But nope, an hour of studying

and do your homework, first then we could do whatever we want." Heather explained

how at first she did not like the mandatory study hours, but came to appreciate it. She

stated, "at the time I was like, 'Oh my God, I don't want to give my hours up.' Now it's

really paid off. I use it as a study skill now. At least for an hour I do homework like we

did there in homework time." Kim described how the study environment helped her by

providing positive peer pressure to encourage her to do her work, "having a study area

was really helpful because you saw everybody else doing their homework so you're like,

'Okay. I probably should just do my homework with everyone else.'" Through a positive environment, the participants learned important student behaviors.

Lastly, Upward Bound played a role in student identity development through forming positive relationships with Upward Bound staff. Kim explained, "Just having encouragement to say that you could do it. Even if people didn't think that we could do it, you guys found a way." Heather described her relationship with Upward Bound staff by stating, "I still keep in contact with them, see them daily. They're still making sure I'm doing what I need to do. If I need help with essays or anything, they're always saying they'll read over them for me." Shannon's relationship with Upward Bound staff provided the encouragement and support she wanted and needed to go to college. She explained,

> The way ya'll stressed, y'all stressed it [college] so much. All the time. Which is a good thing because a lot of people need that. We need the extra push. I know I needed the push sometimes.

Upward Bound staff encouraged students to pursue a college degree. By providing support and the "extra push," the participants felt capable of becoming a college student. Additionally, the relationships did not end at graduation. Heather shared that she still receives support from Upward Bound staff. Relationships with staff contributed to the impact Upward Bound had on the participants.

Divergent Themes

There were several commonalities between the participants which have been described above. However, several divergent themes also emerged when analyzing across cases, including: *the level of student identity centrality, what it means to be a*

college student, and *the impact of Upward Bound*. These differences are explored in the following section.

The level of student identity centrality.

As mentioned in the section on convergent themes, all of the participants identified being a student as one of their identities. However, the centrality of the participants' student identities varied greatly. Through the cross-case analysis, it became clear that two of the participants, Kim and Heather, had high student identity centrality, whereas the other two participants, Shannon and Carrie, had low student identity centrality. Several differences became apparent based on the high and low student identity centrality pairings.

 Carrie and Shannon had low student identity centrality. Although Carrie agreed with the following statements on the "Student Identity Centrality Survey": "Being a student is an important reflection of who I am" and "In general, being a student is an important part of my self-image," she did not talk about her student identity during the interviews. Additionally, of all four participants, she was least engaged in the behaviors associated with a student identity. She rarely interacted with faculty, staff, or other college students. She stated that she never attended campus events and spent a great deal of time off-campus with her family or at work. For Carrie, her most central identities were as an aunt, daughter, and sister.

Shannon's responses to the "Student Identity Centrality Survey" were unique. She strongly agreed with the statement, "Being a student has very little to do with how I feel about myself." On the other hand, she strongly disagreed with the statement, "being a student is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am." Shannon explained

that being a student was important to her, but it did not impact her self-worth. She stated, "my self-worth is still going be up here regardless." Rather than student identity, Shannon's racial identity was most central. Throughout the interview, she spent the most amount of time reflecting on her racial identity. Additionally, the activities she was involved in on-campus were related to race, such as the multicultural organization she was a member of. When Shannon interacted with faculty and staff it was mostly to discuss racial issues or concerns.

Kim had the highest student identity centrality, which was clear from the "Student Identity Centrality Survey" results, and was confirmed through the interviews and observational data. Kim responded to the survey by stating that she strongly agreed with the following the two statements: "Being a student is an important reflection of who I am" and "In general, being a student is an important part of my self-image." Kim also revealed a high student identity centrality by expressing how important being a college student was to her throughout the interviews. Additionally, she engaged in a number of behaviors were consistent with a student identity, such as interacting with faculty and staff, participating in campus events, spending time studying, and socializing with other college students.

Heather also had high student identity centrality, but it was expressed differently than Kim. Heather agreed with both statements on the "Student Identity Centrality Survey" that corresponded with high student identity centrality, but she did not respond as strongly as Kim. When Heather was asked what identity was most important to her, she stated her student identity. When asked why, she explained, "That's my main focus right now. I have to try to be the best student I can be so I can graduate and start to . . .

get my degree and start a career." Although being a student was central to Heather's identity, she was not as engaged in student behaviors as Kim. She was involved in her scholarship program and a Student Support Services program, but due to several part-time jobs and living off-campus, she did not interact with faculty and staff or spend as much time studying as Kim. Furthermore, Heather's academic record was not as strong as Kim's. Heather failed or dropped several courses during her first year and a half and had a cumulative GPA of 1.70. Kim, on the other hand, completed all of her coursework and had a cumulative GPA of 3.63.

The level of student identity centrality varied between the participants and the differences between the two pairs, Kim and Heather and Carrie and Shannon, re-surfaced throughout the case study. Another example of the differences between the two pairs was in the way the participants expressed what it meant to be a student. These differences are explored in the next section.

What it means to be a college student.

Participants not only differed in the level student identity centrality, but also in what it meant to be a college student. How the participants made sense of what it meant to be a college students differed for those participants with high student identity centrality, Kim and Heather, and those that had low student identity centrality, Shannon and Carrie. Although Kim and Heather had other identities that were important to them, their student identity was most central. Shannon and Carrie, however, viewed their student identity through the lens of their central identities: racial identity and family identity, respectively.

For Kim, being a student meant striving for a high GPA, spending considerable amounts of time studying, and accessing her faculty and tutors regularly. Kim also saw college as an opportunity to learn, not just in the classroom, but from other activities on campus. When asked why she participated in campus events, she explained, "I feel like I can always learn something even if I feel like the thing is going to be really general, there's always some fact that you're not going to know everything." In addition to an academic focus, Kim believed it was important to take advantage of the resources available to her. She stated, "I like how many resources they have here…The stuff is just available to everyone and it's always here. I feel like they're really supportive of people doing whatever they want to do." Kim's understanding of what it meant to be a college student was influenced by her mother who encouraged academic excellence, her teachers throughout her educational experience that recognized her academic talent, and her personal motivation to excel.

Heather's main purpose for pursuing a college degree was to obtain a successful career. Thus, Heather saw college as an opportunity to figure out what type of career she wanted; she described, "I don't really know exactly what I want to do. I just know I want to do something in criminal justice field… I am in there trying to explore what I want to do." Therefore, Heather spent a considerable amount of her time thinking about her future career field, as well as working, in order to gain more work experience and insight in to the type of career she wanted. Heather's understanding of what it meant to be a college student was shaped by her experience in Upward Bound where she first engaged in career exploration and learned the importance of a college degree. She stated,

When I joined Upward Bound it was more eye opening. I could see different opportunities. You don't have to decide right away what you want to be. You can go and explore different fields and job shadow people or ask questions.

Shannon's understanding of what it meant to be a college student was understood through her racial identity. Being a college student meant that she was defying the statistics and stereotypes about low-income, first-generation, African American students. Shannon spent a considerable amount of time thinking about her racial identity, discussing issues of race with her professor and mentor, and reflecting on how she could make a positive impact on the lives of other African Americans. Additionally, for Shannon, college was not just about good grades, but rather, college was a time for transformation. Shannon explained, "not only is success about all the good grades, it's about making friends and changing lives while you're here. Coming out not the same way you came in." Shannon's understanding of what it meant to be a college student was shaped by her experience at a predominately white institution during which she began to explore and understand her own racial identity.

Carrie's understanding of what it meant to be a college student was multifaceted. Like Kim, Carrie believed good grades were important, however, she struggled to ask for help and access resources that were available to her. Carrie also believed that college should be an opportunity to "learn about things that were actually important." For Carrie, however, the most important part of being a college student meant she was a role model for her younger nieces and nephew. Carrie's understanding of what it meant to be a college student was viewed through the lens of her family identity. Carrie's most central identity was as an aunt, and thus, Carrie spent a considerable amount of time with her

family, especially her nieces and nephew. Carrie's understanding of what it meant to be a college student was influenced by her sense of duty to be a positive example to her family members.

Although being a college student was important to all of the participants, Shannon and Carrie differed from Kim and Heather in that their understanding of what it meant to be a student was viewed through their racial and family identities, respectively. In turn, the participants' understanding of what it meant to be a college student impacted their behaviors and activities. Through this analysis, it was clear that just because participants were not engaged in typical student behaviors, it did not mean that being a student was unimportant to them. Rather the analysis revealed that Shannon and Carrie's racial and family identities impacted how they understood what it meant to be a student, and thus, their activities and behaviors were different.

The impact of Upward Bound.

Although all participants indicated that Upward Bound played a role in their student identity development, the type of impact Upward Bound had on each participant was different. For the participants with low student identity centrality, Shannon and Carrie, Upward Bound was significant because it provided them with structure and the external motivation they needed to stay focused on their schooling. However, once they graduated from high school and entered college, Shannon and Carrie both struggled because they did not have the same type of structured program in college. Kim and Heather, who had high student identity centrality, also found Upward Bound to be impactful, but they were both able to internalize the skills they learned in Upward Bound and utilize them in college.

Shannon described how Upward Bound provided structure and motivation by stating, "I know I needed the push sometimes. There were days I didn't want to do nothing. But nope, an hour of studying and do your homework first then do whatever you want." When asked whether or not Shannon participated in student support programs at Liberal Arts University, she explained that there were no programs like Upward Bound. She felt she would be doing better in school if there were a program similar to Upward Bound at her college. She explained,

> Oh my gosh I would be studying. Gosh, if Upward Bound could come to Liberal Arts University…if that was here, I would definitely be my P's and Q's, I would be an A and B student instead of having C's sometimes. It would be easier if there was an Upward Bound here.

Carrie also felt like she would benefit from an Upward Bound-type program in college. She explained, "I think, for me it's harder because when I was in high school with Upward Bound, I would always go over there and do homework. Now, there's really not anywhere for me to go and just do my homework." Carrie needed the structure of a regular and consistent location she could go to complete homework.

Heather, who had high student identity centrality, learned study skills in the Upward Bound program, however, unlike Shannon and Carrie, she internalized theses skills and was able to utilize them in college without needing a high-level support program. For example, Heather explained,

> Tutoring…that was one of the biggest things. At the time I was like, 'Oh my God, I don't want to give my hours up.' Now it's really paid off. I use it as a

study skill now. At least for an hour do homework like we did there in homework

time.

Upward Bound taught Heather important study skills that she continued using even after

graduating from high school.

Kim, unlike the other three participants, did not discuss the skills or behaviors she

learned through Upward Bound, but rather, explained how Upward Bound provided an

environment with positive peer pressure and incentives, such as the stipend, that

encouraged her to do her school work. Kim recognized that she excelled in these types of

environments and so she sought out positive study environments in college, such as

"Study Stops" and tutoring at the multicultural center.

It seems that Shannon and Carrie needed a structured program with

accountability, like Upward Bound, even in college, because of their low student identity

centrality. Since being a student was not their most central identity, they were less likely

to participate in typical student behaviors on their own. They needed a program to tell

them where and when to study, to encourage and motivate them, and keep them

accountable. Kim and Heather, who had high student identity centrality, did not need this

level of support because they engaged in student behaviors on their own.

Conclusion

Each case study participant revealed important insights in to the role of student

identity on college persistence, but an even deeper understanding was discovered through

cross-case analysis. The four themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis, *being a*

student is one identity among many, being a student is a means to an end, students persist

in the face of challenges, and *Upward Bound provides an environment conducive to*

forming a student identity, provided insight on the research questions. The divergent

themes, *the level of student identity centrality, what it means to be a college student,* and

the impact of Upward Bound, highlighted the differences and unique experiences of each

participant. However, it also became clear that two participants, Kim and Heather, had

high student identity centrality and two participants, Shannon and Carrie, had low student

identity centrality. The differences between these pairings were apparent in each of the

divergent themes. The results of this multiple case study revealed several important

implications for Upward Bound staff and college personnel who work with low-income,

first-generation students. Recommendations will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

College persistence of low-income, first-generation students is an important issue for college personnel. Previous research has looked at the impact of students' background characteristics, including demographics and high school performance, students' experiences in college, including interaction with faculty and involvement, and postsecondary institutional conditions, including institutional programs and policies (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Kuh et al, 2005). A new area of college persistence research looks at the impact of student identity centrality on persistence (Bowman & Felix, 2014). Although Upward Bound graduates make up a sub-group of low-income, first-generation college students, research studies that have looked at college persistence of Upward Bound graduates are limited in many ways. Furthermore, student identity centrality has not been explored with Upward Bound graduates.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to understand the role of identity in Upward Bound graduates persistence in college and the ways in which Upward Bound contributed to the development of student identity. In order to accomplish this, four Upward Bound graduates were selected based on the following criteria: (a) graduated from Midwest College Upward Bound program, (b) identified as low-income and first-generation upon entry in to Upward Bound, and (c) enrolled as sophomore at a four-year college or university. The participants were invited to participate in the study, which consisted of two interviews, one observational period, and the submission of their college transcript and course schedule. The subsequent data was then analyzed case-by-case and then a cross-case analysis was done. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What role do Upward Bound graduates' identities as students play in their persistence in college?

2. What does it mean to have an identity as a student?

3. What other influences contributed to their identities as a student?

4. How central to their overall concepts of self are their identities as students?

5. How does their student identity intersect with other social identities?

This study contributes to the understanding of student identity development for Upward Bound graduates enrolled in college. The students that participated in this study spoke about their identity development, the role of Upward Bound, and their experience as college students. This chapter will address the significance of the findings that emerged from the case study and the relevant literature. Following that will be recommendations for college personnel and Upward Bound staff based off the findings of this research. This chapter will conclude with the limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, and final conclusions.

Significance of the Findings

This multiple case study provided an understanding of the role of student identity in the lives of four Upward Bound graduates who persisted in college. Through a review of the literature and cross-case analysis, several important and significant takeaways were revealed: *a more nuanced, complex understanding of student identity centrality, identity salience is more fitting than centrality, why students persist,* and *how Upward Bound contributed to student identity development.*

A more nuanced, complex understanding of student identity centrality.

The concept of student identity centrality (Bowman & Felix, 2014) framed this case study; however, through the analysis of the four cases and cross-case analysis, a

more nuanced and complex understanding of student identity centrality emerged. The findings from this case study contributes to the previous research on student identity centrality (Bowman & Felix, 2014) by offering a more complex understanding of how student identity centrality interacts with students' decisions to persist and their ability to deal with stress, campus integration, and academic difficulties.

Bowman and Felix (2014) found that student identity centrality was positively related to intent to persist in college. Furthermore, they explained that students with high student identity were more likely to engage in behaviors associated with being a student, such as socializing with other college students, participating in campus events, interacting with faculty, or spending significant time studying and completing homework. However, the case study data revealed that two of the four participants had low student identity centrality and three of the four participants did not regularly engage in typical student behaviors described above. Moreover, none of the participants normatively defined themselves as students across all situations, which is the definition of identity centrality (Sellers et al., 1998; Bowman & Felix, 2014). Yet, despite the fact that the participants did not exhibit high student identity centrality, all four of the participants persisted. The experiences of the four individuals in this case study reveals the complexity of student identity centrality due to unique ways in which each participant understood what it meant to be a student.

Previous research has shown that stress, adjustment and campus integration, and academic difficulties lead to higher dropout rates (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1975). Bowman and Felix's (2014) study found that student identity centrality served as a buffer against negative experiences, such as stress, difficulty adjusting to college, and academic

difficulty. This present study revealed that although the participants faced all of these challenges during the first three semesters of college, all of the participants persisted, not due to high student identity centrality, but rather, because of support from family, financial support from scholarships, their extrinsic motivation for a better job, and their intrinsic motivation to achieve their goals. Ultimately, the study found a more complicated relationship between student identity centrality and its ability to act as a buffer in the face of challenges.

The findings from this study are significant because it provides a more nuanced, complex understanding of student identity centrality and its role in persistence. Previous research would predict that the four participants in this study would have dropped out due to the obstacles they experienced, or at least, that the students with low student identity centrality would have dropped out. However, all of the participants persisted, regardless of their level of student identity centrality. The present study revealed it was not essential for the participants in this study to normatively define themselves as students in order to persist in college. This understanding about the participants' experiences of identity relates to the cultural foundations critique of Tinto's (1975) theory as well.

Tinto's (1975) theory of student departure failed to recognize the unique experiences of students from different cultures and backgrounds. Tierney's (1992) cultural foundations critique offered an alternative by expressing that students from different cultural backgrounds did not need to sever ties with their culture or home community to be successful in college, and more importantly, maintaining relationships with their culture and home community could actually contribute to their success in college (Cheng et al., 2012; Guiffrida, 2005b). Similarly, students with a high racial

identity centrality or high family identity centrality did not need to abandon their identity or adopt a high student identity centrality in order to be successful in college. This study supports the critiques (Tierney, 1992) of Tinto's (1975) theory of integration by confirming that validation of the multiple identities of students is more important than requiring students to integrate and conform to a particular type of student identity. This study supports the idea that students can maintain other identities and do not need to adopt the values of the institution, as Tinto's (1975) theory would suggest. Furthermore, it was important for the participants in this study to draw upon their multiple identities and values and, as a result, these other identities were essential in their decision to persist.

The participants in this study revealed that it was not necessary to identify themselves with a normative definition of what it means to be a student, but rather it was their strong association with other identities, such as race and family, that helped them persist in college. For example, Carrie's identity as an aunt contributed to her decision to persist in college, despite academic and family challenges, because she wanted to be a good role model for her nieces and nephews. Shannon's strong racial identity pushed her to persist in college, despite not feeling connected to her institution, because she believed graduating from college was important for her as an African American female and she did not want to fulfill negative statistics and stereotypes about African Americans.

Identity salience is more fitting than centrality.

For the participants of this study, the concept of student identity centrality did not adequately explain their experiences; rather, the evidence suggests that identity salience may be more fitting. Stryker and Serpe (1994) explained that salience is how easily or likely an individual is to enact the behaviors attached to a particular identity and how

much time is devoted to these behaviors. Salience better described these participants'
experiences with student identity and it is more consistent with the other theories on
multiple identities (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000).

All of the participants in the present case study identified with being students, but
it was only one identity among many. This finding is consistent with the research by
Jones and McEwen (2000) and Abes et al. (2007) in regards to the Model of Multiple
Dimensions of Identity. The multiple dimensions of identity model indicated that
individuals have a core sense of self that is surrounded by externally defined identities.
 Two of the students, Heather and Shannon, indicated that their student identity was
externally defined, rather than a core sense of self. All of the participants spoke of their
core sense of self in relation to personal characteristics, such as, optimism (Kim), goal-
driven, motivated, and perfectionist (Shannon), quiet and responsible (Carrie), and
hardworking, respectful and dependable (Heather). For the participants, Heather and
Shannon in particular, being a student was just another externally defined identity,
alongside gender, race, religion, and class.

The research by Abes et al. (2007) was influenced by feminist and queer theory
that suggested identities are not hierarchical, but rather are experienced simultaneously
and are fluid and changing. The participants' experiences reflect these theories as well.
 Participants explained that their student identities were more or less salient at different
times. As an example, the participants in the study explained that they were most aware
of their student identity during finals week because they were engaged in many student
behaviors, such as studying and writing papers. Conversely, all of the participants
mentioned that there were times that they did not identify as students. Even Kim and

Heather, who had high student identity centrality, shared that when they spent time with their family or boyfriend or spent time at work, they felt less like students. Two participants also provided examples of racial salience. Being African American was more salient for one of the participants during her participation in a protest against police brutality. Another participant explained that being African American became more salient for her once she began attending a predominantly White college, whereas when she attended a diverse high school, her race was not salient. The participants' experiences of student identity better reflect the concept of salience, rather than centrality.

The finding that identity salience, rather than identity centrality, better describes the participants' experience is significant because it reveals that for these low-income, first-generation students, they can retain their core identity, whether that be racial or familial, in the case of Shannon and Carrie, and still be successful college students. What is important is that their student identity was salient at certain times, such as finals week, which allowed them to engage in student behaviors that were necessary to meet the expectations of their courses. Identity salience, rather than centrality, was more relevant for the participants in this study. In light of the finding that identity salience was more fitting and appropriate for the students in this study, it is surprising that Bowman and Felix (2014) choose to only study the concept of centrality. The study by Bowman and Felix (2014) was influenced by research by Sellers et al. (1998), which included both the concept of salience and centrality. This study would suggest that both concepts, salience and centrality, should be included when studying the role of identity on persistence.

Why students persist.

Perhaps one reason the participants did not indicate their student identity as being their most central identity was because they did not see the importance or value in being a student simply for the sake of being a student. Rather, the participants decided to persist in college because they were motivated to earn a college degree due to their belief that it would lead to better job prospects and better opportunities. This finding supports the existing literature on motivation as a predictor for college success for low-income, first-generation, and minority students (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Dennis et al., 2005).

Dennis et al. (2005) found that personal and career motivation was predictive of college persistence for first-generation minority students. Similarly, in the present study, the participants' main motivations were for better jobs and achieving their goals. Blackwell and Pinder's (2014) qualitative study was conducted with a similar population as the present study, African American first-generation students, and found that one of the strongest extrinsic motivations for graduating from college was the a desire for a better job. The findings in the present study are consistent with the findings by Blackwell and Pinder's (2014) and Dennis et al. (2005).

The finding that motivation for a better job and better life was a critical factor in the participants' decision to persist is significant; it confirms the importance of motivation and goal commitment for low-income, first-generation students. Although each participant had their own unique motivation, a common theme was better jobs and better lives than what their parents had. The experiences of the participants in this study are vastly different from more traditional students, for whom becoming a college student is generally not driven by motivation to get a better job in order to break the cycle of

poverty, but rather a familial expectation or requirement (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).
Thus, for the participants in this study, they persisted in college because of what being a college student was leading them towards -- a better life.

> **How Upward Bound contributed to student identity development.**

Although this study showed that high student identity centrality was not required to persist in college, developing an identity as a student was still important for all of the participants; there were still times that the participants' identities as students were salient and times they needed to engage in student behaviors. The present study revealed that Upward Bound helped facilitate the development of a student identity by providing an environment that allowed for exploration, allowed for the development of strong student behaviors, and allowed for positive, supportive relationships between staff and participants.

The importance of exploration for identity development is supported in the literature, particularly Marcia (1993) and Josselson's (1996) concept of identity statuses. Marcia (1993) explained that one's identity is based on the degree to which individuals have committed to their sense of self and the degree to which individuals have experienced a crisis, also referred to as identity exploration. Identity exploration was conceived of more broadly than experiencing a crisis by Josselson (1996), who described exploration as, "I've tried out something, and this is what makes the most sense for me" (p. 35). For the participants in this study, Upward Bound provided them with the opportunity to "try something out." The opportunity for exploration was important because it made the participants more aware of potential colleges and careers, but it also helped them feel empowered and capable. This finding is significant because it

recognizes the importance of exploration, not only for identity development in general, but for student identity development specifically.

In addition to exploration, the Upward Bound environment supported positive behaviors associated with being a student. One of the objectives of the Upward Bound after-school tutoring program was to help students maintain a high GPA. High school GPA has been a strong predictor of college persistence in the research (DeBerard et al., 2004; Kitsantas et al., 2008; Kuh et al., 2008; Sparkman et al., 2012). Strong academic skills, which was defined by Prevatt et al. (2011) as "a combination of effort expended, study skill and self-organizational strategies" (p. 27), also predicted college success. Upward Bound helped students develop academic skills and establish a strong GPA. Bowman and Felix (2014) found that participating in behaviors that were associated with student identity, such as studying and completing homework, led to high student identity centrality. Thus, this finding is significant because it demonstrates that by providing an environment in which participants can develop these skills and engage in these behaviors, Upward Bound can help participants learn important student behaviors that are necessary in college.

Lastly, the participants shared that relationships with Upward Bound staff helped them develop their identity as a student. The importance of support for low-income, first-generation students was found in the literature (Carson-Warner, 2003; Cheng et al, 2012, DeBerard et al, 2004; Guiffrida, 2005b; Kim et al., 2010; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012); however, most of the studies looked at family support or faculty support. In the present study, the participants shared that support from Upward Bound staff was important because it helped them see that they were capable of being college students,

which reinforced and validated their identities as students. The importance of validation from faculty and staff for college students has been supported in the literature (Barnett, 2011), but participants in this study revealed that support and validation from Upward Bound staff also contributed to student identity development.

Recommendations for College Personnel

This study revealed five important recommendations that should be considered by college personnel that work with low-income, first-generation students: (a) recognize the multiple identities of students and provide opportunities for students to express their multiple identities; (b) help students discover and articulate their particular purpose or end goal for enrolling in college; (c) provide opportunities for exploration; (d) create small learning communities on campus and provide an environment where these students can study, work on homework, and utilize tutors; (e) provide students with mentors.

In addition to encouraging student engagement in activities that are typically associated with student identity, such as studying and interacting with faculty, college personnel should encourage involvement in activities that allow students to express their multiple identities. One of the study participants strongly identified with being African American. However, because she did not find support on campus to express this identity, she grew disconnected from the institution. College personnel should support multicultural student organizations on campus, as well as other types of activities or events that allow students to express their other identities, beyond their student identity.

Goal commitment, a major tenet of Tinto's (1993) theory, was critical to the decision to persist in college for the participants in the present study. Being deeply committed to goals and believing that a college degree is necessary to achieve that goal

was integral for persistence. For students who arrive on campus already firmly committed to their goal, college personnel must find out from students what this goal is and remind students of their goal when they encounter obstacles. For students who arrive on campus and do not have a clear goal in mind or are not committed to their goal, college personnel should provide opportunities for students to engage in goal setting exercises. This could be embedded in a first year seminar experience course or similar established programs for freshmen students.

Exploration is an essential component to identity development. Upward Bound provided opportunities that would expose participants to new ideas, concepts, and cultures. This process of exploration should be continued in college. College personnel should provide opportunities for students to explore potential interests. Examples of exploration programs might include attending a musical or theatrical performance, participating in a travel abroad program, or utilizing a new technology. Opportunities for exploration are likely already available on most college campuses, but college personnel must find ways to engage low-income, first-generation students to encourage participation. Engle and O'Brien (2007) found that low-income, first-generation students may not benefit from campus programs, due to living off-campus or working. For participants in the present study, their need to work often made it difficult to participate. Thus, college personnel should embed opportunities for exploration within courses or activities that are already required for students.

In addition to opportunities for exploration, the participants in the present study shared that having a dedicated place to study, work on homework, and access tutors was invaluable. Although most college campuses have spaces on campus to study, as well as

access to tutors, low-income, first-generation students may benefit from being part of a small learning community that provides them with a dedicated location to study and provides them with tutors specifically for them. Learning communities have been found to increase persistence for academically under-prepared and low-income students (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Additionally, it may be beneficial to require study hours for members of the learning community to provide accountability and structure. Two of the students in the present study stated they felt they needed the structure and support of a program like Upward Bound in college.

Lastly, college personnel should consider providing mentors for low-income, first-generation students. All of the participants in the present study shared that having an Upward Bound mentor was a positive experience. One of the participants also formed a mentoring relationship with a staff member on her college campus which was helpful to her. Although many faculty and staff are willing to be mentors for students on campus, it is often up to the student to seek out the relationship. Low-income, first-generation students may benefit from a mentoring relationship, but may be reluctant to seek out a staff or faculty member. College personnel should consider developing a mentoring program in which low-income, first-generation students are paired with a professional mentor upon entering college. Pairing students with mentors from similar racial or socio-demographic backgrounds may be beneficially as well.

Recommendations for Upward Bound Staff

Several of the recommendations for college personnel can also be implemented by Upward Bound staff while students are still in high school, including (a) helping participants identify their motivations for pursuing a college degree, (b) providing

opportunities for exploration, and (c) providing opportunities for participants to develop strong student behaviors.

A few of the participants in the present study explained that their motivation to go to college began at a young age, but was reinforced and supported in the Upward Bound program. However, one of the participants shared that she was not committed to going to college until she joined Upward Bound. Through Upward Bound, she recognized how a college degree could help her achieve her goal of a successful career. Upward Bound staff can help students who do not have a clear understanding of their goals by having students participate in goal setting exercises. In addition to facilitating goal setting, Upward Bound staff can provide support and encouragement so that participants develop a strong belief in themselves that they can accomplish their goals.

The participants in the present study appreciated the opportunity to explore activities and interests, including career exploration sessions as well as atypical activities like hula-hooping and juggling. Beyond simply providing tutoring instruction or mentoring programs, Upward Bound staff should implement creative programming so students can explore. Not only do exploration programs allow participants to learn and develop a new skill or identify a potential career path, it also can build participants' self-confidence by revealing to them they are capable of accomplishing something they previously thought was not possible.

Upward Bound has the opportunity to help shape participants' student behaviors through program expectations and requirements. Upward Bound has the added benefit of being able to offer a stipend to participants if they comply with program requirements. Participants may only engage in the student behavior in order to earn the monetary

incentive, but overtime, may begin to internalize the behavior and see the benefit, even without the incentive. As a result of encouraging these behaviors and creating habits, participants are engaging in behaviors that are consistent with a student identity. Examples of shaping student behavior through program expectations might include: requiring studying or tutoring hours, requiring the use of an organizational planner, requiring students to meet with teachers if they are doing poorly in a class, or requiring students to receive supplemental instruction in a subject area they are struggling in.

Limitations

This research study had a few limitations. First, there was a lack of diversity among the four case study participants. All four participants were female and three out of the four were African American. The study would have benefitted from having male students and students from other racial backgrounds. Second, the study was conducted during the second half of the semester and the observations and second interviews fell during finals week for a few of the participants. The timing was not ideal because the participants were busy and under additional stress. Third, the participants were all graduates of the same Upward Bound program, thereby limiting the transferability of the results. Fourth, the nature of the study was retrospective; participants were asked to reflect back on their experiences from two to five years ago. Thus, their recall and memories may not be accurate. Lastly, the participants did not provide any feedback when asked to review the transcripts and case study analysis, thus, it is unclear whether or not there were any discrepancies in the analysis.

The lack of diversity among the participants limited this study because it represented only females' experiences. Also, the majority of the participants were

African American, thus, the experiences of other racial groups were not explored. Due to the lack of diversity, it cannot be determined if the experiences of the participants in the study reflect the experiences of other low-income, first-generation students of other genders and racial backgrounds. This limitation is especially important due to the finding that multiple identities intersected with student identity. The timing of the study also was limiting because the participants were under additional stress; the results of the case study may have been different if conducted during the earlier part of the semester. Additionally, because the participants were all from the same Upward Bound program, the findings regarding the impact of Upward Bound on student identity development may not be generalizable to graduates of other Upward Bound programs. Lastly, the fact that the participants did not provide any feedback to the case study narratives limited the study because member checking was not fully completed and the analysis was not confirmed. In light of these limitations, several recommendations for future research are offered in the following section.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future qualitative case study research should include male students, as well as students from a variety of racial backgrounds. Researchers may want to consider conducting case study research with participants during a less stressful time, such as early in the semester. Research with graduates from different Upward Bound programs would also be beneficial.

Additionally, an important finding of the study was that that high student identity centrality was not the critical ingredient for persistence, but rather, goal commitment. The participants in this study persisted in college because they had clear goals, were

committed to achieving their goals, and believed a college degree was an essential component to achieving their goals. Although research has been done on goal commitment (Tinto, 1975), future research should look at the how low-income, first-generation students develop strong goal commitment and how pre-college and college programs can influence and facilitate goal commitment.

Conclusion

Persistence rates of low-income, first-generation students continue to be low (Engle & Tinto, 2008), despite decades of research devoted to this topic. The present study aimed to contribute to the discussion on persistence of low-income, first-generation students by exploring the role of student identity centrality in Upward Bound graduates. One of the major findings of the study was that although student identity was important, high student identity centrality was not an essential component for persistence for the participants in the study. Rather, goal commitment played a stronger role in the participants' decision to persist. The findings of this multiple case study also revealed that Upward Bound did contribute to the formation of student identity in three key ways: opportunity for exploration, opportunity to create positive student behaviors, and support and encouragement from staff. As a result of these findings, several recommendations were offered for college personnel and Upward Bound staff. Opportunities for future research include exploring the concept of student identity salience, as opposed to only centrality, in future studies with low-income, first-generation students.

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APPENDIX A: CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

1. **Background**

Previous research has been conducted on low-income, first-generation students (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006; Dennis et al., 2005; Kuh et al., 2008; Terenzini et al., 2001) as well as the Upward Bound program (Anderson & Larson, 2009; Myers et al., 2004; Walsh, 2011). Additionally, research has been done on the theoretical frameworks that guide this study, including multiple identities (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes et al., 2007) and identity centrality (Sellers et al., 1998; Bowman & Felix, 2014).

However, a review of literature revealed a gap in empirical studies on Upward Bound graduates college experiences and their identities as students. Thus, the main research question for this multiple case study was: What role do Upward Bound graduates' identities as students play in their persistence in college? Additional research questions included:

1) What does it mean to have an identity as a student?

2) How do Upward Bound graduates describe their identities as students?

3) How central to their overall concepts of self are their identities as students?

4) How does their student identity intersect with other social identities?

2. **Design**

a) The design of the research study was a multiple-case, holistic design. The context or quintain (Stake, 2006) was identity development of Upward Bound graduates in college. The cases were four Upward Bound graduates who were currently in college.

b) The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how the Upward Bound program helps facilitate participants' identities as students and the role their identity plays in their persistence in college.

3. **Case Selection**

a) Criteria for case selection:

The participants selected for this multiple case study were selected from the pool of graduates of an Upward Bound program located in an urban city in the Midwest. From this pool, I selected second-year students who were currently enrolled in college and who had completed one year of college.

4. **Case Study Procedures and Roles**

a) This multiple case study was conducted by a single researcher; I conducted all interviews, field observations, and document reviews, as well the data analysis.

b) Below is a diagram that outlines the case study procedures:

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The Role of Student Identity in Upward Bound Graduates Success in College: A Multiple Case Study
Case Study Procedures

Theoretical Framework:
Student Identity Centrality (Bowman & Felix, 2014) and Literature Review guides the research study and questions

Research Question:
What role does Upward Bound graduates' identity play in their success in college?

Case Selection:
Four Cases based on established criteria

Procedures:
• Use maximum variation sampling to get diverse cases
• Gain Informed Consent from participants

Products:
Informed Consent Forms

Data Collection
Types of data:
Interviews (2)
Field Observations
Documents

Procedures:
Conduct initial interviews with each participant;
Conduct one 4-hr observation with each participant
Conduct second interviews with each participant
Collect three documents from each participant (see products)

Products:
Interview transcripts
Observation field notes
Documents: Transcript, course schedule; Identity Centrality survey, photos

Trustworthiness Procedures throughout data collection and analysis:
Triangulation, Member Checks, Peer Debriefing, Rich, thick description, audit trail, show relevance of study through recommendations

Data Analysis (individual cases):
Memoing, coding, theme development, constant comparison method

Procedures:
Begin analyzing and coding data throughout data collection
Write memo to reflect and interpret data
Use MAXQDA to code and develop themes

Products:
Themes and Findings from each case
Mini-case study report for each case with rich, thick description

Data Analysis (cross-cases):
Matrix of findings from each case; look for convergent and divergent themes

Procedures:
Complete matrix
Use matrix to find convergent and divergent themes

Products:
Stake (2006) cross-case analysis worksheet
Findings and Conclusions of multiple case study

5. Data Collection

a) Three types of data were collected: Interviews (See Interview Protocols

Appendix B and C), observations (See Observation Protocol Appendix D), and

documents.

There were two interviews with each participant (eight total interviews), one four-

hour observation with each participant (four observations), three documents

collected from each participant (12 total documents), and multiple photos taken

by the participants and discussed during the second interview.

b) Data collection plan:

Select four cases	October 1
Conduct Interview #1 with all participants	October 6-20
Collect documents from participants (during the interview)	October 6-20
Participants take and email photos	October 6-Nov 24
Conduct Field Observations with all participants	October 20-November 3
Conduct Interview #2 with all participants	November 10-24

c) Define how the data will be stored:

Electronic data will be stored using the DropBox

Audio files will be password protected on the researcher's laptop.

Hard copies of notes, documents, and memos will be stored in a locked

filing cabinet in the researcher's home office.

6. Analysis

The process of data analysis began immediately with the first interview and was

on-going throughout the case study (See Schedule below for detailed outline of data

analysis activities). I utilized the analytical strategy, "relying on theoretical propositions

(Yin, 2009, p. 130). I analyzed all three types of evidence collected for each case in light

of this theory. Alternative explanations that arose from the evidence were explained in

each case study as well. I used the process of memo writing throughout the data

collection and analysis phases in order to reflect, interpret, and analyze the data.

7. Trustworthiness

    a) I used the following techniques for establishing trustworthiness and goodness:

        1. Triangulation

        2. Member Checks

        3. Peer Debriefing

        4. Audit trail/chain of evidence

        5. Rich, thick description

        6. Providing meaningful and relevant recommendations for action

7. Reporting

This multiple case study was my dissertation; the audience was educational

researchers and practitioners interested in college persistence of low-income, first-

generation students, specifically those that participated in an Upward Bound

program.

8. Schedule

Key- DC: data collection; **DA:** data analysis; **T:** trustworthiness

Activity	Time Frame	Length of time
DC: Select four cases and receive verbal agreement for participation	October 1-6	1 week
DC: Conduct Interview #1 with all participants	October 6-20	1 hour per interview, total of 4 hours
DC: Collect documents from participants (during the interview)	October 6-20	N/A
DC: Send Interviews #1 for transcription immediately after interview	October 20-Nov 3	5 hours per interview, total of 20 hours
DA: Write memos, reflect on initial	October 6-20, ongoing	Varies

interviews		
DA: Analyze documents by writing memos and writing down important information on each participant in their electronic file. View photos that have been emailed. Upload documents to Google Docs in each participants file	October 6-20	1 hour per participant, total 4 hours
T: Provide participants with copies of transcript for feedback (member checks)	November 3-December 1	Varies
DA: Begin coding interview #1 transcriptions	November 3-December 1	5 hours per interview, total of 20 hours
DC: Conduct Field Observations with all participants	October 20-November 3	4 hours per observation, total of 16 hours
DA: Type Field Observation notes into Google Docs; write memos; create questions for second interview	October 20-November 10	4 hours per participant; total of 16 hours
T: Discuss field observations and memos with colleague (peer debriefing)	November 10-November 14	2 hours
DC: Conduct Interview #2 with all participants	November 10-24	1 hour per interview, total of 4 hours
DC: Send Interviews #2 for transcription immediately after interview	November 10-December 8	5 hours per interview, total of 20 hours
DA: Write memos, reflect on second interviews	November 10-24, ongoing	Varies
T: Provide participants with copies of transcript for feedback (member checks)	December 8-January 5	Varies
DA: Begin coding interview #2 transcriptions	December 8-January 5	5 hours per interview, total of 20 hours
DA: Code field observations, relevant memos, and information from documents	December 8-January 5	4 hours per observation, total of 16 hours
DA: Using Constant Comparison Method, begin establishing patterns and themes for each case	January 5-January 12	Varies
T: Consult literature for triangulation of findings	January 12-January 19	5-10 hours
T: Provide participants with themes for feedback (member checks)	January 12-January 19	Varies
DA: Complete cross-case analysis worksheet from Stake (2006, p. 51)	January 12-January 19	Approximately 10-15 hours
T: Provide Results and Discussion Chapters to participants and colleague for feedback	February 9-February16	Varies
Dissemination: Write Results and Discussion Chapters for Dissertation	January 19-February 9	Approximately 10-15 hours per chapter

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The Role of Student Identity in Upward Bound Graduates Success in College

Name:_____**Date:**_____

School::_____**Year in school:_____**

Introduction:

I want to thank you for taking time to talk to me today. Before we begin, I would like to go over the Informed Consent Form with you (Read Informed Consent and obtain signature). This interview is part of a multiple case study I am conducting for my dissertation. You have been selected as one of the cases. In addition to this interview, I will be conducting an observation of you while you are on-campus, going to class, and engaging in your daily activities. I will also be conducting a second follow-up interview. As I mentioned on the phone, I will also be collecting a copy of your transcript and your course schedule.

I will be collecting a lot of information from you that will be written in my final case study. I will not use your name; you will have pseudonym, which you can select, if you would like. Although I will not be using your name, I cannot guarantee that your identity could not be discovered by someone reading my dissertation. I want to make sure you understand this and are comfortable with participating. Additionally, I am a mandatory reporter and you disclose that you have been abused or neglected or I have reasonable cause to believe that you have been subjected to abuse or neglect, I am obligated to report it to the proper authorities.

I will be asking you questions about your experience in Upward Bound. Please be honest and share openly about your experiences, even if they are negative. There will

be no negative consequences for you, or the Upward Bound program, from you sharing your experiences and I will not be personally hurt or offended by your comments. I am interested in your experiences, whether they were good, bad, or indifferent. Please feel free to add any information that you think would be helpful for me to understand your experience, so I can gain an in-depth understanding.

I will be recording what we say today and a professional transcriptionist will transcribe the audio in to a Word file. You will have the opportunity to review this document for accuracy and provide feedback. Are you ready?

Interview Questions:

1) Tell me about yourself. We have known each other for several years, but imagine I don't know anything about you; how would you introduce yourself?

    a. Race, Family structure, Hometown, High School, College, Job, Important characteristics/identities

    b. Imagine I am writing a biography about you, what main events should be included in your biography?

2) Describe your identity as a student in your own words.

3) What other aspects of your identity as important to you? Why?

4) What events in your life have made a significant impact on how you identify yourself?

5) What does it mean to be a "student?" What does it look like?

    a. Describe a typical day as a student; what do you do?

6) How did you develop your identity as a student? Who or what influenced you?

7) What, if any, role did Upward Bound play in your identity as a student?

8) What does it mean to be successful in college?

9) Tell me a recent experience you have had where you strongly identified as a "student." What about a time that you didn't identify as a student.

10) How does your identity as a student help you be successful in college?

Now, I would like to ask you to answer a few questions on the Student Identity Centrality survey. These questions were part of a larger survey that was conducted with other low-income, first-generation students. The purpose of the survey is to measure how central (or important) your identity as a student is to your overall sense of self. There are no right or wrong questions on this survey so please answer honestly. I am having you answer these questions in order to understand how you see yourself as a student. Please take a few minutes to complete this and then we will discuss it (hand participants Student Identity Centrality Survey- Appendix D).

11) What did you think of the survey questions?

12) I see you answered _____on question 1; why did you respond in that way?

13) I see you answered _____on question 2; why did you respond in that way?

14) I see you answered _____on question 3; why did you respond in that way?

15) I see you answered _____on question 4; why did you respond in that way?

16) Is there anything else that you would like to add?

After the interview:

Thank you for your time today. I greatly appreciate your participation in this study. I would like to schedule a time I can come back to conduct an observation. What days/times work best for you between October 20 and November 3? I will be sending

you a copy of this transcribed interview when it is completed in a few weeks. I will also

be setting up a second interview. Over the next several weeks, I encourage you to think

about your identity as a student. During this time, please take pictures of situations,

behaviors, and/or activities that you believe showcase what it means to be a student. You

can take as many or as few pictures as you would like. Please email them to me at

allisonkinney@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing about your reflections and thoughts

at our second interview.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW #2 PROTOCOL
The Role of Student Identity in Upward Bound Graduates Success in College

Name:_____**Date:**_____

School::_____**Year in school:**_____

Introduction:

Thanks for meeting with me again today. This second interview is more open-ended than the first and is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts and reflections regarding your identity and college experiences. First, however, I would like to share with you my notes from my observation last (week/month). I have provided you with a copy of my notes and have some thoughts I would like to discuss with you…

I would like to discuss the photos that you have taken over the last several weeks. Tell me about these photos…Why did you take this photo? Do you identify with these photos? How so? In what ways do you not identify?

Now, it is your opportunity to share with me. I hope you had a chance to reflect on your identity and college experiences over the last several weeks. Is there any thoughts or reflections you would like to share with me that you think would be important for me to include in the case study?

Prompts:

- How would you describe your identity today? Has the most important aspects of your identity changed over the last several weeks? What identities are most salient for you right now? Why?

- Are there situations where you notice that one part of your identity is more important than others? Can you give an example?

APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

The Role of Student Identity in Upward Bound Graduates Success in College

Name:_____**Date:**_____**Time:**_____

School::_____**Year in school:**_____

Introduction:

I want to thank you for taking time to talk to let me observe you today. The purpose of the observation is to observe you in your school environment. I want to understand what it means to be a "student" through your daily activities. I will be taking notes throughout the day; I will share these notes with you and may ask you follow up questions about my observations at our second interview. You do not need to talk to me during the observation, but you are welcome to, if you would like. I am most interested in observing you in your natural environment, so you do not need to change your behaviors or rituals. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Observation Procedures:

Permissions: I will have already received permission from the participant for the observation from the Informed Consent Form which was signed at the first interview. I will ask for permission to observe the classroom from the professor before the observation begins; the other observations will be conducted in public spaces on campus.

Physical Positioning: I will position myself in the back of the classroom during class times; I will walk alongside the participants when they are moving between classrooms and activities. If the participant is in a public space, like the Student Center or cafeteria, I will sit near them in an open seat. If asked, I will identify myself as a researcher.

Selection of data to observe: There is much to observe on a college campus, therefore, during my observation I will select to observe information that is in line with the purpose of the study and answers my research questions. The observations can help me answer several of my research questions. Below I describe how the observational data will help inform my research questions.

Research Questions	Data to look for during the observations:
What does it mean to have an identity as a student?	What behaviors does the participant engage in while on campus? Does the participant refer to him/herself as a "student?" Do others refer to him/her as a "student?"
How central to their overall concept of self is their identity as students?	What behaviors that are not strictly "student" activities, does the participant engage in during the observation (work, family, etc)? Does the participant refer to other identities (work, family, etc) during the observation?
How do their identities as students influence their persistence in college?	What behaviors does the participate engage in during the observation that are linked to persistence? (performing research, on-campus living, engaging with faculty, student activities)

Recording Data: I took detailed notes throughout the observation. I transcribed these notes immediately following the observations and wrote memos to capture my thoughts and reflections, as well as identified questions for the second interview.

APPENDIX E: STUDENT IDENTITY CENTRALITY SURVEY

Please read each statement and then identify how strongly you disagree or agree with

each statement by circling the corresponding number.

Statement	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
Overall, being a student has very little to do with how I feel about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a student is an important reflection of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a student is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, being a student is an important part of my self-image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Adapted from Bowman and Felix (2014).

APPENDIX F: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

	Themes:				
Case 1	1	2	3	4	5
Findings:					
Case 2					
Findings:					
Case 3					
Findings:					
Case 4					
Findings:					

Adapted from Stake (2006)

APPENDIX G: UPWARD BOUND REQUIRED SERVICES

§645.11   What services do all Upward Bound projects provide?

(a) Any project assisted under this part must provide—

(1) Academic tutoring to enable students to complete secondary or postsecondary courses, which may include instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, science, and other subjects;

(2) Advice and assistance in secondary and postsecondary course selection;

(3) Assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations and completing college admission applications;

(4)(i) Information on the full range of Federal student financial aid programs and benefits (including Federal Pell Grant awards and loan forgiveness) and resources for locating public and private scholarships; and

(ii) Assistance in completing financial aid applications, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid;

(5) Guidance on and assistance in—

(i) Secondary school reentry;

(ii) Alternative education programs for secondary school dropouts that lead to the receipt of a regular secondary school diploma;

(iii) Entry into general educational development (GED) programs; or

(iv) Entry into postsecondary education; and

(6) Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial and economic literacy of students or the students' parents, including financial planning for postsecondary education.

(b) Any project that has received funds under this part for at least two years must include as part of its core curriculum in the next and succeeding years, instruction in—

(1) Mathematics through pre-calculus;

(2) Laboratory science;

(3) Foreign language;

(4) Composition; and

(5) Literature.

Upward Bound Program Rule (2014)