EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE MULTIPLE OPPRESSED IDENTITIES: A NARRATIVE APPROACH

by

Jeremy L. Rogers
A Dissertation
Submitted to the
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of
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Committee:

_____ Chair

_____

_____

_____ Program Director

_____ Dean, College of Education and Human Development

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Fairfax, VA

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by

Jeremy L. Rogers
Master of Science
North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, 2011
Bachelor of Arts
University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2008

Director: Dr. Jaime Lester, Professor
College of Education and Human Development

Fall Semester 2019
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Dedication

To my loving family, especially Preston, Vivian, Brian, Brandon, and Carrie Rogers for supporting me through this process.

To my students who shared their hearts and personal experiences with me. I am truly blessed to know you.

To those who believe in equity.

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This dissertation could not have been completed without the continuous support from my parents, brothers, sister-in-law, and relatives. I thank each of you for being patient and understanding during this time of growth. Although my family's support contributed immensely to my academic success, it is also my responsibility to acknowledge my George Mason University family for your motivation each semester. You all truly taught me what it means to start green and finish gold.

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of State Colleges and Universities .... AASCU
Critical Disability Theory ....CDT
Critical Event Analysis……………………………………………………….......CEA
Council on Rehabilitation Education ....CORE
Critical Race Theory ....CRT
Free Appropriate Public Education Act..FAPE
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ....IDEA
Individualized Education Program ....IEP
Institutional Review Board……………………………………………………......IRB
National Rehabilitation Counseling Association .... NRCA
National Resources Planning Board .... NRPB
Reserve Officers Training Corps ....ROTC
Specific Learning Disability ....SLD

Abstract

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE MULTIPLE OPPRESSED IDENTITIES: A NARRATIVE APPROACH

Jeremy L. Rogers, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2019

Dissertation Director: Dr. Jaime Lester

This study gathers the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple

oppressed identities. Gathering the experiences of students with disabilities who have

multiple oppressed identities contributes to developing multi-dimensional disability

frameworks when providing meaningful services in postsecondary education. Research

participants shared how salient experiences influenced their disability identity as college

students at a Mid-Atlantic public university. The participants' salient experiences were

heavily influenced by family and support resources offered by their university.

Additionally, this research study used narrative inquiry as its methodology and

demonstrates the collaboration between the researcher and participants over time. The

personal experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities

were obtained via the facilitation of two rounds of interviews. Despite their other oppressed identities, this study used Critical Event Analysis (CEA) to focus on how the experiences of students with disabilities influenced their matriculation through college. Also, this research study's analysis identified academic barriers encountered by its participants. Although universities are increasing their attention toward students with disabilities, I argue that there is a need for postsecondary institutions to utilize multi-dimensional frameworks when providing meaningful support services to students who have a diagnosed disability with another oppressed identity.

Critical Event Analysis assisted with providing chronology and structure to the experiences of this study's participants. Providing structure to the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities allowed me to contextualize each participant's experience by considering its temporality, place, and sociality. Ultimately, identifying and contextualizing these experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities contributes to the advancement of disability frameworks used by universities when providing support services.

Chapter One: Introduction

The number of students enrolling in public universities is continuously rising (Hartsoe & Barclay, 2017). The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) stated that the United States college enrollment rate increased from 30 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2017. Early as 1978, only three percent of undergraduate students self-identified as having a disability (Temple Warren, & Anderson, 2019). However, according to the United States Department of Education (2016), in 2012 nearly 11.1 percent of undergraduate students identified as having a diagnosed learning, physical, or psychological disability.

Current research shows that colleges and universities should expect approximately 11 percent of their enrolled population to need academic accommodations (Burgstahler & Russo-Gleicher, 2015). As an institution's enrollment increases, Disability Services professionals should expect more students to seek academic accommodations. It is essential for institutions to understand students' needs and provide meaningful services as accommodations. Prior research indicates that providing meaningful services for students with disabilities increased the accessibility of education and created inclusive learning environments for students with disabilities (Ware & Valle, 2010).

In addition to rising college enrollment, higher education has recently increased attention toward students with disabilities (Burgstahler & Russo-Gleicher, 2015). For example, colleges and universities provide services to accommodate students with disabilities by entitling them to extended test-taking time for students with Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Disability professionals also approve furniture modifications for students who use a wheelchair or other mobility devices. However, to what level are these services beneficial or meaningful for individuals who lack the resources to obtain them? In regard to the complexities of students who have disabilities as one of their oppressed identities, lack of financial resources is often used as an example of a barrier toward receiving reasonable accommodations because of the costs associated with psychological or medical evaluations. In the previous example, both disability and a student's socioeconomic status (SES) serve as their oppressed identities.

However, recent literature states that more research is needed in regard to providing meaningful services to students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities (Evans, Broido, Brown, & Wilke, 2017). Although providing accessible and inclusive environments are institutional priorities, subsequent sections of this dissertation will explain the origins of disability advocacy and how academic barriers for students with disabilities are exacerbated by the intersections of one's socioeconomic status, race, or sexual preference (Crenshaw, 1989; Evans et al., 2017; Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011).

Advocates for people with disabilities ask questions like "How are privileged or powerful identities formed and dismantled?" Kincheloe (2004) stated that identities are formed and dismantled by individuals who have the ability to control teaching

pedagogies, disseminate knowledge, and decide on what knowledge should be shared across social class. Individuals who have the ability to control teaching pedagogies, disseminate knowledge, and decide how knowledge is shared across social classes are referred to as power-wielders (Kincheloe, 2004). Therefore, having this ability to identify as a power-wielder contributes in shaping presumptuous notions of students with disabilities because of their ability to control knowledge.

According to Dell-Orto and Power (2007), individuals with disabilities were historically viewed as being less intelligent than those who were able-bodied. This dissertation research is designed to empower students with disabilities by providing resources to understand and think critically about the ambivalence in our society's ideals. Since knowledge is socially constructed, challenging mainstream assumptions and behaviors toward disability will generate conversations to mitigate academic barriers for students with disabilities. Moreover, understanding how these mainstream assumptions intersect with oppressed identities is pivotal in disability research.

Identities

Although students with disabilities is the primary oppressed identity in this dissertation study, there are a few other identities that are discussed. Students who participate in this study have a disability identity along with an additional oppressed identity. Examples of additional oppressed identities are SES, race, gender, and sexual orientation. The aforementioned oppressed identities are identified because of their opposition to mainstream identities. Although discussed in more detail later in this

chapter, mainstream identities typically have a lot of cultural capital and align with the abled-bodied, White, heterosexual male identities.

Race and disability are both socially constructed, perpetuated, and reinforced by society (Gillborn, 2015). Critical disability research uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a guiding framework which is a process that is referred to as *comparative subordination* (Ribet, 2010). Critical Race Theory is an elusive quest for racial justice by theorizing how one's race impacts their ability to attain cultural capital (Dixson, Rousseau-Anderson, & Donnor, 2018). A theory created to challenge mainstream behaviors that conjure inequities on the basis of one's race, CRT also encourages scholars not to be naïve about how capital can create hierarchy and inequities within education (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Knowledge associated with the upper and middle class are considered valuable cultural capital and immensely contribute to a hierarchical society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). When race is concerned, attaining the knowledge of the middle and upper class is beneficial for social mobility. Additionally, gaining access to the knowledge of the middle and upper class also benefits the social mobility of students with disabilities.

Valentine (2007) developed an idea to assist in understanding intersections of oppressed identities by referring to it as *geometries of oppression*. This mathematical analogy illustrates the assumption that multiple forms of oppression are simultaneously present. For example, being a Black woman with a disability intersects three oppressed identities because they do not align with society's base identities. Socially, mainstream or dominant identities presumably align with abled-bodied, White, heterosexual males

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(Valentine, 2007). Critics of geometrical oppression iterated that identities cannot be understood by using research on base identities as its foundation (Valentine, 2007). For example, understanding the perspectives of Black women cannot be obtained by adding the experiences of being Black to being a woman through a meta-analysis of White women and Black men (Valentine, 2007). In the previous example, the way that race can alter the meaning of gender makes understanding the experiences of being a Black woman extremely challenging (Valentine, 2007). Therefore, using the geometries of oppression lens is applicable in furthering disability research in higher education.

Oppressed Identities. Although oppressed identities is specifically defined later in this chapter, it is important to know that they are categorical, in opposition of the aforementioned mainstream identities, and individuals who have them are ostracized by frameworks designed by those who hold power within society (Crenshaw, 1991). Poverty is often used as an example to describe how negative frameworks ostracize an individual who has an identity that is not commensurate with society's mainstream identities. When using poverty as one's oppressed identity, research shows a connection to a lack of access to health care, education, and stable housing (Banks & Hughes, 2013; Da & Philip, 2008). According to Da and Philip (2008), many changes in policy influence the lives of individuals from a low socioeconomic status because of their high level of vulnerability.

The Purpose of Study

Due to their cultural capital of mainstream identities, scholarly research has consistently perpetuated dominant narratives of White, cisgender, upper-class, and abled bodied individuals as the least oppressed identities that are consistently reproduced

within society (Evans et al., 2017; Oldfield, 2007; Wagaman, Obejero, & Gregory, 2018). Moreover, Wagaman et al. (2018) stated that young adults with oppressed identities are often silenced by dominant narratives. Therefore, colleges and universities recruit more administrators of working-class origins to communicate with students with oppressed identities (Oldfield, 2012). To capture the intersectional experiences of oppressed identities, my research study will gather the narratives of students with multiple oppressed identities who also do not identify with two or more of dominant narratives. Also, these experiences will focus solely on the students' identities and not their origination or process of development. By using a multi-identity framework, the findings from this study will give higher education administrators evidence based results to enhance the integration of students with disabilities.

Research questions. The purpose of my study answers the research question "What are the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities who are receiving reasonable accommodation(s) and who identify as having multiple oppressed identities?" Secondarily, this research study will answer the question "In what ways have the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities influenced their academic career?"

In the 1950s federal funding was allotted to provide formal training to create competent Disability Services professionals; therefore, educators continued using practices from the medical model prior to transitioning to the functional limitations model (Smart 2001; Evans et al., 2017). According to Evans et al. (2017), the primordial stages of disability advocacy utilized a one-dimensional approach when accommodating

students with disabilities. Currently, disability literature supports the notion that single identity analyses and frameworks are no longer acceptable approaches for accommodating students with disabilities (Evans et al., 2017). Mingus (2014) initiated the shift in analysis by describing the transition from a single-identity analysis toward a multi-identity framework as:

> We recognize that ableism is connected, tied up with, and mutually dependent on other systems of oppression and that we cannot end ableism without also ending White supremacy, economic exploitation, colonization, and gender oppression. Disability justice requires that we no longer build single-identity analysis, but instead build frameworks that can hold the complexities of our lives. (p. 110)

Ableism is defined as a pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people with disabilities that privileges those who are typically-abled and devalue those who do not adhere to that norm (Bialka, Morro, Brown, & Hannah, 2017). When challenging ableist environments, identifying other intersecting marginal groups is essential when building inclusive academic environments. Statistics from the College Board shows that stratifications in higher education are present when considering students' socioeconomic status (SES), race, and gender (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). Math quartiles are positively correlated with SES quartiles, and in 2004, 38 percent of the lowest math quartile was represented by students from the lowest SES quartile (Ma et al., 2016). More stratified data presented itself when the College Board expanded their research from a SES analysis to an analysis of race/ethnicity and gender.

Challenges for Students with Disabilities

With an increase in college students with disabilities and disproportionate graduation rates, it is essential to mitigate academic barriers for students with disabilities. Data from the College Board identified barriers that should be considered when developing a multi-identity framework for accommodating students in an inclusive academic environment (Bialka et al., 2017). For example, college stressors are experienced by many students transitioning into college derive from learning that psychological costs are no longer funded by the academic institution, the timeframe in which psychological or medical evaluations are updated, and the duration of time it takes for students to receive an appointment with a Disability Services professional.

When first-year college students are balancing newly forged autonomy and the rigorous curricula of college, many students often report feeling anxious and overwhelmed (Bialka et al., 2017). When a disability exists, the typical difficulties a student experiences are compounded (Bialka et al., 2017). This research study will explore the experiences of college students with disabilities who identify with at least one additional oppressed identity while matriculating through college.

Many postsecondary institutions have campuses that were designed without the consideration of accessible features to accommodate students with disabilities. Therefore, some common issues that are barriers for students with disabilities deal with appropriate bathroom stall sizes for individuals who use wheelchairs, accessibility of office locations, and the implementation of inclusive policies (Evans et al., 2017). In addition to the environmental structure of campuses, there are costs associated with medical and

psychological evaluations. Many students forgo receiving accommodations because of the exorbitant costs associated with medical and psychological evaluations (Evans et al., 2017).

The Role of Disability Services Offices

A primary function of Disability Services offices at colleges and universities is to provide reasonable accommodations as academic support to mitigate barriers for students with disabilities. Moreover, postsecondary education can become overwhelming for students with disabilities when adequate support is not being received from faculty and staff (Saar, 2015). Although students with disabilities are attending college at similar rates as students without disabilities, retention and graduation rates for students with disabilities are problematic (Temple et al., 2019). Additionally, many students withdraw from college prior to graduation and commonly within their first year (Evans et al., 2017; Temple et al., 2019).

Therefore, due to neoliberalism's threat to higher education, it is imperative for its administrators to consider institutional retention as a significant responsibility. Although not a new concept, neoliberalism is explained as capitalizing, profiting, and corporatizing, higher education (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017). During a time when higher education is receiving less funding than in previous years, applying a neoliberal framework to higher education casts students as consumers and faculty and staff as service providers. Reduced funding and corporatizing higher education can increase tuition rates for students. Moreover, students with disabilities begin experiencing a rise in tuition while also covering costs associated with required psychological evaluations to

receive reasonable accommodations (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017; Drummond, Sheperis, & Jones, 2016).

Significance of Study

Gaining an in-depth understanding of intersecting experiences among students with disabilities who have another oppressed identity may be useful for college administrators when facilitating accommodations and developing other institutional practices geared toward student success. The intention of this research study is to assist in creating multi-identity frameworks that improve the integration of students with disabilities in academic environments. Coalescing increased general enrollment and increased enrollment of students with disabilities with reduced state financial support demonstrates difficulty in resolving America's issue of access at public institutions (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2017).

In 2017, access was labeled on the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) list of top 10 most difficult higher education issues. The AASCU acknowledged the difficulty of attempts to contribute to institutional productivity, student success, and veterans' support by addressing financial needs (AASCU, 2017). From an access perspective, too often literature acknowledges accessibility concerns by discussing financial barriers. There is a dearth of literature on students who have multiple oppressed identities, which prevents Disability Services professionals from creating accessible academic environments for students with disabilities.

In addition to mitigating barriers and providing access for students with disabilities, this research study will also provide data that educators can utilize when

executing their goal of assuring access to equitable education opportunities to qualified students (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). Previous disability research has been oversimplified because of its exclusion of, and generalized conclusions about, individuals with multiple minority statuses (Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savage, 2002). Therefore, the frequent oversimplification of disability research contributes to the importance of this research study which takes a more intersectional approach. This research study design is capable of capturing events that may influence the lower graduation rates of male students with disabilities. In addition, students whose disabilities are accompanied with issues such as low family income and attendance at high poverty high schools may have decreased access and success in college (Madaus, Grigal, & Hughes, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

In relation to critical disability research, Ribet (2010) defined comparative subordination as the ability to rely on the analogy and application of racially-based analysis toward disability. Because of this analogous relationship and application, CRT is viewed as the foundation for Critical Disability Theory (CDT). Although analyses between CRT and CDT are productive, there are limitations that exist. Analogies used in most comparative subordination disability research treat race and disability as two discrete categories (Dixson et al., 2018; Ribet, 2010). According to Ribet (2010), viewing disability and race as two discrete categories not only results in research comparing the two identities but also results in individuals debating about which oppressed identity endures more hardship.

In addition to access, Baynton (2001) stated that the social construction of both race and gender is used to create a sense of inferiority and class within and between groups. Focusing on the intersections of poverty, disability, and race promotes dismantling the social construction of inequalities (Pokempner & Roberts, 2001). Due to the contentious nature of critical pedagogy, it is imperative to understand that its scholarship is not an assault on White people, however, it is an assault on the socially constructed and reinforced power of White identifications and interests (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Critical Disability Theory (CDT)

Procknow, Rocco, and Munn (2017) agreed with Ribet's (2010) claim that CDT is the comparative subordinate theory of CRT. When explaining CDT, Procknow et al. (2017) stated that it is a cross fertilization of ideas from disability studies and critical race theory scholars. Some scholars refer to CDT as DisCrit and define the theory as an approach that seeks to understand ways that macro-level issues of racism and ableism, among other structural discriminatory processes, are enacted in the day-to-day lives of students of color with disabilities (Connor, Ferri, & Annamma, 2016). Although CDT focuses immensely on the intersection of disability and race, Collins (1990) stated that in addition to race, notions of interlocking oppression also include class and gender. The seven major tenets of CDT intently focus on ways that uphold notions of normalcy while contributing to oppressions of racism and ableism (Connor et al., 2016).

The first tenet of CDT focuses on ways that racism and ableism interdependently circulate in invisible to reinforce notions of normalcy (Connor et al., 2016). Secondly,

CDT directly connects to this dissertation because it values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity (Connor et al., 2016). Additionally, when looking at multidimensional identities and troubles of singular notions, it is important to identify and emphasize the social constructions of race and ableism (Connor et al., 2016). It is also important to understand that CDT privileges the voices of individuals who have oppressed identities while also identifying the historical and legal aspects of disability and race that work together and separately in denying the rights of some citizens (Connor et al., 2016). CDT also recognizes Whiteness and ableism as a property and that individuals with disabilities have obtain some social gain because of interest convergence of White, middle-class citizens (Connor et al., 2016). As the final tenet of CDT, it firmly believes that forms of advocacy is a requirement while also supporting all forms of resistance (Connor et al., 2016).

Intersectionality

The second tenet of CDT closely relates to intersectionality because it shuns the notion of singular identity and strives to focus on multiple identities and how they intersect. Intersectionality is an idea that identifies power-differentials by showing how interlocking systems of oppression shape one's identity while also revealing how forms of prejudices overlap (Bartlett, 2017; Lang, 2017). Intersectionality, a term coined by Crenshaw (1989), claims that one-dimensional frameworks have the ability to erase oppressed identities by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group. For example, understanding the experiences of African-American women cannot be obtained by monitoring the experiences of African-American men and

Caucasian women. Therefore, failing to include a multi-dimensional framework of intersecting identities erases the experiences of African-American women and does not encourage allies and researchers to move beyond a simplistic notion of identity (Connor et al., 2016; Crenshaw, 1989).

In recent years, some newspaper columns and celebrities have been challenged for interpreting the term intersectional incorrectly (Bartlett, 2017). However, using the original interpretation of the term intersectionality served as this research study's purpose to focus on disabilities' intersection with other oppressed identities (i.e., socioeconomics, race, gender, and sexual orientation). According to Connor et al. (2016), there is no agreed-upon definition of intersectionality, however, the term addresses the question of how multiple forms of inequality and identity interrelate in different contexts and over time. Moreover, intersecting students' disabilities with their other oppressed identities is a major contributor in developing a multi-dimensional framework to accommodate students with disabilities (Evans et al., 2017).

Methodology

Narrative inquiry is the methodological foundation for this research study. An unstructured interview protocol will serve as the data collection process to understand the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. After collecting the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, this study's methodology will use critical event analysis to analyze the data to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences. Using narrative inquiry, an unstructured interview protocol, and critical event analysis will allow

participants to relive and reveal the most salient experiences that contributed to their

disability identity. The methodology of this research study is discussed in detail in

chapter three.

Organization of Dissertation

In the remainder of this dissertation I will not only explicate the evolution of

disability advocacy, but I will also identify the relationship between disability and other

oppressed identities. This dissertation will provide an overview of the transition and

history of disability research and its associated professions. Chapter two will articulate

the role that veterans and former presidents played in establishing legislation to protect

and prevent discrimination toward individuals with disabilities in higher education. In

addition to disability legislation, transitions between disability advocacy models is shared

to provide additional context regarding disability research's historical foundation.

Chapter three consists of this study's research design and methodology. When

discussing the research design, readers will understand how participants were identified

and recruited from their institution of higher learning. Moreover, when explaining the

study's methodology, this dissertation will provide my ontological and epistemological

commitments to the research study and design. As the researcher, providing my

ontological and epistemological commitment provides context around why it is important

to challenge mainstream behaviors toward individuals with disabilities. Additionally, my

ontology and epistemology also explicates the importance of why researchers who use

narrative inquiry view their participants as experts of their experiences.

Research findings and categories of interest are outlined in chapter four of this dissertation. Categories of interests are identified by analyzing data received from each participant and determining which themes are prevalent across all participants' narratives. Individually, each participant's experiences are discussed in detail to provide clarity of how their interactions influenced their matriculation through college. Chapter four also explains how Mystory is used to collect data from participants while also explaining how critical events analysis is used to analyze participant data.

The final chapter of this dissertation will discuss ways in which students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities can empower themselves. Additionally, the final chapter will provide a brief summary of this study's research design and narrative approach. This dissertation will conclude with discussion regarding its contribution to disability research, my reflection as the researcher, and implications for further research.

Concepts and Terms

Understanding how students' oppressed identities intersect with their disability is critical for higher education administrators when creating an inclusive campus environment. For the purpose of this study, key terms are defined below to provide clarity in regard to the roles and experiences of university administrators and research participants. Conducting research to gather responses related to the inclusion of students with disabilities is critical in disability research. For this study, disability is considered an oppressed identity because historically, people with disabilities were culturally devalued and excluded from most privileges of citizenship (Baynton, 2001).

- Ableism: A pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people with disabilities that privileges those who are typically-abled and devalue those who do not adhere to that norm (Bialka et al., 2017).

- Cultural capital: The skills, education, knowledge, and other advantages a person has that make the educational system a comfortable, familiar environment in which he or she can succeed easily (Oldfield, 2007).

- Disability: (1) A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities; (2) a record of such an impairment; or (3) being regarded as having such an impairment (Colker, 2012).

- Multiple oppressed identities: More than one categorical characteristic that is most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination—that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different (Crenshaw, 1991; Evans et al., 2017).

- Oppressed identity: A categorical characteristic that is most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination—that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different (Crenshaw, 1991).

- Reasonable accommodation: (1) Making existing facilities readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities; (2) job structuring, part-time or modified work schedules, reassignment to vacant positions, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, appropriate adjustment or

modifications of examinations, training materials or policies, the provision of

qualified readers or interpreters, and other similar accommodations for

individuals with disabilities (Colker, 2012).

Chapter Two: The Evolution of Disability Advocacy

Although this research study will focus on the current experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, it is critical to historically understand the experiences of individuals with disabilities. Understanding historical events that are associated with disability research and advocacy shows the amount of progress within the disability field. Therefore, this chapter will provide context regarding historical perspectives of individuals with disabilities, the role that veterans and former presidents played in disability advocacy, and important legal mandates. In addition to the critical aforementioned components of disability advocacy, this chapter will also explain how disability advocacy began in higher education and provide current literature regarding how experiences of students with disabilities may differ contingent upon their socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation, and gender.

Perspectives Toward Individuals with Disabilities

Historically, Dahomeans of West Africa had what most would consider an abnormal perspective of individuals with a disability (Marini, Glover-Graf, & Millington, 2012). During a time when most cultures ridiculed and stigmatized individuals with disabilities, Dahomeans believed that infants born with disabilities were the result of

supernatural forces and good luck (Marini et al., 2012). Similar to Dahomean's belief system, Chagga of East Africa believed that children with disabilities satisfied evil spirits, which in turn safeguarded others from misfortune. According to Marini et al. (2012), positive connotations associated with disabilities are isolated incidences in the history of disabilities.

Historically, negative stigmas were associated with disabilities and reinforced by prejudiced acts (Dell-Orto & Power, 2007). Negative stigmatizing encounters result in increased life stress, reduced self-esteem, and withdrawal from social encounters including treatment and rehabilitation environments (Dell-Orto & Power, 2007). *Spread*, a term coined by Beatrice Wright, was used to refer to the overgeneralization of the effects of disability (Wright, 1960). Soon after Wright coined the term, another disability scholar, Hanoch Livneh, referred to the overgeneralization of disabilities' effects as the *negative halo effect* (Livneh, 1982). Both *spread* and *negative halo effect* describe how individuals discount and underestimate the abilities of persons with disabilities (Smart, 2001). According to Smart (2001), although negative stigmas are widespread, many people with disabilities think of their disability as an attribute, not as a problem.

The Influence of Veterans

In disability literature, veterans are lionized for their service to the United States while and their influence on disability advocacy. This section is important because it will explain the challenges veterans experienced when returning from the World War and how their challenges encouraged them to advocate for their needs as American citizens. The advocacy of veterans led to the creation of federal mandates that are still currently used

when improving the access of education for veterans. In the 1900s, federal legislation was created to provide tuition, housing, and living subsidies for veterans who were honorably discharged from the military (Thelin, 2004). When responding to veterans' advocacy efforts, economists were led to analyze governmental spending to determine what improvements could be made and what influences veterans had on the economy's stability (Watkins, 1993). The government spent time devising plans to answer the inquiries of how transition programs could positively affect the United States' economy.

To mitigate financial barriers, the Revolutionary War Pension Act served as the genesis of transition services for veterans (Arminio, Grabosky, & Lang, 2015). According to Arminio et al. (2015), in 1818 the Revolutionary War Pension Act was initiated to alleviate financial stresses experienced by officers and the enlisted who served at least nine months in the military. As one of the founding federal mandates for transition services in higher education, the Revolutionary War Pension Act established disability as a legal and social welfare category (Evans et al., 2017).

Even though the Pension Act preceded the Morrill Land Grant legislation of 1862 and 1890, higher education must pay homage to The Morrill Land Grant of 1862 for fostering land grant colleges in the United States (Arminio et al., 2015; Thelin, 2004). Determined by the quantity of congressional seats, the Morrill Land Grant apportioned land to be used within five years to support and maintain at least one state college (Thelin, 2004). The Morrill Land Grants of 1862 and 1890 allotted land for the inclusion of agriculture, engineering, mechanics, and mining as viable studies in the 1800s. According to Thelin (2004) agriculture, engineering, and mechanics were compressed

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into the acronym "A&M." Moreover, when differentiating the Land Grant of 1862 from the grant of 1890, it is important to recognize that the latter grant was the government's initial way to acknowledge inclusion in higher education (Thelin, 2004).

Although schools were segregated by race during this time, the Morrill Land Grant of 1890 is specifically lionized for authorizing funds to include historically Black colleges into postsecondary education. Albeit established to include African Americans in higher education, the Morrill Land Grant of 1890 resulted in a major disparity when analyzing the allocation of state funding (Thelin, 2004). According to Thelin (2004), historically Black institutions were disproportionately underfunded and neglected with respect to facilities, salaries, and staffing. [1]The lack of funding and resources contributed to Black institutions' inability to conduct advanced and original research (Thelin, 2004). Currently, the United States Government Accountability Office (2018) stated that many HBCUs are still facing increasing capital project needs concerning the neglect of building maintenance. Moreover, the 1917 survey of Black higher education revealed that although 7,513 students were enrolled in Black land-grant institutions, 4,061 were classified as elementary level students, approximately 3,400 were considered secondary level students and only 12 were actually enrolled in collegiate grades in southern states and the District of Columbia (Wechsler, Goodchild, & Eisenmann, 2007). The inception of the Morrill Land Grants is referred to as the "age of university building," however, oppressed identities such as race and low economic status are only addressed in the Morrill Land Grant of 1890.

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[1] Currently, the United States Government Accountability Office (2018) stated that many HBCUs are still facing increasing capital project needs concerning the neglect of building maintenance.

As higher education began to thrive and shape its local communities in the mid-1900s, World War I veterans contributed to a transition in how Americans viewed people with disabilities (Thelin, 2011). After World War I, America's economy was not as stable as it had been in the past and the economy's slump and inability to thrive was referred to as The Great Depression (Watkins, 1993). According to Watkins (1993), The Great Depression occurred in October of 1929 and caused a recession that influenced daily civilian activities, the stock market, major industries, and small businesses. In response to the economy's downturn, veterans began advocating for transition services to assist in creating a suitable post-war life (Thelin, 2011). Veterans began advocating for support concerning their vocational, educational, emotional, and financial interests (Thelin, 2011).

In the spring and summer of 1932, 40,000 World War I veterans and their families collectively marched in Washington, D.C., to demand financial payment for their time served in combat (Ortiz, 2006). Ortiz (2006) stated that advocates referred to additional payments as bonuses and therefore referred to themselves as bonus marchers. During Herbert Hoover's leadership, it was believed that direct aid to an individual, able-bodied or disabled, was not the business of the government unless demanding circumstances were presented (Watkins, 1993). With knowledge of Hoover's perspective, many were not shocked at the government's hands-off approach in the personal lives of its citizens (Watkins, 1993).

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Disability Advocacy

In his book *The Gi Bill: A New Deal for Veterans*, Glenn Altschuler gave detailed

descriptions of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's disability and its relevance to non-profit

organizations who focused on accommodating the impaired (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009).

President Roosevelt worked arduously to focus on the abilities of less-abled veterans

during his presidency (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009). For example, prior to World War II,

Roosevelt developed the *National Resources Planning Board* (NRPB) as a proactive

measure to mitigate obstacles for postwar veterans (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009).

Supervised by Roosevelt's uncle in 1940, Frederic A. Delano was tasked with stimulating

the economy but the Supreme Court overturned the National Industrial Recovery Act in

1933 (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009). This Act, designed to stimulate the economy by

finding employment for veterans, is historical because it paved the way for services

whose mission was to eradicate barriers for individuals seeking employment (Altschuler

& Blumin, 2009).

Mettler (2006) mentioned that the lack of employment was a major concern for

veterans with disabilities leaving the First World War and entering the civilian world

during the Great Depression. Major General Norman T. Kirk, surgeon general of the U.S.

Army, explicated the experiences of returning World War I veterans by stating that in

addition to veterans returning with amputated arms and legs, they were also returning to

an economy that was not suited to employ a plethora of returning veterans (Mettler,

2006).

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act 1944

War veterans led to significant changes in how society viewed disability in the United States by deeming certain disabilities more honorable than others (Evans et al., 2017; Thelin, 2011). The shift in society's perspective of disabilities, in conjunction with the issue of veteran unemployment, led to a national intervention (Mettler, 2006; Thelin, 2011). Mettler (2006) stated that employment for World War I veterans was a promulgated issue in the 1930s. During a time when postsecondary education was receiving accolades for generating class and prestige, the government established the Servicemen's Readjustment Act 1944, more commonly referred to as the GI Bill. This Act was created to alleviate economic pressures of unemployment (Arminio et al., 2015; Ortiz, 2006). Arminio et al. (2015), stated that benefits associated with GI Bill helped veterans with unemployment insurance, acceptable healthcare, and educational support. Although funding the educational benefits to integrate postwar veterans was an exorbitant governmental cost, its economic contribution was significant in removing barriers to integrate marginalized groups into higher education (Arminio et al., 2015).

Because of the GI Bill's costly intervention, Commander James E. Van Zandt responded to President Roosevelt's initial opposition by reminding him of the federal government's obligation to provide adequate relief for veterans with service-connected disabilities; including veterans suffering from disabilities related to either old age, disease, injury, and those who were unable to carry-on (Ortiz, 2006). Relief was also needed for widows and orphans despite the reason of the veteran's death (Ortiz, 2006). Zandt's advocacy is important because of its contribution to the government's efforts to

stabilize the economy by preventing the return of massive unemployment rates and educational shortages (Mettler, 2006). Securing post-war employment was an arduous task for all but significantly difficult for veterans with service-connected disabilities (Evans et al., 2017).

Rehabilitation Act of 1954

Rehabilitation revamped how the needs of people with disabilities were addressed in the 20th Century (Evans et al., 2017). Rehabilitation does not only focus on job placement for individuals with disabilities, but it also focuses on their vocational training (Evans et al., 2017). The Rehabilitation Act of 1954 allocated funds to afford colleges and universities the opportunity to train and prepare rehabilitation professionals (Parker, Szymanski, & Patterson, 2005). Prior to the Rehabilitation Act of 1954, rehabilitationists were not formally trained but were engineered to enable the physically impaired to become more self-sufficient (Evans et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2005).

Rehabilitationists were divided into two tiers: social and medical rehabilitationists. Social rehabilitationists typically lacked a medical background and focused on changing societal attitudes toward disability. Medical rehabilitationists mostly acquired medical backgrounds and used medical procedures such as orthopedic surgery to correct flaws among individuals with disabilities (Evans et al., 2017). Both social and medical rehabilitationists viewed their approaches as a necessary component in helping those with physical impairments to assimilate into mainstream society (Evans et al., 2017). Although these terms are outdated, Evans et al. (2017) stated that rehabilitation

professionals initially worked with disabled veterans to help them become "successful cripples" rather than the "begging type of cripples" (p. 26).

Addressing the concerns of people with disabilities began by advocating solely for veterans, which became an economic burden (Evans et al., 2017). Veterans initially were not equipped to take on intellectual employment when returning to civilian life (Evans et al., 2017). This lack of employment caused many veterans to end up in poor houses or asylums (Evans et al., 2017). In response to the needs of veterans, the Education Act of 1917 created the Federal Board for Vocational Education which developed vocational rehabilitation agencies (Evans et al., 2017). According to Evans et al. (2017), in 1917 the Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men in New York City was established to accommodate adult men while incorporating in their mission an additional commitment to educate the general public. Although employers often refused to hire individuals with disabilities, historically the Red Cross Institute is one of the first agencies to attempt to address multiple identities when advocating in the Disability Services field (Evans et al., 2017). The Red Cross Institute identified that accommodating disability needs should include voices of the disabled while educating and shifting the perspectives of the general public (Evans et al., 2017).

In addition to more effectively preparing rehabilitation professionals, the Rehabilitation Act of 1954 also improved state vocational rehabilitation agencies, authorized research on independent living specialist through the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association (NRCA) (Parker et al. 2005), and established advanced degree accreditation organizations such as the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE).

These improvements occurred while also expanding services to persons with mental

retardation and mental illness (Parker et al., 2005). The hiring of *qualified personnel* was

an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act that occurred as recently as 1992.

According to Parker et al. (2005), following President Roosevelt's disability

initiatives, rehabilitation counselors and their required credentialing served as a pivotal

moment in disability advocacy. Professionalizing disability advocacy, the act of speaking

on behalf of individuals with disabilities and disability issues, led to preferred language

as a camp of disability research. The discussion of preferred language began in 1975

when Manus, a disability advocate, noted that "the disabled" was unacceptable (Parker et

al., 2005). Parker et al. (2005) stated that in efforts to encourage people to think outside

of a person's disability, Manus encouraged using the term "disabled person." Kailes from

Western University's Harris Family Center for Disability and Health Policy, stated that

the phrase "disabled person" was a "sloppy shortcut" that distorts and undermines who

people with disabilities are and how they want to be seen (Kailes, 1984; Parker et al.,

2005). Using a critical lens, person-first language originated in response to the advocacy

of Kailes (Parker et al., 2005).

Person-first language is defined as a technique that puts the person in front of the

disability (Guth & Murphy, 1998). For example, current professionals typically say, "the

student with dyslexia" in lieu of "the dyslexic student." Using person first language

avoids the use of language that suggests individuals with disabilities are sick and

dependent (Guth & Murphy, 1998). Suggestions that create an image of sickness and

dependency were referred to as disabling language (Patterson &Witten, 1987), which is

also described as language that perpetuates myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions about people with disabilities (Parker et al. 2005). Albeit outdated, examples of disabling language are crippled, imbecile, handicapped, deaf and dumb, and idiot (Parker et al., 2005). In summary, amendments of the Rehabilitation Act of 1954 heavily influenced the evolution of disability advocacy. Though the amendments focused on training and employing disability professionals, the Rehabilitation Act also focused on advocating for employment of individuals with disabilities (Parker et al., 2005).

Advocacy for Students

Advocacy in Higher Education

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 was amended almost two decades after its genesis and is referred to as the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). The ADAAA was created to lucidly define and provide examples of ameliorative effects, major life activities, substantial limitations, and being *regarded as being disabled* (Dunleavy & Gutman, 2018). Being regarded as being disabled refers to episodic conditions that may or may not be in remission (Colker, 2012; Dunleavy & Gutman, 2018). At the postsecondary level, the ADAAA protects students with disabilities from discrimination (Colker, 2012).

Students with disabilities who are transitioning to college must adjust to new procedures and policies when seeking reasonable accommodations. Postsecondary administrators establish departmental policies and procedures that are commensurate with guidance from the ADAAA. Therefore, Gordon and Keiser (2000) stated that ADAAA is an antidiscrimination law because of its civil rights component that prevents

discrimination in the workplace and education. As for IDEA, it is considered an entitlement law because of the free and appropriate education that is mandated in secondary education (Gordon & Keiser, 2000). The different classification of both Acts immensely contribute to the different policies and procedures that guide DSPs within education. Moreover, The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2007) stated the ADAAA influence the transition process for students with disabilities. For example, the transition process for students in postsecondary education includes a detailed interview and documentation process prior to gaining access to reasonable accommodations (NJCLD, 2007).

The definition of disability is used in postsecondary education and is defined as a physical or mental impairment that *substantially limits a major life activity* and there should also be a record of an impairment (Gaal & Jones, 2003; Parker et al., 2005). It is important that Disability Services professional at colleges and universities have a thorough understanding of the legal definition of disability when creating entitlement decisions that are appropriate for students seeking accommodations (Gordon & Keiser, 2000). According to Colker (2012), ameliorative effects are considered when substantiating the meaning of substantial limitations and methods used to reduce the academic barriers that result from one's impairment. Colker (2012) used two examples to clarify how ameliorative devices may influence a disability entitlement decision. For example, a student with a prosthetic leg still meets disability criteria while individuals with corrective lenses would not meet disability criteria if the visual acuity does not classify them as being legally blind (Colker, 2012). Therefore, a DSP at a college or

university cannot provide reasonable accommodations to reduce visual barriers for a student who uses corrective lenses. However, a student using a prosthetic leg is entitled to reasonable accommodations while enrolled in college.

In addition to the aforementioned examples, another contentious scenario that college disability professionals consider is substantial limitations that are concomitant with episodic impairments or diagnoses that are in remission (Colker, 2012). Examples of diagnoses that have episodes are autism, cerebral palsy, obsessive compulsive disorder, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), schizophrenia, and cancer (Falvo, 2014). University DSPs are encouraged to have a comprehensive understanding of how substantial limitations is necessary when advocating and making entitlement decisions for students with disabilities. It is important for DSPs at colleges and universities to have a comprehensive understanding of "substantial limitations" because they are two key words in the ADAAA's formal definition of disability (Gordon & Keiser, 2000). As previously mentioned, the ADAAA is the primary Act that guides decisions, policies, and procedures for postsecondary DSPs. In addition to comprehensively understanding substantial limitations, university disability professionals are also expected to recognize how understanding students' major life activities is pertinent in qualifying an individual for accommodations in while in college (Colker, 2012).

Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams is a United States Supreme Court case that has shaped the meaning of major life activities and help Disability Services professionals identify reasonable accommodations for college students (Ohlweiler, 2005). The phrase *major life activities* is another pertinent

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component in the ADAAA's formal definition of disability which also guides the entitlement decisions, procedures, and policies of DSPs in higher education. Therefore, knowing how the Toyota Motor v. Williams case contextualized major life activities is essential for DSPs in higher education.

Ohlweiler (2005) stated that part of the analysis of whether a life activity is major, is contingent upon its frequency and universality. When determining the frequency of activities, a major life activity must be one that is routinely and frequently performed (Ohlweiler, 2005). The universality of an activity is determined by showing that it is a "basic ability" that is essential to "daily life" and cannot be subject to a lifestyle choice (Ohlweiler, 2005). Beneficially, the Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams case provides an example for DSPs to consider when attempting to refrain from receiving legal ramifications when consulting students with disabilities.

For example, an individual cannot voluntarily choose when to impair their ability to see, walk, breathe, speak, or care for self to achieve suitable daily living. As for one's occupation, it is considered a life activity of choice and is not performed daily by many people (Ohlweiler, 2005). Colker (2012) provided an updated and non-exhaustive list of major life activities that pertain to one's ability to operate bodily functions. Activities that are considered major are cell growth, respiration, neurological functioning, bowel and bladder functioning, and digestion (Colker, 2012).

According to Ohlweiler (2005), understanding this example of major life activity was an important component in the court's decision to rule in favor of the employer in the

Toyota Motor Manufacturing case. For example, in the Toyota Motor Manufacturing case, Williams developed carpal tunnel syndrome and her related impairments served as impediments when performing work on an automobile assembly line. The Court of Appeals ruled in her favor and found that her impairments substantially limited her ability to complete major life activities that required gripping of tools and repetitive work with hands and arms extended at or over the shoulder for a prolonged period. Therefore, because "major life activities" and "substantially limits" are within the legal definition of the term disability, it is imperative that DSPs are aware of the consequences associated with their administrative duties.

Advocacy in K-12 Education

In 1975, educational advocacy in public school systems began with the lobby for the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Congruent with the Rehabilitation Acts, the IDEA was also enacted to mitigate barriers for students in education. As disability advocacy evolved over time, unlike the Rehabilitation Acts, the IDEA expanded disability advocacy by focusing specifically on removing barriers for students at the secondary level of education (Ramirez, 1998). The IDEA removed financial barriers for K-12 students with disabilities by affording them the opportunity to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

According to Ramirez (1998), FAPE allowed parents to play an essential role in developing their child's educational goals located in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IDEA has been amended to provide services that extend beyond FAPE (Driscoll & Nagel, 2010). For example, in 1997, the IDEA was amended to

strengthen a parent's role when accommodating K-12 students with disabilities by involving them in educational decisions and the promotion of meaningful access to general curricula (Driscoll & Nagel, 2010). The 1997 amendment also authorized financial assistance to support the needs of infants and their families (Driscoll & Nagel, 2010).

After the establishment of the IDEA 1997 amendments, the IDEA Improvement Act of 2004 was enacted to ensure that all K-12 students with disabilities have a quality education program. To enhance the quality of K-12 education programs, the 2004 amendment required special education teachers to be highly qualified by mandating that they be certified (Driscoll & Nagel, 2010). Also, the IDEA Improvement Act of 2004 established IEPs as an outline for developing person-centered learning goals while also creating awareness around the phrase *specific learning disabilities* (SLD). A specific learning disability is important at the K-12 level because it releases a school from the requirement to show a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability (Driscoll & Nagel, 2010).

Goal development is monitored via a student's IEP and is created with the collaboration of the student, parents, and IEP Team (Colker, 2012). According to Colker (2012), an IEP is person-centered to ensure that goal development is unique by tailoring course instruction and related services to each student. There is a plethora of services that may be used when tailoring course instruction for students with disabilities. To academically accommodate students with disabilities, both secondary and postsecondary

institutions include speech pathology, audiology, and psychological services; however, this is a non-exhaustive list (Colker, 2012).

The *Irving Independent School District v. Tatro* case is influential in the development of advocacy and accommodations in education (Flygare, 1984). The Tatro case involved Amber Tatro, a student with spina bifida and a slew of other neurogenic disorders that heavily impacted her incontinence. Henry Tatro, Amber's father, challenged the Irving Independent School District and the Texas court's decision to deny his request to provide clean intermittent catheterization (CIC) services for his daughter during academic hours (Flygare, 1984). Providing CIC services was deemed necessary by doctors to avoid extensive kidney damage for Amber.

The Texas court supported the school district's decision and stated that CIC is not a service related to education. This led to the case being further investigated in the Fifth Circuit of the U.S. Supreme Court. In efforts to support the father's claim, the Supreme Court reversed the district court's decision and awarded the family damages and attorney fees (Flygare, 1984). The IDEA was pivotal in the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the Tatro case and although not identical, it parallels with students' requests in the postsecondary context. Like CRT and CDT, a relationship of comparative subordination exists between the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the IDEA.

Disability Advocacy Models

Historically, all disabilities were treated under the medical model of disability, one of the earliest disability models (Smart, 2001). Using this lens, disability treatments focused heavily on objective, clear-cut, and standardized measures that were created and

administered by experts such as physicians. This model of disability is criticized by scholars because it often objectifies individuals with disabilities and views them as a body-part, specific organ, or type of disability. This objectification demarcates how individuals with disabilities may view themselves. Smart (2001) stated that through this lens, professionals have a tendency to refer to an individual by their disability (i.e. quadriplegic, schizophrenic, or diabetic) and opposes person-first language which is concomitant with modern disability jargon (Parker et al., 2005).

The *environmental model* of disability posits that an individual's social and physical environment may cause or exacerbate their disability (Smart, 2001). Through this lens, the ADA was created to help make environments accessible for all (Colker, 2012). Environmental barriers became the forefront of disability advocacy it led to the establishment of the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 which was one of the first major barrier free pieces of legislation that is applicable to a classroom environment or the design of a building (Evans et al., 2017; Longmore, 2009). Establishing the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 was essential in enabling students with disabilities to gain access to education by mitigating significant architectural barriers (Colker, 2012; Pliner & Johnson, 2004). Curb ramps and student residential housing are two components that are influenced by the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (Colker, 2012).

[2]Moreover, the United States Access Board has a website with a detailed list of additional architectural barriers to consider when designing an accessible environment for students with disabilities. Mitigating environmental barriers is the sole function of

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[2] https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/background/adaag#4.18

universal design model used by teachers during course instruction (Roberts, Park, Brown, & Cook, 2011). Universal design is defined as the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design (Burgstahler, 2009). When determining how to make modifications to an environment to accommodate students with disabilities, it is essential to examine their functions and abilities. This examination relates to the functional model of disability.

The *functional model* of disability scholars theorizes that the functions of the individual influence the definition of disability (Smart, 2001). For example, mobility impairments will limit someone who enjoys physical activities (i.e. running, basketball, or tennis) more significantly than someone who does not have the desire to engage in physical activities. When utilizing the functional model, professionals must keep the relationship between function and disability in mind. As a second example, losing a finger may not be problematic for most, but a pianist who loses a finger may deem this situation as more problematic.

Subsequently, after the functional model, the *Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation* served as activists to integrate commonalities and barriers experienced by all individuals with disabilities by promoting and developing the *social model* of disability (The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976). According to Evans et al. (2017), social model scholars believe that prejudice and discrimination is the true cause of disability. In addition to architectural barriers, this model posits that interactions between the powerless individuals with disabilities and

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powerful able-bodied individuals serve as social barriers that influences the psycho-emotional aspects of disability.

The *minority group model* of disability, also known as the sociopolitical model, immensely influences the creation of an integrated experience for students with disabilities (Parker et al., 2005). As an expansion of the social model, the minority group model focuses primarily on changing policy and strengthening laws to combat prejudice and discrimination toward persons with disabilities. The sociopolitical model demystifies the difference between an impairment and a disability (Hahn, 1985). An impairment is used to refer to a mental or physical disease, injury, or ailment affecting the person's body or mind, whereas a disability is defined as the interaction between individuals and their environment (Evans et. al., 2017; Hahn, 1985).

As a component of the *ableist model*, also known as the social justice or disability oppression model of disability, interactions allow oppressive actions to emerge (Evans et. al., 2017). Due to the lack of research and literature that focus on ableism, the University of Massachusetts' Social Justice Education Program is lionized for developing the ableist model (Evans et al., 2017; Nocella, 2009). When working to transform social behaviors, supporters of the social justice model evaluate discriminatory behavior by identifying concepts such as social justice, liberation, and oppression (Evans et. al., 2017). Identifying these concepts helps to establish environments that accept all individuals as they are and change the lens of the dominant ableist society. The ableist perspective will learn how to be inclusive and accepting rather than attempting to fix people with

disabilities in order to integrate them into the dominant ableist society (Evans et. al., 2017).

Comparison of models. The environmental model and functional model many times are viewed as interrelated. Orto and Power (2007) recognized how intertwined both models are and combined them as one entity in the literature. Agreeing with Smart (2001), Orto and Power (2007) referred to the functional and environmental models of disability as interactive models because of how the disability interacts with functions and the environment. As models that do not view the "problem" of disability as located totally within the individual, environmentalists and functionalists challenge the lens of professionals who utilize the medical model. Although its causal attributions and treatments are clearly and scientifically defined, the medical model is criticized for ignoring social (i.e. person-first language) and environmental solutions (Orto & Power, 2007).

As for functional and environmental models, critics devalue their importance because of the inability to clearly categorize disability (Orto & Power, 2007). According to Orto and Power (2007), professionals who use the medical model believe that categorizing disabilities assists with its diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. However, when using the lens of functional and environmental models, categorization by disability is less likely because it is believed to dehumanize individuals with disabilities (Orto & Power, 2007). In addition to these lenses, the sociopolitical and ableist model of disability are similar due to their foundation in critical pedagogy. In

efforts to build an inclusive environment, both models challenge social norms in the development of policies and interactions.

Emerging models. In 2017, Nancy Evans published the *Disability in Higher Education: A Social Justice Approach* which provides comprehensive and current knowledge for disability professions. Nancy Evans' text is currently used by many DSPs and I currently refer to it as the sacred text for disability administrators. Therefore, Nancy Evans' literature is often used when sharing the current and emerging components of disability topics. Obtaining an understanding of disabilities through the lens of activists in lieu of scholarly researchers may render different understandings.

The *disability justice model* was developed by Patty Berne and queer women of color who all have disabilities (Berne, 2015). Introducing individuals with multiple oppressed identities is one of the focal points of the disability justice model (Berne, 2015). According to Evans and Broido (2011), single issue analyses and frameworks are no longer acceptable when evaluating social justice issues. Additionally, the disability justice model challenges the disability rights argument that individuals with disabilities want to be independent (Evans et al., 2017). Instead, this model values interdependence and believes it is essential to physical and emotional well-being (Evans et al., 2017).

In addition to the disability justice model, the *interactionist model* of disability is gaining increased attention. Expanding upon Kurt Lewin's disability perspective, Evans and Broido developed the interactionist model of disabilities from two studies whose participants were all college students with disabilities (Evans & Broido, 2011; Lewin, 1936). Evans et al. (2017) encourages the use of the interactionist model for student

affairs professionals who are interested in examining which components of a campus environment are disabling. According to Lewin (1936), changing components of an environment influences an individual's psyche, therefore, environments can range from enabling or disabling and influence a person's ability to make effective choices that are appropriate for their disability.

Critical Disability Theory (CDT)

As mentioned in chapter one, CDT serves as the foundational theory for this dissertation research study and focuses on daily structural discriminatory processes that are experienced by students of color who have disabilities. The first tenet of CDT focuses on the interdependency of race and ableism (Connor et al., 2016). As an additional component of this tenet, race and ableism work together in contributing to the perpetuation of normativity because of society's use of Whiteness and ableism as mainstream traits (Connor et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Tenet one of CDT also challenges the common assumption that individuals who deviate from the traits associated with Whiteness and ableism, desire to achieve mainstream traits to reach society's level of normativity.

The second tenet of CDT incorporates oppressed identities other than race and disability and is known as the genesis of multidimensional conversations within disability research. For example, this tenet of CDT includes identities such as an individual's economic status and gender. Because of its multidimensional approach to the disability conversation, this tenet of CDT seeks to identify issues that have not previously received prominence in CRT (Connor et al., 2016). Additionally, once oppressed traits are

identified, the second tenet strives to recognize how they contribute to constructing disability (Connor et al., 2016). Data gathered from this dissertation research study is immensely beneficial to the second tenet of CDT because it will reveal experiences that contribute to the construction of disability.

The fact that race and ability are socially constructed in tandem is the focal point of CDT's third tenet. In regard to the in tandem relationship between race and disability, CDT refers to the notion that the social construction of disability uses the perception of race to inform the abilities of a student and their abilities inform their perceived race (Connor et al., 2016). After questioning the relationship between race and disability, advocates desire to know how the tandem relationship influences students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. This desire is strongly connected to the fourth tenet of which focuses on the voice of marginalized populations.

According to the fourth tenet of CDT, students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities often feel as if their voices are silenced. Therefore, the fourth tenet of CDT invites the voices of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities when advocating for their rights (Connor et al., 2016). Albeit discussed in chapter three, the data collection and analysis methods of this dissertation research study will give a voice to students with disabilities by allowing them to share their experiences in higher education. Many departmental procedures regarding students with disabilities are often composed with the consideration of legal parameters which is in alignment with CDT's fifth tenet (Evans et al., 2017).

The fifth tenet of CDT focuses on the legal, ideological, and historical aspects of disabilities (Connor et al., 2016). For example, literature states that historically Whiteness and Blackness were the only two components when considering racial hierarchy (Connor et al., 2016). Moreover, primordial disability research that derived from phrenology and craniology, generated objective and pseudoscientific knowledge stating that Whiteness is superior (Connor et al., 2016; Valencia, 1997). When considering the historical legal aspect of disabilities, legal policies worked to racialize disability (Connor et al., 2016). Historically, Black Codes are viable examples of legal policies that racialize disabilities because it used vagrancy or laziness to criminalize freed slaves who refused to do work. However, Black Codes focused on vagrancy and laziness as reasoning for work refusal in lieu of refusing to do work because of inequitable working conditions and labor practices (Alexander, 2010).

The *Lau vs Nichols* case of 1974 is another legal example of policies that upheld the notion of White supremacy by ostracizing people of color (Connor et al., 2016). This case created bilingual education for students who spoke English as their second language because of institutions' willingness to associate students as having a disability when participating in English-only instruction (Connor et al., 2016; Baca & Cervantes, 2004). Although this tenet explains the historical components of race and disability, my dissertation research will identify additional experiences in which students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities are legally and ideologically influenced. This dissertation study aligns with CDT's belief of renouncing imposed

segregation for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities (Connor et al., 2016).

Due to this dissertation study's eligibility criteria, many of its participants will not identify with the sixth tenet of CDT. This sixth tenet of CDT recognizes Whiteness and Ability as properties that provide an economic benefit for those who have the option to identify with them (Connor et al., 2016). Hence the importance of the civil rights movement and although not an exhaustive list, their willingness to advocate for women and people of color during a time when economic resources were diverted toward individuals of a dominant class. When considering economic mobility and distribution of resources, the sixth tenet of CDT introduces Derrick Bell's concept of interest convergence (Connor et al., 2016; Bell, 1980). Interests convergence define situations in which the interests of Blacks in receiving racial equity is accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites (Bell, 1980).

As the sixth tenet on the economic benefit of individuals who identify with Whiteness and Ability, it also acknowledges the advocacy on behalf of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. Although activism is the focal point of the seventh tenet of CDT, its desire to support and promote diverse forms of resistance to social constructive frameworks differentiates it from the sixth tenet (Connor et al., 2016). This final tenet of CDT embraces resistance because of the notion that activism is needed, however, traditional forms of activism may be based on ableist norms (Connor et al., 2016). Therefore, in disability research, there is a need to embrace and promote the resistance from students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. This

dissertation research design will contribute to providing a platform of activism via the experiences of its participants.

Recent Advocacy

Recent examples of advocacy include the realization that some students with disabilities are well equipped to endure the stressors of college, while others are not able to adapt as quickly when transitioning into college (Stoelting, 2010). Stoelting (2010) stated that to ease students' transition into college, many institutions, like Niagara University, have offered individualized progress conference sessions for students during their first semester of college. Although individualized monitoring is critical when understanding how well a student is adjusting to college, Senator Bob Casey has taken a different perspective on the matter.

The RISE Act. In collaboration with Senators Orin Hatch, Bill Cassidy, and Maggie Hassan, Senator Casey attempted to ease the transition for students with disabilities who are entering college by proposing the Respond, Innovate, Support, and Empower Act (RISE Act) as an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Casey, Hatch, Cassidy, & Hassan, 2017). The RISE Act stated that documents used to receive special education or accommodations in K-12 education would be considered acceptable evidence of a student's disability when entering higher education (Casey et al., 2017). Senator Casey stated:

> No student with a documented disability should have to jump through extra hoops or incur extra costs to prove their disability. I am pleased to see educational

institutions and the disability community working together with me on this

important issue. (Casey et al., 2017)

As noted in the literature and by Senator Casey, the RISE Act will mitigate barriers by

eliminating costs associated with students being reevaluated for a learning disability and

by allowing colleges and universities to focus on the important goal of promoting

academic success (Casey et al., 2017). Differentiated from services offered by Niagara

University, the RISE Act will help offer services through-out a student's collegiate

career, whereas Niagara University's services are strictly for one semester (Casey et al.,

2017; Stoelting, 2010). In addition to its longevity of services, the RISE Act's attempt to

remove financial obligations for students will directly impact students who identify with

a low socioeconomic status as one of their oppressive identities.

Most recent legislation. According to Vu (2018), in an era where Disability

Services professionals are striving to restore the integrity of the ADAAA, the House of

Representatives passed the ADAAA Education and Reform Act (HR 620). HR 620 is the

United States government's attempt to decrease the growing number of lawsuits brought

by serial plaintiffs who find relatively minor physical access barriers in business

facilities. In efforts to decrease the plethora of ADAAA lawsuits concerning architectural

barriers preventing physical facility access, HR 620 mandates that an ADAAA physical

barrier lawsuit can only be filed after a business has been notified and does not respond

within 60 days (Vu, 2018). In addition to a response within a reasonable amount of time,

businesses are allowed 120 days to demonstrate substantial progress toward removing the

barrier before a lawsuit can be filed (Vu 2018). According to Poe (2018), Howard Cohan

is a serial plaintiff who filed 1,114 ADAAA lawsuits since 2012. Cohan's lawsuits inspired the coining of the term "drive-by lawsuits" because the architectural ADAAA violations were identified via pictures, google searches, or simply by driving-by. Hence, the passing of HR 620 is beneficial for all stakeholders because it allows businesses and higher education institutions to have reasonable notice of claimed violations prior to a lawsuit being filed.

Creating an inclusive environment at institutions of higher education. Many of the aforementioned disability models are one dimensional and fail to capture the complexities of disability identity; consequently, oversimplified literature produces generalized conclusions to complex matters (Henry, Fuerth, & Figliozzi, 2010). In addition to oversimplified literature, integrating students with disabilities in an academic environment is a paradox that led to advocates differentiating between inclusion and mainstreaming (Minow, 2013). In postsecondary environments, methods and procedures that determine how instruction is offered is one of the best examples of how higher education struggles to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Hartsoe & Barclay, 2017). Many traditional models of teaching pedagogy are not in alignment and do not address the needs of the diverse and growing population of students learning styles (Cook, Rumrill, & Tankersly, 2009; Gradel & Edson, 2010; Hergenrather & Rhodes, 2007; Lombardi, Murray, & Dallas, 2013). Although accommodations for students with disabilities have improved throughout the history of higher education, some professionals argue that now is the time when students should be provided with services that are beyond the minimal legal mandates (Black, Weinberg, & Brodwin, 2015; Mole, 2012).

Transitioning into Higher Education

When transitioning into higher education, it is important for students with disabilities to understand the differences between the IDEA and the ADAAA because of the role it plays in gaining access to accommodation services. This transition period is challenging for students with disabilities and contributes to their low postsecondary completion rate when compared to their able-bodied peers (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). In addition to the aforementioned differences between the IDEA and ADAAA, students with disabilities are expected to be more autonomous at the postsecondary level of education (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). For example, in higher education autonomy is exhibited when it is the expectation that students initiate the request for receiving reasonable accommodations (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). In addition to autonomy, Gordon and Keiser (2000) stated that reasonable accommodations are much less defined in the ADAAA than the IDEA.

Certain components of a student's transition period should be addressed to help students with disabilities meet their full potential (Getzel & Gugerty, 1996). Therefore, my research will allow future disability policies to incorporate challenges associated with a student's disability and other oppressed identity when transitioning from high school into college. According to Janiga and Costenbader (2002), many students with learning disabilities are encouraged by high school counselors and teachers to pursue vocational education; therefore, parents are typically not informed of available postsecondary options and fail to encourage their children to apply to college. Similar to parents having the lack of information regarding postsecondary options for students with disabilities, due

to the lack of research, high school counselors lack information regarding resources to accommodate the experiences of a student with a disability and their other oppressed identities. Parental support is often needed to motivate students to continue their education beyond high school (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Therefore, college is more challenging for students with disabilities when their support system is removed (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). The challenge of self-assessing strengths, weaknesses, interests, and values is enhanced and causes the transition for students with disabilities to be more problematic (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000; Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

Mainstreaming and inclusion. According to Minow (2013), K-12 school systems typically use mainstreaming as their attempt to allow students with disabilities to participate in a traditional academic environment, whereas higher education primarily uses inclusion. Mainstreaming is the selective placement of students with disabilities in one or more regular education classes to the extent that students are able to manage the workload assigned by the regular classroom teacher (Minow, 2013). Inclusion, on the other hand, is a means for structuring the educational environment to the extent possible so that students with special needs can be successful in general classrooms (Minow 2013). In other words, the inclusionary approach is primarily focused on bringing support to students rather than bringing students to the support, which is the foundation of universal design in the classroom (Roberts et al., 2011). Therefore, offering support and integrative experiences through interaction is how an inclusive environment is built using an integrative approach. Inclusion and multi-dimensional frameworks both oppose

mainstreaming and one-dimensional frameworks because of their belief in creating environments that are readily available for students with myriad disabilities.

Mainstreaming and inclusion practices often prompt contentious conversations in higher education, especially as budget amounts decline (Minow, 2013). An advantage of removing environmental barriers is that it helps to integrate students with disabilities into suitable places for learning. However, institutions incur significant costs when developing and maintaining an inclusive academic environment (Minow, 2013). Funding architectural modifications and technological updates to accommodate students with disabilities can be viewed as an undue burden by academic administrators (Minow, 2013). From fiscal years 2003 through 2012, state funding for all public colleges decreased while tuition rose (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014).

Universal design. The reduction of state funds received by state institutions presents a barrier for college administrators when attempting to accommodate a diverse student population. Although mandated by the Americans with Disability Act 1990 (ADA), creating accessible buildings is labeled as one of the most expensive accommodations for postsecondary institutions (Colker, 2012). According to the ADA, institutions do not require facilities to be fully accessible if they can demonstrate that accommodating qualified individuals with disabilities would impose an undue hardship (Colker, 2012; Gordon & Keiser, 2000). It is the purpose of the ADAAA to increase building accessibility for an array of individuals regardless of race, age, or ability (Minow, 2013). Architectural accessibility of college campuses is a critical component for students with physical impairments.

Positive interactions between students with disabilities and their academic environment is encouraged by the social model of disability and helps establish an inclusive environment (Evans et al., 2017). Because of one's interactions, oppressive attitudes and socially constructed assumptions influence the powerful versus powerless struggle between students without disabilities and students with disabilities (Evans et al., 2017). Both groups will gain an understanding of each other's challenges through interactive opportunities that derive from inclusive strategies like universal design. According to Barnard-Bark, Lechtenberger, and Lan (2010), identifying and eliminating environmental barriers during the strategic planning of an academic environment is a major advantage of universal design in higher education. Universal design ensures an inclusive, flexible, and supportive environment for students with disabilities, in addition to students from other diverse populations (Evans et al., 2017).

Examples of inclusive academic strategies are constructing buildings with ramps, the provision of class notes online, providing handbooks to guide students through difficult homework assignments, and structuring long-term projects so that students can submit them in sections through-out the semester (Evans et al., 2017). Utilizing universal design in academic environments will encourage interactions between students with disabilities and students without documented disabilities. Finding commonalities between both groups address how everyone can execute tasks while also respecting the myriad of ways individuals complete tasks. Creating positive interactions influence how inclusion is created and reformed (Evans et al., 2017).

Multi-Identity Framework

Disability literature is oversimplified and includes narratives that have a one-dimensional perspective when accommodating and understanding perspectives of individuals with disabilities (Connor et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2017). However, when engaging in a multi-identity framework of disability, literature should become complicated by obtaining perspectives of individuals who have multiple oppressed identities that accompany their disability. Although a non-exhaustive list, students' economic status, race, and sexual preference are some oppressed identities that may accompany their disability. While there is an immense amount of literature to support this claim in the K-12 educational context, there is a dearth in higher education (Evans et al., 2017). Although scholarly narratives are dominated by research for White, cisgender, upper-class, and able-bodied people, students with disabilities are often neglected in disability research (Evans et al., 2017; Thorne, McCormick, & Carty, 2009).

Intersectionality

This dissertation research will increase the complexity of disability literature by analyzing the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. In reference to Crenshaw's intersectional framework that is mentioned in chapter one, participants who are interviewed in this study will ensure that identities are not erased for students with disabilities who also identify with an oppressed race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender. Including intersecting experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities will motivate

researchers to consider the complexities of associated with students' experiences (Connor et al., 2016; Crenshaw, 1989).

Socioeconomic status (SES). As mentioned in the RISE Act, additional barriers are present when the decision of whether or not to accommodate students relies on medical or psychological diagnostics. This is because, as Harbour (2013) stated, students and their families are responsible for costs associated with medical and psychological evaluations. Although some families consider the cost of diagnostics as an investment in their student's academic success, other families may lack the financial stability to pay these costs which prohibits them from obtaining accommodations in college (Harbour, 2013). Tuition costs serve as a primary barrier to access to postsecondary education for able-bodied students and those with disabilities. However, the additional costs associated with medical and psychological evaluations presents two financial barriers that students with disabilities must overcome when obtaining reasonable academic accommodations.

Students from a low socioeconomic status are experiencing exacerbated challenges when matriculating through institutions of higher learning (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). In 2012, records show that tuition revenue for public institutions increased from 17 percent to 25 percent while state funding decreased by 12 percent (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). The U. S. Government Accountability Office (2014) stated that the lack of financial support from the state concomitant with an increase of tuition revenue is contributing to the decline of college affordability.

College affordability. Determining college affordability goes beyond the "sticker price." According to U.S. Government Accountability Office (2014), sticker price is defined as the published tuition and fees by an institution. One disadvantage of colleges' and universities' sticker prices is that it does not necessarily reflect the costs that students and their families incur once financial aid has been utilized (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). For students with disabilities who have other oppressed identities, costs associated with medical and psychological evaluations are a prime example of financial obligations that are not considered in a university's sticker price. In contrast, net tuition and fees are known to reflect an institution's sticker price and associated out-of-pocket expenses (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014).

Federal funds are available to increase access to higher education for students from low SES backgrounds. Education advocates have challenged the government's approach toward helping students overcome the financial barriers of college. In response to the government's financial aid program, literature states that federal funding for higher education is primarily targeted at supporting students rather than focusing on collaborating with states on higher education policies affecting affordability (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). An example of supporting students prior to supporting affordability is demonstrated in the dissemination of federal dollars. In the fiscal year 2013, the federal government provided $136 billion dollars directly to students through loans, grants, and work-study to help low SES students cover the costs of higher education (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). In contrast, the government spent $358 million on two higher education programs whose purpose was to support

college affordability (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). Literature refers to the *College Access Challenge Grant* (CACG) and *GEAR UP* program are two governmental efforts to mitigate financial barriers for students who desire to gain access to postsecondary education (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). However, the literature did not share federal programs that provide financial assistance for students who cannot afford the exorbitant costs associated with medical and psychological evaluations.

   College Access Challenge Grant. The College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) program provided states with funds to assist low SES students with affording college (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). Allocation of funds can be used to provide information to students and families on financing options for college, provide need-based grant aid to students, and conduct outreach activities for students who may be at risk of not enrolling in or completing college (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2014), the federal government determined the amount of money each state received for their CACG program by identifying the number of state residents who are below the applicable poverty line and identify with being between ages five to 17 and 15 to 44.

   To receive funds under the CACG, states were required to maintain their funding commitment to higher education at a level equal to the average amount provided over the five preceding fiscal years (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). Meeting this commitment requirement was referred to as a maintenance of effort provision (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). In 2013, $143 million was appropriated for

the CACG program and after some institutions failed to meet the maintenance of effort requirement, only $72 million was utilized (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014).

    GEAR UP Program. In addition to the CACG program, the GEAR UP program also encouraged its grantees to provide support to students from low SES. The GEAR UP program motivated students to apply to rigorous academic programs while providing scholarships for financial support. Enrolling students in rigorous coursework not only eliminates financial stressors by offering scholarships, it also reduces the amount of time necessary to complete a degree by reducing the need for remedial courses (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). In 2013, almost $123 million was provided for 34 state grant awards to increase the accessibility of education for low SES students (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). Programs such as CACG and GEAR UP have acknowledged barriers that exist for students. Prolonged stressors exist when combining the exorbitant financial costs of tuition and adult psychoeducational evaluations (Harbour, 2013).

    Poverty and increased risk of disability. According to Pokempner (2001), disability experts have stated that poverty is the primary indicator of variables that increase the risk of disability at both the macro and micro-level. Macroeconomic growth can improve the aggregation of health by offering better life quality and living standard (Pokempner, 2001). For example, quality of life can be improved by offering housing stability and living conditions that are not exposed to toxic or dangerous substances (Pokempner, 2001). According to Pokempner (2001), at a micro-level, low

socioeconomic status involves higher incidences of illness and/or disability due to inequalities in the distribution of material such as health insurance and quality healthcare providers. Even as adolescents, productivity is immensely affected by a serious illness or disability (Pokempner, 2017). A serious illness or disability can result from contact with a home that has toxins such as lead, mold, or asbestos, therefore, resulting in a child's low birth weight which can lead to learning limitations. Numerous studies found a link between long-term effects of low birth weight increase one's chance of having a neurodevelopmental disability (Pokempner, 2001). Neurodevelopmental disabilities, such as learning disorders, are long-term and can be current when students are transitioning into higher education (Pokempner, 2001).

Racial and ethnic diversity. Although overrepresented in special education and remedial classrooms, racially and ethnically diverse students represent a large portion of misdiagnosed and underdiagnosed students in comparison to their White peers (Connor et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2017). For example, the misdiagnosis and placement of African American and Hispanic children in special education classes occur from students not being properly tested or by evaluators not considering the racial and cultural biases of an evaluation (Connor et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2017). When receiving a certificate of attendance or dropping out of special education classes, African American children typically meet academic milestones at lower rates than their White peers with disabilities (Blanchett, 2006; Chamberlain, 2005).

The educational experiences of African American and other racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities reflect the precarious intersections of

disability, race, and cultural jeopardy (Banks & Hughes, 2013). In reference to African-Americans with disabilities, cultural jeopardy is defined as the challenge of having to internally affirm the integrity of their disability and cultural identities while confronting the norms of an educational system that is historically known for its negative views of both disability and African-American identities (Banks & Hughes, 2013). Cultural jeopardy is a concept that applies to myriad cultures that do not align society's mainstream and dominant identities.

For example, Banks and Hughes (2013) believed that the high percentage of African American male representation among students with disabilities derived from ineffective teaching preparation, lack of culturally responsive teaching, ethnic backgrounds of teachers, low socioeconomic status, geographic location, and the lack of housing stability. Albeit a non-exhaustive list, these factors were considered because of disability theory challenging the medical model of disability by focusing on the social barriers that impede education in lieu of the disability itself (Banks & Hughes, 2013). Additionally, when discussing students of Hispanic culture, the inadequacies of teacher practices and educational procedures contribute to growing number of Hispanic students being able as having a learning disability (Connor et al., 2016). In comparison to their White peers, inadequacies of institutional and instructional practices influence the lag in the enrollment rate of Hispanics (Goldrick-Rab & Shaw, 2005; Connor et al., 2016). The critical pedagogy of CDT and CRT are applicable to LatCrit theory and serve as its comparatively subordinate theories (Connor et al., 2016). For students of color who have disabilities, their race increases the probability of receiving a misdiagnosis and as a

consequence, students may receive accommodations that are not best suited for the functional limitations that are associated with their academics.

Tenets of CRT. The five tenets of CRT provide a clear framework for individuals whose social justice advocacy includes race. Intercentricity is a tenet of CRT that situates race and racism are central, endemic, and permanent fundamental components when defining and explaining the societal functions of the United States (Bell, 1992; Russell, 1992; Solorzano, 1997). The ability to challenge dominant ideologies is another tenet of CRT and refutes claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunities (Delgado-Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000). As the third tenet, CRT is committed to social justice because it posits a liberal and transformative response to forms of oppression by exposing behaviors of interest convergence that reinforce power differentials between mainstream and oppressed identities (Freire, 1970; Matsuda, 1991; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

When drawing on the lived experiences of people of color, CRT recognized the centrality of experiential knowledge (Yosso, 2005). This tenet of CRT posits that experiential knowledge received by people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding, teaching, and analyzing racial subordination (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). Although a non-exhaustive list, this experiential knowledge is obtained via methods of storytelling and family histories (Yosso, 2005). And finally, CRT has a transdisciplinary perspective that is beneficial to critical disability research (Yosso, 2005). In regard to its transdisciplinary tenet, CRT framework goes beyond its disciplinary boundaries to

analyze race and racism within the context of women's studies, sociology, history, and law (Yosso, 2005).

At the secondary level of education, experiences of students of color can influence their help-seeking behavior while affecting their use of resources at the postsecondary level (Evans et al., 2017). In 1993, Kroeger and Schuck stated that many students of color distance themselves from their disability and avoid using disability resources. Some professionals assume that distancing results from negative experiences with the special education instructors, the feeling of being ostracized when placed in remedial courses, and challenges with their individualized educational plan (Evans et al., 2017). Connected to Kincheloe's discussion of how knowledge is controlled and disseminated, help-seeking behaviors may also be influenced by students of color not having access to certain information. Although deemed a vague term by Taylor et al. (2009), intelligence is typically determined by one's success on an I.Q. test, which are known to cater to individuals with base identities and resources.

LGBTQ. Accurate estimates of the amount of LGBTQ individuals in higher education are non-existent (Wimberly, 2015). According to Carpenter (2008), 4.7 percent of women and 3.8 percent of men described themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual in a college student health survey concerning alcohol use. However, there are no accurate estimates of how many students in higher education identify with the LGBTQ community (Renn, 2015). Although there are a few studies that focus on the LGBTQ community, many studies use a qualitative narrative inquiry approach to gather data on students who

may identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, researchers are working to demonstrate that this community is participating in higher education (Renn, 2015).

Similar to research on African Americans with disabilities, many authors note a dearth of research on the LGBTQ community and disabilities in higher education (Evans et al., 2017). Students who have identities in both the LGBTQ and disability communities have an influx of prejudice and discriminatory experiences when compared to their heterosexual peers with disabilities (Duke, 2011). According to Duke (2011), discriminatory and prejudice experiences are immensely impactful for students who identify with the LGBTQ community and frequently occur in educational, medical, religious, and mental health settings. These experiences for LGBTQ students who also have disabilities are impactful when regarding the concept of cultural jeopardy. When combined with heterosexuality and ableism, discriminatory experiences led to the increased reportings of depression, generalized anxiety, and academic difficulties amongst LGBTQ students with disabilities (Evans et al., 2017; Morgan, Mancl, Kaffar, & Ferreira, 2011).

According to Wimberly (2015), literature on individuals who identify as transgendered is rising. Prior to this literature, most studies examined gay and/or lesbian experiences while few other studies included the identity of bisexuality. Due to the scarcity of LGBTQ literature and research, educators and scholars rely on historical and visibility studies that establish awareness of this population (Wimberly, 2015). Although some scholars argue that the narratives of visibility studies lack analysis and theoretical

backing, they do show that they individuals who identify with the LGBTQ community

are present in higher education (Wimberly, 2015).

Students at Oregon State University (OSU) took extensive steps to create an

inclusive academic environment for their transgender peers (Wexler, 2016). In 2016,

OSU students wore pins to promote their "I'll go with you" campaign. This campaign is

essential in creating an inclusive environment for transgender students. Wexler (2016)

stated that wearing the campaign's pins is important because it informs transgender

students that they have peers who are willing to accompany them to gender-exclusive

spaces where they feel unsafe (e.g. bathrooms and locker rooms). [3]Although actions of

OSU students were to prohibit the divisive and non-inclusive behavior occurring in

higher education, other universities abided by state policies that opposed inclusive

practices.

Women with disabilities. According to Kim (2014), approximately 80 percent of

women acquired their disability via environmental factors, abuse, diseases, and accidents

from obstetric problems during labor. Women comprise the majority of the disability

population and sometimes experience what is referred to as "triple invisibility" within

disability research (Kim, 2014). When addressing triple invisibility, literature refers to

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[3] For example, months after OSU's inclusive campaign, North Carolina barred transgender people who attended public colleges and universities from using bathrooms associated with their gender identities (Wexler, 2016). The divisive law that barred transgender individuals from using bathrooms that corresponds to their gender is commonly referred to as House Bill 2 and passed by Governor Pat McCrory in March of 2016 (Silvia, 2017). According to Silvia (2017), Governor Roy Cooper announced that he signed to repeal HB2 a year after McCrory's costly executive order.

three discriminatory identities that most women with disabilities face: disability, gender, and poverty (Kim 2014).

Discrimination has the potential to influence multiple aspects of one's life, including education quality and economic status (Prics & Khanna, 2003). As for women with disabilities, when employment is obtained, they have the tendency to receive lower wages, poor working environments, and no vocational status (Price & Khanna, 2003). Increasing the vocational suitability and salaries of women with disabilities is important because Price and Khanna (2003) stated that employment provides economic security and independence, value, and status. Understanding the vocational attainment and suitability of women with disabilities is essential when developing an inclusive academic environment at the postsecondary level.

Conclusion

Content within this chapter provides a historical perspective of how the views toward disabilities are socially constructed. Additionally, advocacy challenges that veterans experienced have involved, DSPs are noticing that students with disabilities are still experiencing academic challenges that push for the need to update disability research as a form of advocacy. Literature at the beginning of this chapter shares which federal legislation was established to promote equity, provide postsecondary education, and mitigate educational barriers for veterans with service-connected disabilities. However, as the historical literature is compared to current literature, it attests to the importance and necessity of advocacy for the modern-day student with disabilities.

In addition to observing federal disability legislation, higher education professionals use the ADAAA and universal design as foundational frameworks to provide guidance when creating accessible environments for all. Moreover, disability models have evolved from focusing solely on the disability to focusing on the environments impact on disabilities. When identifying emerging models, the disability justice model is encouraging disability professionals and researchers to consider a holistic view of students with disabilities. Holistically viewing students with disabilities encourages DSPs to consider how their disabilities intersect with their other oppressed identities, therefore, contributing to emerging models of disabilities.

This dissertation will contribute to emerging models of disabilities by gathering the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. Obtaining the experiences of students with disabilities is helpful in identifying accessible accommodations to include when using the disability justice model, interactionist model, or universal design as an administrator. This research study's methodology and analysis will identify challenges for students of color, low socio-economic status, women, and individuals who identify with the LGBTQ community. Results from this dissertation will contribute to finding additional ways to accommodate students with disabilities whose race, economic status, sex, or sexual preference does not align with society's dominant narratives.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of college students with disabilities who also identify as having multiple oppressed identities. This dissertation's research design used narrative inquiry to elicit students' experiences that contributed to shaping their disability identity. In addition to shaping disability identity, students' experiences were also identified to determine factors that influenced their academic career. The research questions I sought to answer were:

1. What are the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities who receive reasonable accommodation(s) and have multiple oppressed identities?

2. In what ways have the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities influenced their academic career?

This chapter explains an appropriate methodology to collect and analyze this research study's data. Moreover, providing clarity around the data collection is obtained by understanding the significance and demographics of the university where participant recruitment took place. A description of each participant was provided to give a historical perspective of each participant's disability identity. In addition to data collection, analysis, and participant descriptions, my positionality as a researcher and disability professional provided clarification regarding my desire to further disability research for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities.

Research Design

Exploring the experiences of college students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities relied on a narrative research design to help Disability Services professionals learn about a community via dialogic communication. It was important to understand the three-dimensional spaces of narrative inquiry to understand the experiences and interactions of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry was an appropriate methodology for this social science research (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), narrative inquiry was defined as a study of experiences when an experience is understood as lived and told in stories. Additionally, it was a collaboration between researchers and participants over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with the social milieus (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Moreover, narrative inquiry has a large focus on subjectivity and it is known for its ability to teach, represent, identify, explain, persuade, and reinforce social boundaries (Bruce, 2008; Ketelle, 2010). Subjectivity is important in narrative inquiry because it assists in moving the research focal point away from abstract theoretical debates into the lives of the researcher and the research participant (Bruce, 2008).

As a researcher whose epistemology is person-centered, narrative inquiry was the appropriate methodology for my research design because it is grounded in exploring individuals' experiences within a particular community or culture. In addition to

exploring individuals' experiences, narrative inquiry contributes to challenging the assumptions and behaviors of people who identify as having mainstream, dominant identities. There is a necessity for the exploration of narratives of marginalized communities and cultures because of their underrepresentation within education (Milner, 2007). In addition to the underrepresentation of marginalized communities, exploring their narratives also contributed to enhancing the access of resources and creating equitable policies, developing close working relationships with identity-based offices, and enhance affordable disability related services for students with limited financial resources in higher education (Evans et al., 2017).

Narratives, a term that stems from the verb "to narrate" or "to tell a story in detail," are a key component in a narrative research design because they foster the expressions and stories of participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Ehrlich, Flexner, Carruth, & Hawkins, 1980). In this dissertation research, narratives told both short and extended stories about a significant life event. As a distinct form of qualitative research, narrative inquiry typically focuses on a single person, gathering data by collecting stories from storytellers, reporting individuals' experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual (Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell (2008), this person-centered approach to data collection focuses on the "microanalytic picture," also defined as the individual stories, rather than a broader picture of cultural norms that is often seen in ethnographies or grounded theory research. The microanalytic picture of data collection heavily involves story-telling by an individual and helps persons create order and contextualize the events that are being told (Riessman, 1993).

An unstructured interview was used to focus on the microanalytic picture of participants' narratives and its importance is discussed later in this chapter. Orientation was a term used when establishing order to an event begins by identifying the events clear beginning and ending while also determining individuals who participating in creating memorable interactions within an event (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Riessman, 1993). Encouraging students to tell and retell their stories allowed me to determine which interactions were significant, how interactions contributed to research participants' experiences, and how individuals chose to respond to significant experiences that occurred. Allowing participants the opportunity to relive their experiences afforded me the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the significance of each participant's narrative. The following quote provides an understanding of how researchers should value narratives received from interviewees:

> If we wish to understand the deepest and most universal of human experiences, if we wish our work to be faithful to the lived experiences of people, if we wish for a union between poetics and science, or if we wish to use our privileges and skills to employ the people we study, then we should value the narrative (Richardson, 1995, p. 218-219)

As a researcher who values narrative inquiry, I am aware that human experiences are a powerful tool when understanding the complexities of an individual's identities. When using experiences to understand how an individual has interpreted and responded to elements that occurred during an event it was important to understand the structure of one's story. It was important to understand how elements within a story connect because

it will contribute to its further development. In the context of this dissertation study, plot was defined as the connection of elements within a story that moves understanding of a situation forward by developing or unfolding concepts (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Understanding the structure of one's narrative structure provided ways of holding meaning together between elements but it also fused an individual's cultural life and identity (Bruner, 2002; Butler-Kisber, 2010). Fusing one's cultural life and identity contributed to the narrative structure of research participants.

When using and describing narrative inquiry there were key elements that emerged. Narrative inquirers must capture the telling of stories which required participants to relive their experiences by retelling their stories. The narrative inquiry process consisted of three-dimensional spaces where the first is referred to as the temporal space (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), temporal space referred to time in which an event or experience took place (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Secondly, there was a social component that referred to interactions that are taking place within a narrative (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Finally, place was an important dimensional space to consider when listening to one's narrative (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The narrative structure of story-telling is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) developed narrative inquiry and stated that it is situated in providing researchers with a rich framework to investigate the ways humans experience the world via their stories. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), narrative inquiry was well suited for this research study because one of its goals was to address the

complexities and subtleties of human experiences in teaching and learning. These complexities of human experience are obtained via narrative inquiry's ability to construct and reconstruct personal stories and address complexities associated with cultural centeredness (Bal, 1997; Clandinin, 2006). For this research study, disabilities were the centered culture that is experienced by each participant. Listening to these disability narratives will present opportunities to record and retell the most influential events amongst a group with common ground (Bal, 1997; Stirling & Green, 2016).

Stirling and Green (2016) define "common ground" as the shared background knowledge which individuals who engage in interaction must possess and/or dynamically construct. Also known for exploring natural storytelling behavior that occurs between interpersonal interactions, common ground serves as the foundation for meaningful conversation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Stirling & Green, 2016). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the natural storytelling behavior of humans' experiences serves as the primary claim for using narrative inquiry in education research. These natural and authentic narratives are important because they contribute to the meaningfulness of narratives within the disability community (Carr, 1986). Authentic narratives contribute to this research design because the participants are individuals who identify as a person with disabilities and also understand the challenges and limitations associated with their diagnoses.

Fieldwork and Site Selection

As a university located in the Mid-Atlantic and near the United States' sixth largest metropolitan area, Brisk University was a research one institution with an enrollment of over 35,000 students. Brisk University enrolled students who are in undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. Albeit an institution who was known for their engineering and science programs, an additional portion of degrees offered by Brisk University were in education, hospitality management, business, theater, and philosophy. In addition to their diverse academic programs, Brisk University prided themselves on having one of the most diverse campuses in the United States. Figure 3-1 provides a brief description of Brisk University's ethnic breakdown. Moreover, Brick University was committed to helping students succeed and expand their science and technological resources to solve the most complex global issues.

Table 1

Demographics of Brisk University

Ethnicity	Percentage
1. White	42.6%
2. Asian	19.3%
3. Hispanic/Latino	13.5%
4. African American	10.8%
5. Non-Resident Alien	5.7%
6. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.4%
7. American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2%
8. Ethnicity Unknown	7.5%

Disability Services Office

The Disability Services office at Brisk University served as my research study's site location. As an office of a university who was known for its diversity and location near the nation's capital, the Disability Services office at Brisk University was a prime location to explore the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities because of the university's diverse student population. In addition to the experiences of students with disabilities, Disability Services operated under the supervision of a full-time director, two associate directors, an assistant director, an event specialist, an office manager, and nine student workers. Currently, Brisk University's

Disability Services Office serves over 2,000 students by providing academic and housing accommodations for students with disabilities.

Data Collection

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Although a pseudonym, Nancy Rodriguez served as director of the Disability Services Office at Brisk University and as the gatekeeper for the Disability Services Office at Brisk University. As gatekeeper, Nancy contributed to the recruitment of participants by advertising the research study's recruitment letter to students who were registered with the office. As a disability advocate for more than ten years, Nancy built rapport with students and has experienced how disability advocacy in higher education has evolved. Nancy served as the gatekeeper because of her expertise and the position that she held in the Disability Services office. [4]As the Disability Services Office's former assistant director, I had access to the psychological and medical evaluations of students that verified their diagnosis. Having once had access to students' evaluation information.

More importantly, my previous employment and access to student confidential information was informed and approved by Institutional Review Board (IRB). Also, as the professional who facilitated students' initial meetings, many shared stories explaining the intersection of disabilities and other social identities. For example, during a participant interview a former student alluded to an inappropriate sexual encounter that was present in the psychological notes that were reviewed for the intake meeting.

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[4] IRB approval was received providing permission to use student information and documentation as part of the recruitment strategy.

However, she alluded to the inappropriate sexual activity to express her apprehension regarding being reluctant to share her disability with her male colleagues and professors.

Participants. Participant selection began by recruiting students who were registered for accommodations via Brisk University's Disability Services office. Students were selected through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. From a purposive stance, the Disability Services office was a prime location to recruit participants because students with disabilities generally frequent the location for services. Hosting interviews in a private location on the university's campus made it easy to schedule students for an interview time that was commensurate with their class schedules. Also, many students lived in an on-campus residence hall which made it easier to attend and adjust interview appointments. I also relied upon purposeful selection to deepen the understanding of the research phenomenon. Students were purposefully selected by the strategic eligibility criteria placed in the recruitment letter. The initial of the three eligibility criteria informed students that they must be currently registered with their university's Disability Services office. Secondly, participants cannot identify with two or more of the following identities: White, Cis-gendered, Upper-class, or Abled-Bodied. As the final eligibility criteria, participants must identify with one or more of the following identities: African American, low socioeconomic status, LGBTQ, or female. By purposefully selecting participants in this research design, participants contributed to investigating the complexities of the intersections among students' oppressed identities and their disabilities. This strategic process contributed to the quality of the research design.

Selecting students from Brisk University who had a disability and another oppressed identities, ensured that participants had lived experiences that were relevant to the initial question in the unstructured interview. In this dissertation study, a small participant selection allowed me to gather rich data that was relevant to answering the study's research question (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Patton, 1987), which revolved around gaining an in-depth understanding of how an individual's experience of disability, race, low socioeconomic status, and sexual preference intersect.

A total of six individuals participated in this research study. Although Nancy forwarded the recruitment letter to a listserv of approximately 2,000 students. I received approximately seven responses from individuals who were interested in participating in the study. However, due to unforeseen circumstances only four of the seven were interviewed. Because of my desire to have more than four participants, I reached out to colleagues to ask if they had students who met the requirements to participate. After conversing with colleagues, two additional students were willing to serve as research participants. Therefore, in totality, six students participated in my initial interview process. The low number of participants is due to a low response received from the recruitment letter and not because of students expressing concerns regarding the research's purpose.

Although IRB approval was received in early summer, the Disability Services Office staff intentionally waited until the beginning of the following semester before informing its students of this research opportunity. Waiting until the beginning of the upcoming semester was a strategy used to obtain a response from old and new students

while they were in close proximity to campus. In lieu of this strategy, a low response rate was received. However, this research's findings contribute to the literature regarding students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities.

Description of participants. These individuals who participated in this research study had myriad backgrounds that resulted in varied age ranges, academic degrees, and programs. However, when analyzing participants' responses, there were a plethora of commonalities identified. All commonalities found amongst this study's participants are explained in the *Findings* section of this chapter. Additionally, via their pseudonym, this section explicates the demographics and identities of each participant while providing a brief description of their enrollment at Brisk University. The brief description of each research participant includes explicit identity claims. Using explicit identity claims helped find the most salient identities of each participant. A detailed analysis of each participants' critical events are shared in this chapter's subsequent sections.

Deidra. Deidra is a doctoral student in the School of Education and is a self-proclaimed middle-aged adult student. As a feminist, Deidra vehemently stated her connection with social justice, critical pedagogy, and enhancing equity in different environments. Deidra stated that her connection to justice, critical pedagogy, and equity stemmed from being a bi-racial woman who identifies as African American. Deidra had three identities that classified her as an eligible participant for this research study. To summarize her current experiences, Deidra stated "my experiences as a bi-racial African American woman is why I am committed to equity, justice, and critical pedagogy…I also

have ADHD followed by working memory." As derivates of Deidra's statement, her sex, race, and learning disability, allows her to meet the study's eligibility criteria.

Clifton. A junior in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Clifton is an African American male whose parents are both from Ghana. During the interview, Clifton expressed his challenges with social appropriateness and he alluded to a difference between being African, African American, and Black. When explaining why social settings are difficult, Clifton stated, "It was hard to let go and be respectful of everyone's opinion… being African American and being Black…sometimes we don't know when to let things go." Via assistance from support services, Clifton admitted to an improvement in his social skills and is prideful about his disability. Clifton's developmental disability and identity as an African American male are the two identities that deemed him an eligible participate for this research study.

Mahj. As a sophomore whose major is undeclared, Mahj expressed how important familial support is to hir. Mahj identifies as nonbinary. To honor this participant's non-binary identity, nonbinary pronouns and Mahj's preferred name are used as references. For example, I may use non-binary pronouns like *hir, zie, them, they, and their*, while also repetitively using their name in a sentence. Mahj shared complexities associated with hir oppressed identities and many of these complexities intersect with sexuality and gender identities. There are university policies that exclude students who identify as pansexual and non-binary as their additional oppressed identities. For example, the university allows students to use their preferred name in the Banner (registration) system. However, when using platforms other than Banner, Mahj's

birth name is automatically populated and has, according to Mahj, caused professors to make mistakes when posting grades. Mahj said, "My birth name, I'm not a fan of. I know it has to show up on your academic record and degree works and everything…I feel like my teachers get confused." In addition to identifying as non-binary, Mahj is a Hispanic student with a learning and mental health disability, and also identified as pan-sexual.

Sarah. A freshman who is adjusting to college, Sarah has proclaimed that she is a responsible student who values building personal relationships with support staff members in the Disability Services Office. Sarah began establishing personal relationships with support staff at her high school when she was first diagnosed with a learning disability. Before college, Sarah attended schools with students from low-income families; however, their support staff members were acquaintances of her family. Hence, Sarah believed that developing personal relationships with university staff would play a critical role in her collegiate career. When conjuring experiences associated with her disability identity, Sarah identified as African American, low socio-economic status, female, and having a learning disability. These identities established her eligibility for this research study.

Cynthia. In her second year in the School of Engineering, Cynthia has identified challenges transitioning into college. She admitted to not understanding how to navigate the university's intake process to receive academic accommodations. Although she said she enjoyed her initial meeting with Disability Services support staff, most of her challenges derived from interaction with a professor who encouraged her to change majors. Cynthia identified as African American woman with a learning and mental health

disability. In addition to the three aforementioned oppressed identities, Cynthia's family also experienced financial difficulties. Although a detailed conversation followed this statement, Cynthia quickly and explicitly shared the oppressed identities that framed her disability experiences. Toward the beginning of the interview, Cynthia's stated: "I guess you can tell that I'm Black and a woman. But you probably couldn't tell that my family never had a lot of money and you can't really see my disabilities."

As a first-generation student, most of Cynthia's interactions with her professors exclude her mother. This is important when understanding Cynthia's desire for constant academic guidance. Although Cynthia's mother attended the intake meeting with Disability Services, she is rarely involved with conversations regarding coursework. Cynthia stated that because her mother did not attend college, she doesn't feel as helpful when discussing coursework. However, Cynthia's mother works as a special education assistant at a high school. Therefore, she felt more comfortable supporting her daughter at the initial meeting with Disability Services. Cynthia and her mother have a healthy relationship; however, the mother's lack of guidance regarding coursework contributed to Cynthia's challenges navigating conversations with professors.

Tyrone. As a second-year graduate student studying education, many of Tyrone's challenges in college derived from his medical diagnosis. Although he is from a family with limited finances, his narrative consists of pleasant experiences with Disability Services. He also admits that he does not rely on additional support services nor routine visits with his Disability Services professionals. Tyrone shared two oppressed identities that contributed toward his eligibility as a research participant. As an African American

male whose disability is an invisible medical condition, Tyrone stated: "Thankfully I haven't had any troubles with professors understanding my class attendance. I've submitted all assignments on time."

Interviews

Using MyStory is a form of narrative inquiry technique and was used as the data collection method because it caused participants to recall personal memories and have epiphanies concerning their disability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Moreover, as a form of a MyStory data collection, unstructured interviews were appropriate in obtaining personal experiences from participants (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Due to this research study's critical nature, the interview protocol is shaped using critical frameworks (Ribet, 2010). The unstructured interview began with questions that allowed the interviewee to identify which experiences are most salient for them. I asked questions like, "If there is one primary memory of your disability identity, what would it be?"

An unstructured interview protocol was designed and used to solicit a welcoming conversation that was led by the interviewee. An interview that solicits experiences of one's life is sometimes referred to as a *life world interview* (Kvale, 1996). A life world interview is defined as an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996). This research study intends to collect, interpret, and describe the experiences of students with disabilities who have other oppressed identities.

According to Kvale (1996), through conversation we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings, hopes, and the world in which they live in.

The qualitative interview will utilize an open-ended leading question to allow interviewees to describe their lived world experiences and their relationship to it (Kvale, 1996). Having an open-ended leading question allowed the participant to identify an influential moment in their life and also allowed participants to explain why such events were influential (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Descriptions from participants' influential events were used as a meaning making tool by providing understanding to central themes in the life of subjects (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996), descriptions and meanings of a theme can change by participants over the course of an interview. Therefore, when analyzing descriptions interview data, I will identify moments in which there are changes in participants' descriptions and meaning of themes.

Interview probing. According to Webster and Mertova (2007), there are three groups that are used when probing questions that address overt categories of interest. When probing overt questions in the interview protocol, *sensitizing questions* were used to determine what issues, problems, and concerns are taking place (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Also, sensitizing question assist in identifying who are the actors involved in an experience and how they define experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In addition to sensitizing questions, *theoretical questions* are essential in determining the relationship between two concepts and how they change over time (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Moreover, a second round of interviews were conducted in secluded spaces and allowed participants to provide genuine responses. Second interviews allowed me to probe for additional responses from each participant and allowed participants to relive their salient

experiences. Details regarding the second round of interviews are discussed in chapter four.

Skype interviews. In-person interviews were my desired method of data collection due to its ability to assess a participant's environment and non-verbal cues (Paulus, Nester, & Dempster, 2014). Albeit in-person interviews were an important data collection method, participants had the option to request that their interviews be conducted via Skype. Zero participants opted to participate in a Skype interview, however, they were intended to be audio recorded. Skype interviews were an option because it allowed me to interview students with disabilities who had flare-ups deriving from episodic symptoms associated with their disability. In addition to episodic symptoms, Skype interviews allowed me to engage in the data collection process during summer and holiday breaks when most students had vacated their residence hall. Moreover, during Skype interviews, the data collection procedures or protocol was altered for participants who may have requested them. One limitation to online interviews is the inability to fully assess the participant's surrounding environment and non-verbal cues (Paulus et al., 2014).

Data Analysis

In this dissertation study, the three dimensions of narrative inquiry that were used to analyze and create meaning to participants' statements are: temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin, Caine, Lessard, & Huber 2016). Temporality was essential in understanding the transitions within a story and place refers to the location and time in which an event occurred (Clandinin et al., 2016). Understanding the location and time in which an event occurs helped me determine when an event occurred (Clandinin et al.,

2016). Finally, the sociality of an event included an understanding of how participants interacted with other individuals and their environment (Clandinin et al., 2016).

Transcription. Transcribing interview responses was critical when identifying emerging themes because of the direct connection between the interview questions and research topic and played a critical role in the critical event analysis (Reybold et al., 2012; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The emergence of truth claims was tracked by analyzing specific responses to each question that is asked. Each transcription was used to identify critical events and to recall participants' interpretation of the event to comparatively analyze recurring topics of intersections of a student's disabilities and other oppressed identities. The first round of interviews were transcribed by myself. In regards to the second round of interviews, two of the three interviews were personally transcribed and the final interview was professional transcribed.

Critical events analysis. Critical event analysis was utilized to interpret data that was collected through the use of Mystories as a data collection method. According to Webster and Mertova (2007), critical events were reflected in an individual's identity, more profound when more time passes between an event and storytelling, and they have seven properties. In this dissertation, not only were critical events contextual, they also significantly impacted the storyteller; the consequences of the event significantly altered one's life; events were structured by well-defined stages of chronological patterns; they were unplanned and can be identified after the event has passed; and lastly, critical events were personal and engaging for the storyteller (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Only the individual who experienced the event can accurately describe its influence (Riessman,

1993). According to Riessman (1993) individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives.

Stages of critical events analysis. The analysis of criticality, stage one of evaluating a critical event, required me to identify a critical event, contribute to the analysis of its subsequent patterns by gathering episodic data, and contextualize the critical event with others (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Event structure analysis is the second step in critical event analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007). During the event structure phase, I focused solely on the critical events that were highlighted in stage one. According to Webster and Mertova (2007), when analyzing a specific event, it was critically important to determine what incidents took place that initiated the critical event (inception); the actors initial response to the event (reaction); the emergence of unforeseen opportunities (divergence); the ways in which the actor integrated unforeseen opportunities (convergence); how the actor continued to operate and refine their views after the emergence of unexpected opportunities (consolidation); and lastly, it was important to identify incidences that marked the ending of an event or experience (conclusion).

Once this step was completed, stage three of the analysis process was to locate identity claims to determine which claims were stagnate and those that had shifted (Carspecken, 1996). In other words, using identity claims as a step in the analysis process helped find implicit and explicit claims (Carspecken, 1996). Identity claims were identified by understanding the structure of a statement by analyzing the environment, time, and the social interactions within the statement. For example, Clifton initially

implicitly expressed his concern with speaking to women. This was identified by

Clifton's statement: "High school taught me how to talk to video games correctly to

people, specifically women." From this statement I gathered that Clifton is a male who

once struggled communicating to women.

After completing stage three of the critical events analysis process, entered the

final stage of the analysis process. Content analysis, the final stage in the critical event

analysis process, categorized the types of events experienced by research participants

(Webster & Mertova, 2007). In addition to categorizing event types in the final stage, it

was also imperative to create definitions of the developed categories (Webster &

Mertova, 2007). From the inception to cessation of a critical event, these four steps

helped to identify influential incidences of students with disabilities who have other

oppressed identities (Riessman, 1993; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Stages of Critical Event Analysis
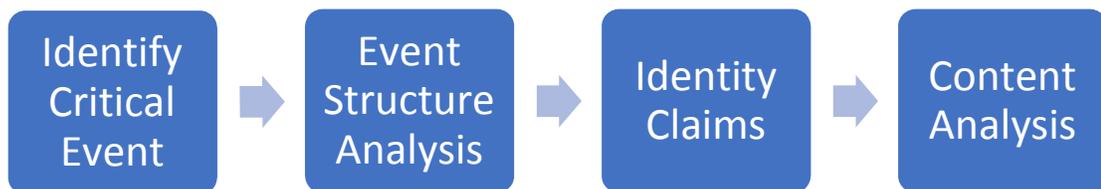
Figure 1. Stages of Critical Even Analysis.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is another data collection method used to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. When analyzing documents, researchers are able to gather information from official documents (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Official documents are defined as items that are written, photographed, or recorded by a private or public organization (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Student records, newspaper articles, annual reports, speeches, and meeting minutes are all examples of official documents to review in efforts to gain in-depth details regarding the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. Sampling was the method used to analyze documents. According to Olsen (2012), sampling is the taking relevant information from a larger document or from paragraphs, pages, and phrases within a document.

Table 2

Document Analysis

Reviewed Documents
1. Student's accommodation letter that is presented to professors and also lists accommodations
2. The Brisk University's Disability Services website
3. List of on-campus and off-campus resources for students with disabilities
4. List of department's intake documentation requirements

Verisimilitude

Validity of narrative is more closely related to a meaningful analysis and reliability is strongly connected to the trustworthiness of note or transcriptions (Polkinghorne, 1988). For this research study, narrative inquiry was not used to produce conclusions of certainty or of exact truths; instead, narrative inquiry was used to focus on *verisimilitude*, which is defined as findings that have the appearance of truth or reality (Clandinin, 2006). When findings were classified as verisimilar, linguistic experiences of truth were grounded, supported, and retain an emphasis on the linguistic reality of human experience (Clandinin, 2006). There are three aspects of verisimilitude that was useful when determining truthfulness within a participant's story. First, the story and critical event resonated with the experiences of the researcher (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Additionally, the reported story should have a level of plausibility (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Finally, when using a critical events approach, truthfulness of events is confirmed through like and other events (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Tracy (2010) equated validity with the *goodness* of a research design and developed eight domains that an excellent qualitative research design should have: a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, significant contribution, ethics, resonance, and a meaningful coherence are the eight validity domains of qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). Sincerity, a validity domain that was applicable in my research design, was obtained by developing opportunities for self-reflexivity, transparency, being mindful of study participants' needs. Tracy (2010) described these three components as essentials in creating a sincere research design.

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Reflexivity. As a researcher, I was intentional about writing reflections after each interview to develop self-reflexive moments. As a disability advocate who does not have a visible disability, many students that I have worked with assume that my connection to disability advocacy stems from a professional experience instead of a personal experience. Therefore, it is my assumption that students perceived me as an expert researcher which may have led to a reluctance to fully sharing authentic ideas and thoughts. In many scenarios I relied immensely on roles and experience as a disability expert to negotiate my insider identity. My negotiations began when working in the collective between myself and the interviewee as the facilitator by encouraging dialogue, providing suggestions, and reframing ideas (Call-Cummings, 2017).

Transparency. In addition to self-reflexivity, transparency is essential in establishing a valid and ethical study. Therefore, as a researcher it is my primary responsibility to protect the privacy and integrity of my interviewees. A detailed description of executed steps to protect the integrity and privacy of interviewees is discussed in the subsequent section entitled *Ethical Resources*. Transparency in a research design should also inform all participants of any barriers or challenges that they may experience. For this reason, students will be informed that depending on their disability or the cause of their disability, reflecting on experiences may recall traumatizing events. Although recalling negative life experiences in a narrative can be detrimental, participants will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Having the ability to identify arduous topics within a conversation that could possibly

lead to an emotional experience for the interviewee, aligns with the final component of sincerity as a validity domain.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness, the last component of a research design's sincerity, is defined as the researcher's ability to consider the needs of their participants (Tracy, 2010). When considering the needs of participants, empathy and vulnerability will be exhibited from the interviewer. It is my hope that being empathetic and vulnerable in the interview process will help me to develop an intersubjective understanding of postsecondary students with disabilities who have other oppressed identities. Because narrative inquiry focuses on the experiences of the interviewee, it is my intention to create an environment where the participants are experts of their narratives. In order to create this environment, I will portray myself as a vulnerable researcher who seeks more understanding of the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities who also have other oppressed identities.

Additionally, as a narrative researcher I had an ethical duty to protect the dignity and privacy of the lives that were studied and used to contribute to the scholarly field of disability professionals (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). According to Clandinin (2006), as a derivative of accumulating experiences of narrative researchers and principles enforced by institutional review boards, narrative research is considered to be in a state of evolution. The development of my research study was designed to have minimal to no costs. Therefore, the success of this research design was primarily contingent upon access to reliable and committed research participants.

It was my desire to interview approximately four to ten college students who were registered with Disability Services at Brisk University. Moreover, to protect the confidentiality and well-being of my research participants, it was essential that I obtained IRB approval and participants' consent forms before conducting research. Also, students had the option to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time once after providing their consent. Participants were allowed the option to withdraw at any time because of a probability of reliving stressful or hurtful life experiences. Webster and Mertova (2007) stated that critical events are not necessarily positive. For this reason, participants had the option to withdraw their data after a research study has been published (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

In a research study where interviewees were expected to be vulnerable, Clandinin (2006), stated that ethical researchers should conclude the interview process with a reflective question. For this research study, participants' interviews were concluded by allowing both the researcher and interviewee to reflect on their collaborative process. Lastly, due to the study's low maintenance research design, once IRB approval and the consent of participants have been obtained, I did not foresee the need for additional resources. The authentic transcriptions, approved IRB, unstructured interview protocol, and signed consent forms are the ethical foundation of this research study.

Limitations

There are two limitations that are associated with this research study. Every participant was enrolled at the same mid-Atlantic research one institution which may have resulted in similar experiences between students and the university's support

services. Additionally, there was only one participant who identified with the LGBTQ community, it was challenging to obtain a plethora of experiences of individuals who may identify themselves as homosexual, pansexual, or nonbinary.

Researcher's Positionality

Ontology

When using narrative inquiry to gain an understanding of the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, finding truths within a participant's narrative was also an important piece of my ontology. The status of truth is also discussed by Riessman (1993) and was determined by interpreting the structure of one's narrative. The structure of an individual's narrative provides direct access to time, place, and culture; all of which can be interpreted to identify which statements or experiences are true (Riessman, 1993). Details regarding proper analysis of an event's structure is discussed later in this chapter.

As a critical pedagogist, challenging mainstream thoughts and behaviors was pertinent when enhancing disability research (Kincheloe, 2004). When challenging mainstream thoughts and behaviors, it is important for me to understand how ideals and behaviors are socially constructed. Hence, the importance of inquiring about the narratives of postsecondary students with disabilities who also have multiple oppressed identities. Understanding topics that students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities challenge identified behaviors that have occurred because of its alignment with the behaviors and resources of those with dominant identities. For example, costs associated with psychological evaluations are easily accessible for

individuals who have a high SES. Additionally, CDT is a prominent framework used as social justice components in the ontology of this dissertation research study. Therefore, advocacy for equitable conditions for students with a disability who also have multiple oppressed identities was important in my research as a disability advocate and researcher.

Epistemology

Epistemologically, I believe that we operate in a world where our views and perceptions are socially constructed. Therefore, persons with disabilities are viewed as a marginalized population because they do not subscribe to society's dominant narratives. As mentioned in a previous chapter, historically, American society has constructed a notion that individuals with disabilities are inferior to mainstream identities. Understanding that social construction served as the foundation of my epistemology and led to my commitment to challenging mainstream identities and behaviors. My epistemology also contributed to my desire to design a person-centered research approach to gathering participants' narratives. Being committed to person-centeredness allowed me to identify subtle connections and influences within my research participants. Therefore, I desire to challenge mainstream identities and behaviors, use a person-centered approach to research, and identify subtle connections with one's narrative as my epistemological commitments.

Positionality

As a professional who has received a Master of Science degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice, I am professionally trained to review each student's diagnosis and their daily functional

limitations, once appropriate documentation is received. The review and understanding of one's diagnosis and functional limitations creates an efficient counseling environment during the initial meeting between myself and a student. The purpose of the initial meeting was to promote informed decision making and determine clients' needs and the subsequent direction that intervention strategies will take (Roessler & Rubin, 2006). Therefore, for postsecondary students with disabilities, their initial meetings with a Disability Services professional (such as myself) assist in determining which accommodation requests are reasonable.

Raised as a hospitable southerner, my parents always inculcated honesty, equity, generosity, respect, humbleness confidence, and tact, into their children. Although these qualities may have been congenial instincts for me, I wholeheartedly believe such traits were taught and reinforced by the nurturing nature of my parents. In addition to being committed and nurturing parents, both my father and mother made conscious efforts to provide educational and intellectually stimulating opportunities that would seem to have the perfect balance of recreation and learning objectives. Unbeknownst to me at an early age, these experiences situated themselves in my desire to become a professional and researcher who is devoted to advocating for equitable learning environments for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities.

Consequently, in many instances, my childhood experiences were consumed with my siblings and I being the only students of color in educational spaces. Although I was too young to proclaim myself as an advocate for individuals with oppressed identities, in many instances my experiences in the classroom seemed different than my peers.

However, now as a social justice advocate who has reflexively considered nostalgic and challenging childhood experiences, I can admit that my childhood educational spaces lacked people of color. My notion of representation is similar to the experiences of this study's research participants while also serving as personal primordial experiences that motivates me to continuously serve as a disability advocate.

When advocating for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, critical pedagogy became a personal interest of mine. Critical pedagogy encourages individuals and entities to challenge mainstream behaviors and beliefs that are associated with dominant or mainstream cultures (Kincheloe, 2004). Challenging behaviors that are established by dominant cultures can be a daunting and intimidating task that motivates individuals to seek help when advocating for their needs. When studying critical pedagogy, I find it interesting to assess why dominant cultures exist, who is being oppressed, and how oppression has been created and maintained?

When analyzing a question like, "Why do dominant cultures exist?" I can sum it up in one simple way. That is, dominant cultures exist because of their insatiable desire for power. The insatiable desire for power is often exhibited through their control or how a particular culture delineates resources and knowledge. Examples of how knowledge is delineated are apparent when monitoring the United States education system. From my experiences in higher education, notable resources and networking opportunities are often associated with institutions that are financially stable via contributions from lionized donors and alumni. Although alumni and other donors are critical components in the financial stability of a university, student fees and tuition are also deemed costly

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essentials. Such exuberant costs allow certain information and resources to be more accessible to those who identify with wealthier demographics.

Families with a lower socio-economic status have to overcome financial barriers when seeking to obtain privileged information. Associating costly fees with accessing education is known to be the primary way to oppress and ostracize individuals from certain economic statuses (Ribet, 2010). Many decades ago, individuals who had the mental capacity to obtain, process, and analyze information, were privy to have access to educational resources (Ribet, 2010). This perspective can be recognized when analyzing CDT while using a CRT lens. Epistemologically, many oppressive behaviors are socially constructed through family and environmental constructivism (Ribet, 2010). Hence, my belief that it is important to create environments with diverse representation and inclusive behaviors that contribute to giving voice to individuals with oppressed identities who are silenced. As a former director of a Disability Services office, I constantly heard students express their concern of academic needs that were being overlooked. Through this qualitative research study, it is my intention to allow the voices and concerns of students with disabilities to emerge.

In addition to the emergence of experiences, concerns, and moments of gratitude, conducting this research study contributes to progressing current disability frameworks. As mentioned in a previous chapter, currently disability frameworks are one dimensional and focus solely on students' disabilities without considering the influence that other social factors may have. Therefore, this research study is primarily designed to contribute toward the development of multi-dimensional disability frameworks that identify silence

and other social factors as factors that play a significant role in a student's disability

identity.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Findings

As mentioned in chapter two, disability frameworks are one dimensional and need frameworks that are multi-dimensional. Therefore, this dissertation's research contributes to developing multidimensional disability frameworks by using a narrative approach to explore the experiences of students whose disability identity intersects with at least one additional oppressed identity. Currently the Disability Services office at a large mid-Atlantic Research One institution accommodates approximately 2000 students with disabilities. Research participants responded to a recruitment email sent to the Disability Services listserv. The recruitment email sent to the Disability Services listserv received seven responses; however, only six of the seven met the eligibility requirements for this research study. Therefore, responses from six individuals contributed to identifying categories of interest for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities.

This chapter discusses the environments of both initial and secondary interviews of research participants. The interviews' environments provided a confidential space that encourages its participants to engage with interview questions and provide authentic responses. In efforts to contextualize participants' statements, chapter four provided pseudonyms for each participant and list the oppressed identities that determined their eligibility for this research study. Connecting participants' responses to their oppressed

identities helped contextualize the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, which led to this study's findings.

The experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities emerged from using interviews as a method of data collection. In addition to data collection, the four steps in critical events analysis are utilized to identify the themes of across students' experiences. As mentioned in chapter three, these four steps are identifying critical events, providing structure to these events, finding identity claims of participants' narratives, and analyzing their content. This chapter provides examples of how participants' statements were identified and analyzed to conjure salient findings within the study.

Initial Interviews

After receiving the recruitment email, six participants agreed to meet in-person in a private study room located in their university's library or academic building. Designating a private interview space allowed an opportunity for participants to openly share experiences associated with their oppressed identities. During the initial interviews each participant received a copy of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) certificate to show the approval of the study's ethical standards. Participants conveyed their understanding of this study's ethical foundation by reviewing and signing a consent form. After reviewing the purpose of the research study, consent form, and IRB certificate, each participant verbally stated their understanding of the content and did not ask additional questions.

Initial interview question. After completing the aforementioned preliminary steps of the interviews, as a part of the unstructured interview protocol, each participant responded to one open-ended research question that situated the interviewee as the expert within the conversation. The unstructured interview protocol is an important component of the study's methodology because it allows participants to think reflexively and identify their most salient experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Moreover, the unstructured interview protocol allows interviewees to situate themselves as the expert of their experiences (Denzin, 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Methodologically, these salient and influential experiences are referred to as critical events and are pertinent when completing the first step in critical events analysis (Denzin, 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007). For this study, participants responded to this interview question: "If you were asked to describe one memory of your disability identity, what would it be?"

Stages of Analysis

Stage 1: Identify Critical Events, Like Events, Other Events

Unanimously, an interpersonal interaction with a professor, high school teacher, or family member sparked a personal concern for the research participants. Students' interaction with a professional staff or family member led to conversation concerning the potential presence of a learning or medical disability. Therefore, all of the participants utilized an interpersonal interaction as the initial motivator to schedule their first meeting with a Disability Services provider. Participants expressed working quickly to schedule an appointment with a DSP. When discussing providers, each narrative represented a Disability Services Office staff member, trained psychologist, or medical doctor who

administered the appropriate assessment and diagnosis. These experiences were noted as critical events for the research participants and are explained below.

Deidra. As an adult student who received a learning disability diagnosis in graduate school, Deidra's disability identity was shaped by interacting with professors, professional disability staff, and her father. When interacting with university professors, Deidra stated "I received a lot of feedback concerning my bad writing but I already have multiple degrees." This statement was the basis of Deidra's frustration while a graduate student and her father supported her emotion. When sharing her academic challenges with family, Deidra's father stated "No daughter of mine has a disability." Although Deidra believes that her father's statement was meant to be supportive, she also remembers it as an experience where both her and her family were in disbelief.

In addition to professors and family, Deidra's interaction with disability professionals also provided a rich framework around her disability identity. When entering doctoral school, Deidra interacted with Disability Services professionals to request academic accommodations. Deidra was informed that she needed to retake a psychological evaluation. In response to the Disability Services request, Deidra stated, "I'm actually 37 and I took the test when I was 29 or 30, so, I probably don't need to take it again." However, to oblige with departmental protocol, Deidra completed the recommended assessment for a second time. According to Deidra, being reevaluated served as an additional barrier to her education.

Clifton. As a student who proclaimed social interaction as his primary challenge, Clifton stated, "My disability identity framing began in middle school and high school…

Social skills were big in high school and Mr. Jackson taught me a lot." Clifton's

statement was his immediate response to the initial interview question. Therefore,

Clifton's interaction with Mr. Jackson served as a critical event in his disability identity.

As Clifton routinely shared his experiences and interaction with Mr. Jackson, it was

apparent that his teacher's mentorship served as the foundation for his improved social

skills with his colleagues. Clifton's experience with his mentor was impactful, altered his

behaviors and thoughts, structured, unplanned, identified after the event occurred, and

personally engaging. Therefore, it was classified as his critical event.

When transitioning into college, Clifton continued working on his social skills by

registering with a support program at his university. Being enrolled in this program

provides Clifton with a learning strategist who continuously helps him improve his social

skills. Although Clifton is appreciative of the support he receives in college, he often

credits Mr. Jackson's mentorship for improving his social awareness. When referring to

Mr. Jackson's mentorship, Clifton stated:

> Most of my memories come from middle school and high school, besides being in
>
> college with a peer learning strategist. Again I've had learning strategist through
>
> this support program for three years now. But more of my identity has come from
>
> high school and middle school. Specifically, kind of like how I cope with things,
>
> how I transgress, how I evolve, made friends, got myself in trouble. It's true.
>
> Better now, thankfully.

In addition to Clifton's mentorship experience with Mr. Jackson, his

communication with family served as another critical event that shaped his disability

identity. Clifton's distinctly remembers a conversation with his parents when they brusquely stated that they did not want him to tell his teachers and colleagues about his autism diagnosis. When sharing this experience, Clifton stated, "They taught me not to say I'm autistic to other people… So, you want me to hide who I really am?" Clifton's experiences with his high school teacher and family are the main contributors when framing his disability identity.

Mahj. Many of Mahj's interactions that shaped hir disability identity involved support services staff. When discussing hir intake process with Disability Services, Mahj shared the financial limitations associated with hir request for reasonable accommodations. To provide an in-depth understanding of the effects of hir financial limitations, Mahj stated, "I need to pay up first. And then I need to get my money back. But currently I can't pay off my semester until the reimbursement from insurance." Mahj's critical event occurred during hir consultation with medical professionals to obtain a psychological evaluation. Although Mahj was reimbursed for the evaluation, its exorbitant cost delayed hir ability to pay off tuition debt. Mahj felt that accommodations were necessary components of hir academic success; therefore, tuition funds were used to obtain the psychological documentation requested by the Disability Services Office. Consequently, using hir tuition funds prematurely caused a financial barrier for Mahj while also exacerbating symptoms associated with hir disability identity. Mahj's socioeconomic status and disability identities were influenced by hir critical event.

This critical event is important because it provided an in-depth understanding of how the costs of evaluations impede access to learning. Mahj's position caused hir to

prioritize a psychological evaluation over hir education. Therefore, interacting with

disability professionals contributes to the shaping of hir disability identity. Interpersonal

communication with family members is an additional critical event for Mahj. Although

zie has a support system from hir mother and aunt, Mahj does not disclose hir pansexual

and non-binary identities with hir mother. When clarifying why zie does not disclose hir

pansexual and non-binary identities with hir mother, Mahj stated: "She doesn't know

that. Or she wouldn't be supporting me financially." It seems as if Mahj will risk the

financial stability needed to complete college if zie discloses all of hir oppressed

identities to hir mother. Identifying this concern is pivotal in understanding why Mahj's

mother does not fully understand the limitations associated with hir disability identity.

Sarah. Many of Sarah's experiences involve interaction with professional staff

members and her family. Sarah constantly referred to her interactions with professional

staff as pleasant. Although when sharing how challenging it is to disclose personal

information to a professional staff member, Sarah stated, "It's weird meeting someone

new and talking about yourself." Sarah felt more comfortable discussing her learning

disability with family and friends as her support system. Sarah recognizes that she has

individuals who support her outside of the university. Sarah stated: "My stepdad was

actually the one who was like… 'She needs to get tested.' I had like a really strong

support system."

According to Sarah's narrative, she always had an environment that supported her

academic success and learning disability. Sarah's stepfather's request to initiate an

accommodation request provides context around being open to share her diagnosis with

others and her confidence in excelling academically. Sarah made the following statement explaining the confidence that she has within herself because of the support of her family.

> "I've heard law school is really hard. I did a law program with actual law students and they talked about how they basically survive off caffeine and they get nosebleeds. I'm just like... I know I am capable of doing it."

Sarah plans to continue her education by applying to law school and eventually practice as an attorney. Having a strong support system has contributed to Sarah's desire and motivation to continue to excel academically despite her diagnosis.

Cynthia. As a first-generation college student and a female in a predominantly male field of study, Cynthia experienced a lot of challenges with professors and support staff members. Cynthia was diagnosed with a learning and mental health disability her junior year of high school and immediately expressed her concerns with transitioning to college. Transitioning to college was one of Cynthia's critical events in the development of her intersectional identity. During the interview, Cynthia stated that she was apprehensive about disclosing her diagnosis to the Disability Services office. Also, Cynthia was concerned about how her male professors would treat her as a woman with multiple disabilities who is in the engineering program. Although a sophomore in the engineering program, Cynthia stated that some of her professors have talked with her about switching majors. Cynthia stated: "I was nervous about sharing my disability but there were no other options!"

Tyrone. As a student who seemed confident and independent in his academic abilities, Tyrone also shared experiences with professors, disability professionals, and

family and this sharing has been a key component in shaping his disability identity. Albeit diagnosed with a medical condition, Tyrone stated that his accommodations are simple. According to Tyrone, although he routinely visits his medical doctor, consistent visits with the Disability Services staff at his university are not necessary. With an inflammatory medical condition, Tyrone remembers feeling excited and relieved when assigned "flexibility with attendance" as a reasonable accommodation for his disability. Tyrone made the following statement in reflecting on his interactions with his professors: "My professors understand that with my condition, some days are better than others. So, I might arrive late, leave early, miss class."

Tyrone's conversation with his doctors served as his crucial event. After multiple routine visits, Tyrone's medical professional encouraged him to visit the Disability Services Office at his university. Once obliging to his doctor's request, Tyrone's like event consisted of communication with a DSP which resulted in his receipt of flexibility with attendance. Receiving flexibility with attendance as a reasonable accommodation alleviated Tyrone's academic stress and introduced an avenue of academic support that he had never considered. These experiences served as Tyrone's critical, like, and other events.

Stage 2: Event Structure Analysis

Identifying and providing structure around critical events are two pivotal steps in analyzing critical events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). As mentioned in chapter three, structuring an individual's event provides direct access to time, place, and culture (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Combining the time, place, and culture in which an event

occurred contributed to my ability to contextualize participants' statements when analyzing data. Analyzing the structure of a critical event helped provide context to the narrative that was provided by tracking other similarly related events that were shared. Therefore, divvying events with similar characteristics into three tiers (critical events, like events, other events) helped to identify critical events while tracking the frequency of similar events that exhibited common behaviors or themes (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

For example, when Clifton shared that his high school teacher heavily influenced his disability identity, he also shared that he developed coping and interpersonal communication skills by interacting with Mr. Jackson. As a result, Clifton reflected and understood that a plethora of interactions with Mr. Jackson helped him grow and mature into a responsible and mature college student. The following subsection explains how Clifton's critical event, like event, and other event, shaped his disability identity. In many narratives, like events and other events are used when analyzing the specifics of a particular event. As Webster and Mertova (2007) mentioned, identifying the inception, reaction, divergence, convergence, consolidation, and conclusion of events are imperative when structuring critical events within a narrative.

Clifton: enhancing interpersonal skills.

Inception	Reaction	Divergence	Convergence	Conclusion
An aggressive interaction with a female high school classmate was a memorable experience for Clifton.	Clifton yelled across the cafeteria at a female classmate during a disagreement.	Mentor had a conversation with Clifton to provide advice on improving his communication skills. Clifton began to heavily reflect.	Clifton committed himself to improving his interpersonal communication skills.	Clifton has grown to appreciate his past experiences for contributing to his current success as a person and student.

Figure 2. Clifton's First Critical Event.

The primordial stages of Clifton's disability identity occurred during his middle and high school years. Early into the interview, Clifton shared an experience that served as the inception of his critical event which is the interaction with a female classmate. Before learning how to express his feelings and accept the perspectives of others, Clifton's reaction to his female classmate was I and he stated that there were times when he used "Bad words and very harsh words. But, I didn't care at the time." The reaction to Clifton's aggressive interaction with his female classmate led to accepting the mentorship relationship with Mr. Jackson. Although Clifton welcomed the guidance from Mr. Jackson, the conversations between the two of them allowed for moments of reflection.

Clifton's reflective moments represent the divergence stage of critical events analysis. The reflective moments are unforeseen because they are derivatives of the unanticipated interaction and mentorship from Mr. Jackson. During his unforeseen reflective moments, Clifton began to question his aggressive behavior toward his female classmates. When discussing his rearing in an African family, Clifton stated: "Being

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African American and being Black, I have to be honest, we are hostile people. We don't know when to let go… I'm going to force my opinion and you'll swallow it and accept it."

During moments of reflection, Clifton began to consider how much of his African American culture influenced his aggressive interaction with his peers. Therefore, interactions with Mr. Jackson and Clifton's reflexive thoughts led to the improvement of his interpersonal skills. When transitioning to college, Clifton continued to actively seek assistance with improving his social skills. Therefore, Clifton and his college mentor worked collaboratively to build upon the foundation established by Mr. Jackson. Clifton's commitment to self-improvement and his weekly communication with his college peer mentor is a prime example of convergence within critical events analysis because of the resources and techniques that he voluntarily incorporated in his life for self-improvement. The integration of the resources and techniques of the unforeseen circumstances fit the definition of convergence within critical events analysis.

Consolidation is the next step in analyzing the structure of a critical event. The duration of Clifton's ability to continuously operate and refine his social skills after the emergence of an unforeseen circumstance is an example of consolidation. In college, Clifton is actively engaged in continued support services to improve his social skills. Even as a college student, Clifton's support services are similar to the guidance he received from his high school teacher.

Finally, it is important to mark the conclusion of a critical event. Clifton was able to reflect and appreciate how his past experiences contributed to his current view of

himself. The outcome of his reflective experiences is labeled as the conclusion of this specific critical event.

"Specifically, kind of like how I cope with things, how I transgress, how I evolve, made friends, got myself in trouble. It's true. Better now, thankfully. At my age I can look, I literally talk to someone before and it's like, "Why did I do such stupid things? Why did I do so many stupid things?" It just annoys me with ... If I didn't those stupid things, I wouldn't have grown to be the person I am today and learn from them, that's the thing."

After conducting a document analysis of the Disability Services office's website, the director outlines the expectations regarding the intake procedures when transitioning from high school to college. Students are informed that they are required to complete a form requesting services, submit medical or psychological documentation, participate in an intake interview with a disability counselor, review approved accommodations, and provide professors with a copy of their letter which lists their approved accommodations.

Figure 3. Clifton's Second Critical Event.

In addition to Clifton's interaction with Mr. Jackson, his communication with his family also played a critical role in shaping his disability identity. A critical event associated with Clifton's interaction with his family stems from his parents instructing him to not disclose his diagnosis to teachers and colleagues. The onset of this expectation occurred at an early age, therefore as a reaction, Clifton felt as if he should hide his true identity while in academic environments. When hiding his disability identity and learning how to manage his emotions, opportunities began to emerge that provided communication with peers with similar identities.

For example, due to challenges communicating with his family, in college Clifton formed relationships with peers by participating in social events such as game night. The events that led toward Clifton's desire to interact with peers is present in Figure 2. Integrating social interactions with peers who have similar identities helps Clifton to continuously refine his interpersonal skills, if needed. Although there are challenges with the communication between Clifton and his family, he still credits them for supporting his disability identity. Clifton stated the following regarding parents who have children in college: "Parents are a really keen thing. The key to an autistic student, be it female or a male, is how the parent teaches the kids." Although his parents were unaware, during the consolidation stage, Clifton became outspoken about his autism and actively sought students who had similar identities as himself. Therefore, to conclude his event, Clifton considers himself an advocate for students with marginalized identities which motivated him to become a participant in this dissertation study.

Deidra: identifying as an older adult.

Figure 4. Deidra's Critical Events Analysis.

Although the inception of her disability identity occurred in graduate school at age 29, Deidra vividly remembers the emotions that emerged when speaking to disability professionals about her diagnosis and academic accommodations. Deidra constantly shared feelings of frustration when completing the psychological assessment, meeting her disability counselor, and informing her family of her diagnosis. While her disability identity shaped after her diagnosis, Deidra also expressed frustration with professors and classroom assignments. Deidra reacted to her critical event by seeking and completing a psychological evaluation from a credentialed professional. Most of Deidra's frustration stemmed from knowing she owned two degrees already and her writing was not criticized. When sharing this experience, Deidra stated: "I was a master's student for the second time... I kept receiving aggressive feedback from faculty... I went through a mini-breakdown and asked, 'What do you mean?'"

As an example of divergence, Deidra did not anticipate learning about how campus resources could benefit her. In response to learning about the university's resources, she began to constantly meet with academic support staff. Although she mentioned that initially her constant interactions with Disability Services staff was taxing, she integrated meetings with support staff into her weekly schedule. Integrating weekly meetings with support staff served as Deidra's convergence of unforeseen opportunities. Moreover, to consolidate her experiences, Deidra currently schedules weekly meetings with writing tutors and assistive technology professionals. Deidra's ability to advocate for her academic needs served as a conclusive incident when analyzing the structure of this event. During her second interview, Deidra stated the following: "Now, when I don't get the services I need, I don't hesitate. I advocate for myself. It may be more aggressive than normal, but they have been willing to give me what I need."

Via a document analysis of Disability Services office's eligibility website, a list of criteria and preliminary steps that need execution prior to receiving accommodation services. Disability Services eligibility criteria focused individuals who had received a diagnosis of disability, registered with the Disability Services Department, and the submission of disability documentation that met the departments specific criteria. In addition to eligibility criteria, the department's website also provided academic resources for students that are both within and outside of the university. These academic resources varied from on-campus tutoring, counseling, and assistive technology services to off-

campus resources that provides detailed information pertaining to specific disabilities

within the department.

Mahj: Transitioning from high school to college.
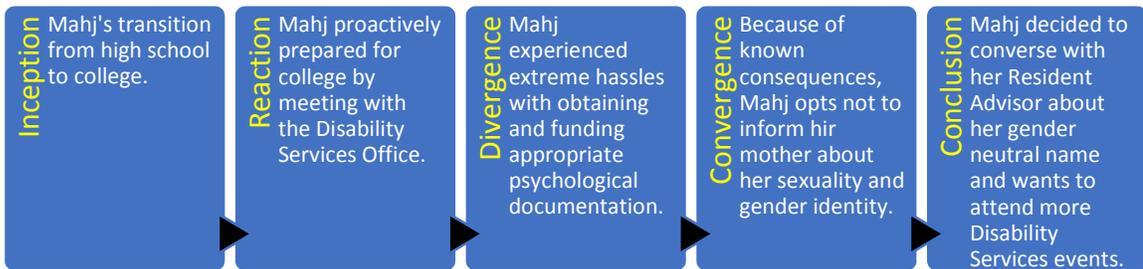
Figure 5. Mahj's Critical Event Analysis.

The inception of Mahj's critical event began as they transitioned from high school

to college. Mahj stated that to gain detailed information about the intake process, a

meeting was scheduled with a Disability Services professional at Brisk University.

According to Mahj, during this meeting they asked for the specific name of the

assessment to ask a psychologist to administer. Mahj said that a direct answer was not

given.

> I was trying to figure out if I can get diagnosed with depression and anxiety
>
> because I knew it was negatively impacting me…I feel like they kind of loosely
>
> told me that I needed to get a diagnostic. When I asked questions they were like,
>
> "Well you can call somebody else and they'll tell you." They didn't really give
>
> me any information.

As a reaction, Mahj began to consider alternative options to obtain appropriate documentation.

Via document analysis, Brisk University's documentation requirements informed students that appropriate documentation must be provided by a credentialed or licensed evaluator, give a description of the diagnostic methodology used, list past accommodations or medications received by the student with a disability, and share information that identifies the functional limitations associated with the disability. When obtaining the appropriate documentation, Mahj experienced financial limitations and used tuition funds to pay for a psychological evaluation. The divergence here was that zie placed more emphasis on funding a psychological evaluation than on paying tuition. In response to Mahj's decision to pay for a psychological evaluation, an unpaid tuition balance was posted to hir student account. To describe hir financial barrier to attend college, Mahj stated: "I need to pay up first. And then I need to get my money back. But currently I can't pay off my semester until the reimbursement from insurance arrives."

Mahj stated that currently zie is enrolled because of hir mother's generosity to pay the owed balance while waiting for the insurance company's reimbursement check to arrive. However, this prime example explains why Mahj is hesitant to disclose hir sexuality and gender identity to hir mother. Mahj was asked if hir mother is aware of the sexuality and gender identities. Mahj responded with apprehension and stated: "She doesn't know that or she wouldn't be supporting me financially." Therefore, to integrate opportunities of financial stability into one's life, Mahj strategically hides a portion of hir identity from particular family members. Although Mahj's mother is unaware Mahj is

pansexual and non-binary, Mahj's aunt is aware of these two identities. Interpreting Mahj's college and familial communication is important when consolidating the narrative's emergent experiences. Analyzing hir experiences showed that Mahj separates family and peers to protect the financial security that is deemed necessary to complete college. For example, Mahj's peers are informed of all of hir oppressed identities; however, hir immediate family is only aware of the mental health conditions. Culturally, Mahj's family is unaccepting of relationships that are not considered mainstream. Therefore, revealing these identities to hir parents will pose negative risks toward the financial stability needed to complete a postsecondary academic program.

Although Mahj's disability identity began with an interaction with Disability Services staff, subsequent or like experiences resulted in hir balancing an academic environment that does not fully mitigate her barriers to learning with the challenges of withholding information from family members to sustain financially while a student. Therefore, as a conclusion to Mahj's event structure analysis, they decided to become a participant in this research study to share experiences that disability professionals are unaware of. Mahj's participation led to a question regarding how hir information will benefit Disability Services at hir university. Mahj stated: "Now that you have this information, what do you see Disability Services at Brisk University being like in like two years?"

Sarah: Support from family and friends.

Inception	Reaction	Divergence	Convergence	Conclusion
The day Sarah was diagnosed in her sophomore year of high school.	Sarah felt extremely weird and began thinking about the stigmas attached to disabilities.	Sarah's family and friends were very supportive and overly involved in her academic success.	Sarah began using the positive words from family and friends as motivation.	Sarah is committed and determined to further her education to receive a terminal degree in law.

Figure 6. Sarah's Critical Event Analysis.

As a critical event, Sarah's initial diagnosis served as the most salient memory of her disability identity development. Therefore, the inception of Sarah's critical event began when she received her diagnosis as a sophomore in high school. Although she was diagnosed in high school, Sarah reflected and stated that as a younger child, her family and friends regularly mentioned her inability to stay focused. However, acknowledgment of her disability identity did not develop as a child. Although it was difficult for Sarah to summarize her reaction into one word, she stated: "When I finally got diagnosed, it was weird because you know there's a stigma around it. You have to take meds or you're special ed, or something like that. I just felt weird." However, Sarah's reaction to her diagnosis led to moments of reflection. Multiple times throughout the interview, Sarah shared that her family's acceptance and involvement, support from friends, and assistance from disability professionals, helped her accept her disability identity.

When interpreting Sarah's statements, many of her experiences shared the importance of having a support system of family and friends. Because of Sarah's familial and professional support, she constantly stated that she is capable of graduating college. Interpreting Sarah's statements related to familial support and her ability to complete educational goals, provided structure around the ideal that her family believes in her ability to succeed academically. Therefore, the support and encouragement received by her family, motivated Sarah to continue to excel academically while not allowing the limitations of her disability to intimidate her. Sarah stated: "A really strong support system is needed. Which I had… My stepdad was actually the one who was like…'She needs to get tested.'"

The support received by family and friends served as the divergent property of Sarah's critical event. When integrating this divergent property into her life's experiences, Sarah began feeling comfortable with transitioning from high school to college and continuously told herself that she is capable of being a high performing student. Positive reinforcing her abilities resulted in Sarah's conscious decision to continue her education beyond a bachelor's degree. Sarah stated: "I want to be a lawyer or teacher… Although I am focusing on my current situation, I am capable of completing law school."

Cynthia: resiliency in a male dominated profession.

Inception	Reaction	Divergence	Convergence	Conclusion
Cynthia's initial diagnosis led to her thought process about college.	Cynthia began to question her college experience.	Cynthia received a lack of support from professors.	Cynthia intentionally and routinely met with professors and DSP.	Cynthia focused on resiliency and graduating from her academic program.

Figure 7. Cynthia's Critical Event.

At the beginning of Cynthia's interview, she was concerned with being a female with a disability as an engineering major. In reacting to being diagnosed with two disabilities, Cynthia began to ask herself very specific questions regarding interactions with professors. Cynthia stated: "I wonder if my professors won't like me after knowing that I have a disability. I mean… I feel like I'm already gonna be treated differently because I'm female. The disability isn't gonna help." During Cynthia's interview, she did not dwell on the time when she was diagnosed. Instead, Cynthia talked about her emotions and concerns regarding interactions with professors. Thus, interacting with professional staff and professors play a critical role in shaping Cynthia's college experiences as a student with a disability.

As a divergent property within Cynthia's narrative, she stated that some professors suggested that she will not be successful as an engineering major. To reject this, Cynthia scheduled routine meetings with tutors, visiting professors' office hours,

and constantly renewing her accommodation plan. Consistently scheduling time to receive additional academic support from professors and tutors is important because it helped Cynthia refine views of her disability identity. In the consolidation phase of event structure analysis, Cynthia began focusing more on resiliency in spite of her professors' recommendation to enroll in a different degree program. As her event's conclusion, Cynthia stated that it is more important for her to continuously work harder each semester to graduate with her engineering degree. "At this point all I can do is continue to work. I made it to my sophomore year in the program, so there's hope."

Via document analysis of an official accommodation letter from the Disability Services office, a level of anonymity is present regarding students' diagnoses. Although professors are provided with the student's name and list of approved accommodations, they are not privy to any information associated with the diagnosis or its functional limitations. Protecting this information is beneficial for students who had experiences that may present an uncomfortable feeling in the presence of colleagues or professors.

Tyrone: the invisible disability.

Inception Tyrone's episodic flare-ups caused him to routinely miss class.	**Reaction** Tyrone began visiting multiple doctors to receive an official diagnosis.	**Divergence** Tyrone's doctor encouraged him to visit the Disability Services Office at his university.	**Convergence** Tyrone sought services from his Brisk University's Disability Services Office.	**Conclusion** Tyrone realized how beneficial his accommodations were and continued to use them as needed.

Figure 8. Tyrone's Critical Events Analysis.

Invisible disabilities present challenges that are difficult to convey to professors and colleagues; therefore, Tyrone appreciated Disability Services for providing appropriate accommodations to mitigate academic barriers. Tyrone's critical event regarding his disability identity began prior to receiving a diagnosis his junior year of college. During his first two years of college, Tyrone shared experiences where his episodic flare-ups from his undiagnosed condition prevented him from regularly attending class. As a reaction to his inability to attend class, Tyrone's frustration increased when balancing his academics and personal health. Tyrone's frustration derived from visiting multiple doctors who could not determine the cause of his health concerns which caused difficulty providing a specific diagnosis. Rotating through a plethora of medical physicians served as the divergent property of Tyrone's event structure.

For two years, Tyrone was referred to multiple doctors at multiple health care facilities before he was officially diagnosed with a medical condition. This two-year

process was taxing for Tyrone; however, via a doctor's referral, he was encouraged to visit the Disability Services office at his university. As a result, Tyrone began researching and considering reasonable accommodations from Disability Services before scheduling his intake meeting with Disability Services. Hence, completing the intake process served as his event structure's convergent property because it demonstrates how Tyrone integrated his doctor's recommendation into his disability narrative. When consolidating his experiences, Tyrone stated: "I underestimated how much I would benefit from the accommodations I received from Disability Services."

The shaping of Tyrone's disability identity stemmed from his interaction with medical and Disability Services professionals. Prior to seeking help from professionals, Tyrone shared that he attempted to independently balance academics, work, and family. After seeing the benefits of seeking support from Disability Services, Tyrone realized that he now had two support systems – his family and reasonable accommodations. Tyrone stated: "Before my accommodations, when sick, my family would drive over two hours to help me manage my life."

Stage 3: Identity Claims

For critical events analysis, it is important to put into conversation the event's structure with the participant's explicit, implicit, and tacit identity claims (Dennis, 2013). By doing so, I can better understand how which identities are influential in each participant's life (Dennis, 2013). Narrative inquiry is an iterative process that captures incidences that contribute to the evolution of ideals, feelings, and identities. Therefore, in addition to understanding the structure of one's narrative, it is important to locate identity

claims and determine which claims are stagnate and those that are mutable (Carspecken, 1996). Dennis (2013) suggests categorizing identity claims in three ways: explicit, implicit, or tacit. In this section, each participant's identity claims are listed and discussed as another avenue to understanding the shaping of their multiple oppressed identities.

Clifton. Some of Clifton's explicit claims situate him as an African American male with who has a developmental disability. As an extroverted college student, Clifton also stated that he loves being disabled. Clifton feels as if his disability makes him unique and different from most of his peers. Clifton's sense of pride is a major contributor to his ability to openly share his disability with professors and peers:

> Being African American, specifically because my mom and dad are from
> Ghana…That explains to me how my mom and dad had been treating me…
> Although you don't hear a lot of people say this but I love being disabled.

Although Clifton enjoys being around others, he once struggled with interpersonal communication. However, his challenges with interpersonal communication evolved over time. While in high school, Clifton stated that his disability made it difficult to take constructive criticism. In addition to accepting constructive criticism, Clifton implied that it was more challenging to accept criticism from females. A previous section included a quote from Clifton that shared his thoughts concerning the level of hostility that is within the African American culture. In addition to his statement of hostility, Clifton connected that emotion to his interaction with women and stated, "High school taught me how to talk about my passion for video games correctly to people. Specifically women."

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As a student who identifies as a video gamer, Clifton's statement included women because of an altercation that occurred between him and a female classmate. During their conversation, Clifton did not want her to be correct about a conversation regarding a video game. The experience between Clifton and his female classmate clearly showed the progression in his interpersonal communication skills. Although communication was an arduous task, Clifton made the following remark when referring to his current ability to communicate with others:

Social cues, I didn't really understand until ninth grade. I'm still having problems with social cues today, even though I learned more about them sophomore year with my peer mentor. Social skills was a big thing back in high school and I learned a lot from my special ed teacher…he helped from ninth grade all the way up to twelfth grade. He taught me how to approach women, hug them, arms down.

This implicit remark shows that although some challenges still exist, some progress has occurred between Clifton's high school and undergraduate years.

Deidra. Deidra had three explicit identity claims that contextualized statements used to shape her disability identity. Deidra's three identities were African American, female, and a first-generation student. When completing stage three of critical event analysis, Deidra stated that she is comfortable with challenging mainstream systems. When analyzing Deidra's interview data, there were moments when she discussed not being treated fairly by family members because of her brown skin tone.

For example, Deidra's experiences growing up bi-racial in the mid-west during the 70's played an essential role in how certain family members treated her. Additionally,

her narrative shared challenges as a first-generation female college student. Understanding the connection between Deidra's narrative and identity claims led me to ask probing questions. These allowed Deidra to explicitly state that she understood how her childhood environment contributed directly to her comfort challenging mainstream behaviors. Deidra stated: "Although I am bi-racial, I identify as African-American, I look African-American, and people typically think that I'm African-American, that's how I'm treated, and I can't really pass as White."

Mahj. Explicit statements clarifying Mahj's identities were found in hir first response to the initial interview question. Although Mahj does not identify as a student from a low socioeconomic family, she also stressed that hir family is not extremely wealthy. Therefore, Mahj classified hirself as an individual who was raised in a middle-class family. Mahj's three identities that contributed to shaping hir disability identity are non-binary, pansexual, and Hispanic. However, when analyzing hir responses, Mahj stated that in most environments policies do not exist to accommodate hir pansexual and non-binary identities. Therefore, in response to the lack of protective policies, Mahj tacitly stated the following: "I feel like non-binary is a little bit more stressful. I feel like people genuinely don't really understand what that is."

When analyzing Mahj's narrative, many of hir experiences that included feeling misunderstood and ostracized stemmed from professors, family, and friends, not understanding hir non-binary and pansexual identities. Because hir closest family and friends struggle to understand hir identities, Mahj anticipates confusion from hir

professors. Therefore, the lack of understanding from hir support systems intersect with and exacerbate the symptoms associated with Mahj's diagnoses.

Sarah. Sarah explicitly stated that in addition to having a learning disability, she also identifies as an African American woman whose family is below middle class. Sarah's racial and economic identities played an essential role in her disability identity because it encouraged her to strategize ways to gain access to accommodations and it contributed to the family support that she adored. For example, Sarah gained access to reasonable accommodations in college by finding a way to update her psychological evaluations for college at no cost. This solution derived from collaborative thoughts and communication between Sarah and her parents. As a self-proclaimed quiet student, Sarah made the following statement regarding her preparation to transition to college: "I am quiet…even though my public school did not have a lot of money… my parents encouraged me to speak up about ways to update my evaluations."

Cynthia. As an African American female in an engineering program, Cynthia's experiences involved males who did not identity as African American. Therefore, in many situations she felt ostracized or misunderstood. Cynthia's race and gender served an essential role in shaping her disability identity. The shaping of Cynthia's disability identity began prior to transitioning into college. However, she stated that the concerns that she had about her professors treating her differently was proven correct during freshman year. In regard to her oppressed identities that intersect with disability identity, Cynthia stated the following: "Every challenge I anticipated, I experienced within the first year of college."

Tyrone. Although Tyrone mentioned his race as his additional oppressed identity, during his interview he mainly talked about his medical condition as his oppressed identity. Therefore, when analyzing Tyrone's responses, I recognized that he does not see intersections between his medical disability and African American identities. Tyrone stated that many of his academic barriers derive from his medical condition, which prohibits him from attending class or completing assignments on time. Showing his sense of humor, Tyrone stated:

> I guess I'm just used to being Black. I've been Black all my life. So, my Black experience has been the same in high school, college, the mall, and even the grocery store. Can't do nothing about that. Being Black has never prevented me from submitting an assignment. But, my flare-ups have.

Stage 4: Content Analysis

During the final stage of critical event analysis, I identified the similar events across participants and categorized these experiences by defining their similar properties. I looked for shared background knowledge among the experiences of participants and referred to it as common ground (Stirling & Green, 2016). For example, every participant shared an experience with support services department at their university; therefore, communication with support staff is considered a common ground topic for participants. Commonalities are used to establish categories of interests for the experiences of all six participants. Subsequently, this section provides an analysis of participants' critical statements to provide and solidified outcome of their experiences.

Clifton. As previously mentioned, Clifton's high school mentor helped shape his disability identity. During the content analysis stage of critical event analysis, three statements were identified and supported Clifton's shared experiences that explained his challenges with interpersonal communication with his female peers. In addition to his challenges with interpersonal communication, statements were also found that provided clarity regarding his family's contribution to his disability identity. Clifton's statements and meaning that are related to his communication with his mentor and family are exhibited in Table 3.

Table 3

Clifton's Content Analysis

Conditions	Event	Meaning
1. Mentorship	"My disability identity framing began in middle and high school." AND "Social skills were big in high school and Mr. Jackson taught me a lot." AND "Mr. Jackson taught me how to communicate with individuals of the opposite sex."	My high school teacher helped me improve my social skills by teaching me how to communicate with individuals of the opposite sex.
2. Family	"Not that they did anything wrong, it's more like they taught me not to say I'm autistic to other people." AND "To me it's kinda like, you basically want me to hide who I really am to people." AND "I still lie to their faces about it. And I don't say that to be disrespectful, I'm just saying that you can't control what I do outside."	My family taught me to hide my disability which I never personally agreed with. Now that I am in college and have my own freedom, I share my identity with everyone. My parents do not have to know.

Taken together, events experienced with his mentor showed an improvement in Clifton's ability to communicate with peers of the opposite sex. However, his statements concerning his family's contributions to his disability identity revealed their dissimilar views toward disability.

Deidra. Deidra referred to her communication with Disability Services staff and her professors as a main contributor to her disability identity. She regularly referenced the feedback that she received from her professors when completing a writing assignment. In addition to communicating with her professors, Deidra experienced challenges when requesting reasonable accommodations from her university's Disability Services office. Deidra shared challenges with using a previous psychological assessment as a form of appropriate documentation and therefore absorbed the costs associated with updating her assessment.

The final component that shaped Deidra's disability identity involved interactions with her family at a young age. For example, Deidra shared experiences where she was ostracized by paternal and maternal family members because of her bi-racial identity. However, the inequitable behavior expressed by her family members served as the foundation for her interest in critical pedagogy and her advocacy of/for her disability identity. The statements that provided additional structure to Deidra's disability identity are shown below in Table 4.

Table 4

Deidra's Content Analysis

Conditions	Event	Meaning
1. Family	"When I'm with my family it's a race thing." AND "Being bi-racial it depends on if I'm with my Black side of the family or White side of the family." AND "Being bi-racial it's kinda like… I can't fit in totally."	I experienced forms of discrimination at an early age so I am used to not fitting in.
2. Receiving Feedback	"I received a lot of feedback concerning my bad writing." AND "I already have multiple degrees."	Because I am so far along in my educational/academic career, it is difficult to receive negative feedback at this stage.
3. Psychological Assessment	"They were like… 'Oh yeah, umm…. You need to take the test again.'" AND "I laughed and said… 'Oh yeah, I'm actually 37 and I took the test when I was 29 or 30 so I probably don't need to take it again.'"	Retaking a psychological evaluation served as a barrier for me receiving accommodations.

Mahj. Experiences shared in Mahj's interview mainly regarded interactions with the university's support staff. Mahj's critical events were supported by a plethora of statements during hir interview. Interacting with family, support services, and hir psychologist served as three major challenges that shaped Mahj's disability identity. Although Mahj had uncertainties regarding the intake process, when visiting Disability Services, Mahj was informed that they needed a psychological evaluation. In response to Disability Services' request and to mitigate hir anxiety, Mahj attended sessions at the university's Counseling Center to vent about the unforeseen circumstances that delayed hir accommodations. Mahj stated that hir anxiety increased when informed that counseling services was no longer beneficial to hir.

A final component that shaped Mahj's multiple oppressed identities was the interaction with hir family. Although Mahj's aunt is aware of sexual and gender identities, sharing this information with hir mother may sever their relationship, consequently resulting in losing the financial stability to complete college. The following statements that support Mahj's experiences are denoted in Table 5.

Table 5

Mahj's Content Analysis

Conditions	Event	Meaning
1. Support Services	"I was really disappointed with Counseling Services." AND "After the first two visits, I had to talk about things that were bothering me and things I wanted to get done. After that, it was like, [Oh, we can't help you]." AND "It felt like they were pushing me aside."	When I was mentally prepared to talk in-depth about my feelings and emotions, I couldn't access the services I needed at the Counseling Center and was referred to an off-campus resource.
2. Family	"She wouldn't support me in my sexuality." AND "She doesn't know that or she wouldn't be supporting me financially"	My mother is not aware of my non-binary and pansexual identities. If she finds out about these two identities, I will no longer have financial stability to complete school.
3. Psychological Evaluation	"I need to pay up first. And then I need to get my money back." AND "Currently I can't pay off my semester until the reimbursement from insurance."	Paying for a psychological assessment served as a financial barrier for me. I was in a position where I had to use tuition monies to pay for the evaluation.

Sarah. Experiences shared in Sarah's interview had strong regard to her family as the core of her support and motivation to continue her education. After analyzing Sarah's content, her statements revealed that an eclectic support system is also important in grappling with disability identity. For example, although she had a strong family support system, Sarah also relied on her college disability counselors, tutorial services, and professors to support her in navigating college as a student with a disability. When receiving her initial diagnosis, Sarah felt as if she was disappointing her family. However, Sarah's family's response restored a sense of hope which motivated her to continue her education. Table 6 provides statements that provided structure to Sarah's experiences as a student with disabilities who had other oppressed identities.

Table 6

Sarah's Content Analysis

Conditions	Event	Meaning
1. Family Support	"I felt like I was disappointing my family." AND "A support system, like a really strong support system." AND "My stepdad was actually the one who was like… [She needs to get tested.]"	I initially felt as if I was disappointing my family; however, their support and guidance motivates me to not give up.
2. Staff Support	"It's weird meeting someone new and talking about yourself, and they're asking questions about you." AND "I didn't really feel connected, but I definitely thought that she seemed like she had my best interest at heart." AND "I definitely felt like she knew what she was doing."	It did not feel normal meeting someone for the first time and sharing my disability with them. However, my disability counselor was friendly and seemed to be knowledgeable. She was helpful.

Cynthia. In regard to her experiences with her professors, Cynthia interpreted

many of their conversations as innuendos that she should not be enrolled in the

university's engineering program. Defying suggestions from her professors and academic

advisors to switch academic programs, Cynthia was intently focused on being resilient

and completing the engineering program. Her motivation to show resilience stems from

her belief that she is capable of excelling coupled with her belief that her professors

challenge her because she is a female in a male-dominated career path. Cynthia's

statements that provided structure around her content analysis are organized in Table 7.

Table 7

Cynthia's Content Analysis

Content	Event	Meaning
1. Interactions with professors	"Everything that I thought was going to happen, has happened." AND "Not surprised, just disappointed." AND "At this point all I can do is continue to work. I made it to my sophomore year in the program, so there's hope."	I was disappointed that the behavior that I anticipated from my professors is exactly how they reacted toward me. Yet, I have hope.

Tyrone. The shaping of Tyrone's disability identity began when his flare-ups caused him to miss class on a frequent basis. Initially, when his flare-ups began, Tyrone did not have an official diagnosis and assumed that his condition was temporary. However, as his flare-ups worsened, Tyrone's family became more involved with assisting him with house chores and doctor's appointments. In addition to his familial support, Tyrone stated that his professors' flexibility with attendance and deadlines contributed to his academic success in the education program. The levels of understanding and support that Tyrone received from his family and professors contributed to framing his disability identity. Support from Tyrone's family and professors has allowed him to realize that autonomous individuals need assistance from others.

Table 8

Tyrone's Content Analysis

Condition	Event	Meaning
1. Family Support	"I'm independent but a time came when I just need help." AND "Before my accommodations, when sick, my family would drive over two hours to help me manage my life."	My family recognized that although I'm independent, I needed additional help.
2. Professional interaction	"I underestimated how much I would benefit from the accommodations I received from Disability Services." AND "My professors were understanding and flexible." AND "It was the first time I really needed someone's help."	I appreciate the help provided by Disability Services and my professors. Asking for additional assistance was humbling.

Findings

After completing the four steps of critical events analysis for the initial interviews, I grouped the meanings that emanated from my analysis of events into four tiers. Within their narratives of critical events of disability identity development, participants described moments of *silence*, *professional support*, *familial support*, and *reflection*. The culmination of experiences within these categories played an essential role in forming each student's disability identity. The following four subsections will clarify the different characteristics (e.g. maternal/paternal support or intake meeting with disability professionals) that are composed within each experiential category and how they may influence one another.

Silence

Most participants' narratives included an experience where feelings of angst, confusion, frustration, or authenticity, could not be expressed. Subconscious silence is difficult to identify and using probing questions during the interview process presented moments for me and each participant to reflect on shared experiences. The reflexive process played a critical role for interviewees as they used reflexive moments as an opportunity of self-transparency to parse out the structure of their experiences and to clarify how those structures were inextricably linked with their own identity claims.

Deidra: compounded consciousness. Deidra's silence surfaces when she is exhausted from the intersections of her multiple oppressed identities. For example, when transitioning from a full-time employee to a full-time doctoral student, Deidra's ability to manage her department as an African American female in higher education was

challenged daily and left her mentally exhausted. Therefore, when advocating for disability accommodations, Deidra reluctantly obliged to Disability Services' suggestion to update her psychological evaluation. Upon reflection, Deidra noted:

> I just said okay… but it was also very frustrating because we just had to take the test. I know that I probably could have went up the food chain and complained but as an incoming new student I thought, okay let me just do it.

Deidra mentioned that performing and compensating for her multiple oppressed identities is tiring because no matter the environment, there is always an oppressed identity for which she is compensating and/or accommodating. This *compounded consciousness*, which involves the constant compensation and accommodation of Deidra's intersecting oppressed identities, means that in any environment at least one of her oppressed identities is always present even when another oppressed identity is accommodated.

Mahj: silence of safety. Mahj's silence exhibited itself more subtly. Mahj refrained from proclaiming hir LGBTQ pride via flag and banner postings in hir dorm room because this was information that hir mother is not privy to. For a student who relies heavily on hir mother's monetary stability for college, Mahj chose to remain silent to increase the probability of hir successfully completing college without creating additional financial barriers. In Mahj's narrative, silence created a sense of safety: "I feel like I can't have any LGBT things in my room. Like I can't have a gay pride flag hanging on my wall…"

Clifton: silence as respect. As a response to his respectful relationship with his parents, Clifton's parents are unaware that he openly shares his developmental disability with his peers and professors. Clifton's parents are also unaware of how comfortable he is with his disability. Although Clifton is silent about informing his parents that he defies their suggestion regarding his disability disclosure, silence is also present when declared as unwillingness to converse with his parents regarding his level of comfort with his disability. When analyzing Clifton's data, both incidents of silence provided examples of how much he respects his parents and their level of influence. Clifton's silence is in response to his commitment and loyalty to family: "They taught me not to say that I'm autistic… So, you basically want me to hide who I really am to people…"

Sarah: silence because it's not worth it. In Sarah's experiences, she is silent when professors and Disability Services professionals converse with her and excessively use politically correct statements regarding her disability. Although Sarah does not agree with excessive use of politically correct responses, she consciously decided not to address her concern because the issue lacks worth and importance for her. Interpreting Sarah's experiences of silence was important because it showed her ability to rationalize experiences that shape her disability identity. Sarah stated the following in regard to professors and disability professionals who use excessive politically correct responses: "I usually ignore it for the most part because it's not worth getting upset about."

Cynthia: silence because it's too awkward. Although Disability Services issued an official notice outlining Cynthia's accommodations, she is reluctant to provide additional details concerning her disability. Cynthia's professors oblige to the

accommodations determined by the university's Disability Services office. However, Cynthia's silence showed in situations when she needed additional time to complete an assignment or test. In most situations when needing an extension on assignments, Cynthia's delayed processing and executive functioning skills are impacted by her learning and mental health disability. Although discussed vaguely during the interview, Cynthia's mental health disability is the primary cause of her discomfort in a male dominated degree program. As a female who had been sexually assaulted by a male, Cynthia's narratives involved discussion regarding her learning disability and is discreetly shared with her professors via her accommodations issued by Disability Services. However her mental health disability, a derivative of sexual assault, is silenced and rarely discussed during the interview and with family. Therefore, Cynthia's mental health disability is a silenced topic with professors: "I can't explain my condition to my professors. It's gonna make things awkward and difficult."

Tyrone: silence because it's embarrassing. Claiming his flare-ups as embarrassing, Tyrone silence was the opposite of his extroverted demeanor. Tyrone's silence showed through his reluctance to inform his professors of the frequency and severity of his flare-ups. Tyrone reported multiple incidents when he attended classes while experiencing severe pain. According to Tyrone, Disability Services allowed him to receive reasonable accommodations to mitigate the impact his medical condition. The intervention of Disability Services allowed Tyrone to express with his professors moments when his medical condition was preventing him from attending or staying the entire duration of class. Prior to Disability Services' intervention, Tyrone considered

disclosing his medical condition with his professors. Moreover, Tyrone also expressed confusion around how much information should he disclose. When analyzing Tyrone's statements, the embarrassment associated with his medical condition contributed to his silence. "I'm uncomfortable telling my professors why I am sometimes late for class. That's why I'm glad I met with my disability counselor."

Professional Support

Each participant shared an event that involved an interaction with a professional staff member. Participants stated that interacting with professional staff served as their gateway for receiving reasonable services. A portion of interactions were associated with challenges while other interviewees presented their interactions as familiar territory. Every interviewee who attended a high school where the disability counselor updated their evaluations before graduation also forwarded the most recent evaluations to the student's prospective college of choice. Interviewees whose updated evaluations were forwarded reported that this task contributed to easing the stress of college.

Overall, each participant showed appreciation for the services they received. Most participants agreed that they were pleased with the accommodations listed on their accommodation plan. Once the accommodation plan was administered to their professors, participants stated that most professors were willing to oblige by what had been established by the university's Disability Services office. Via document analysis, the Disability Services office provided students with a list of on-campus and off-campus professional support resources.

Challenges. Participants often referred to the intake process as being somewhat tedious and burdensome. Demonstratively, the burdensome process derived from students being asked to retake a psychological evaluation due to departmental policy encouraging students to update documents post three years of receipt. In efforts to meet the Disability Services professional's request to update evaluative documents, students are typically faced with paying additional costs that were unforeseen. As a result, receiving reasonable accommodations may be a delayed, temporary, or an unreachable goal. In addition to a tedious intake process, students also expressed that the lack of continued support from counseling services served as a barrier when attempting to improve mental health. According to several of the interviewees, after approximately three or four sessions with the counseling center, they were referred to an external resource for long-term care. This interrupted the students' healing process and made them feel devalued.

Participants also relayed narratives that portrayed difficulty communicating with professional support staff. Difficulty in communication may occur when professional staff members attempt to use sensitive language when conversing with students with disabilities. Sarah referred to the constant attempt to use sensitive language as being overly sensitive. Other interviewees stated that sometimes conversations with overly sensitive professional staff create a false sense of belonging in an academic classroom. For a more detailed description of students' experiences with sensitive language, refer to the intersectionality section of this chapter.

Clifton. Although Clifton's high school mentor helped him frame his disability identity, this framing continued after transitioning into college. In addition to the high

school mentor, Clifton's college mentor also helped him develop healthy relationships with female peers socially appropriate behaviors. Clifton showed his commitment to improving his interpersonal communication skills by finding support in college that resembled what he received in high school. When sharing the importance of his freshman year in college and the lessons he has currently learned, Clifton stated the following:

Freshman year specifically or college, I learned so much… I didn't know the social norm that if you have a woman or guy on your actual screen save, it shows that you are in a couple with that actual person. I didn't know that until last year.

Cynthia. As for Cynthia's assistance from professional support, many of her experiences involved meetings with Disability Services and attending professors' office hours. Although Cynthia routinely shared apprehension toward disclosing her disability to the engineering faculty, she expressed that the letter issued by Disability Services revealed that she had a disability. Although details of her diagnosis were not disclosed in the letter, it does alert professors that she does have a diagnosis. Therefore, providing her professors with an accommodation letter, caused Cynthia to feel forced to disclose that she has a form of disability.

Narrative inquiry's iterative process allowed me to identify compounding incidences that contributed to Cynthia's discomfort in the engineering program. The three factors that contributed to Cynthia's discomfort are her assumptive thoughts that surfaced after receiving her initial diagnosis, reluctantly disclosing a disability to her professors by providing an accommodation letter, and suggestive conversation with professors and advisors about changing her degree program. These three factors are important to

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Cynthia's experiences because they immensely contributed to her discomfort in the engineering program. When reflecting on incidences where she provided her professors with an accommodation letter, Cynthia stated the following: "I was nervous about sharing anything about my disability but there were really no other options."

Deidra. This chapter previously mentioned Deidra's challenges receiving accommodations due to an outdated psychological evaluation. Deidra hoped for more flexibility with updating the psychological evaluation, however, she obliged. Like many of the study's participants, after receiving accommodations from Disability Services, Deidra continued to seek additional help from the Writing Center and the Center for Assistive Technology. As for challenges, Deidra mainly referenced the intake process and services from the Writing Center. When referring to the Writing Center, Deidra's main concern was finding a writing tutor who understood the writing style and expectations of a doctoral student.

So, after updating her psychological evaluation and receiving accommodations from Disability Services, Deidra began advocating for adequate services from the Writing Center. Deidra's ability to advocate for appropriate services from the Writing Center is an example of her declared identity claim that she is a critical pedagogist. When referencing her experiences with the Writing Center, Deidra made the following statement: "I had to jump through so many hoops just to get unlimited tutoring appointments."

Deidra' experiences with the Center for Assistive Technology were more pleasurable than the Writing Center and Disability Services. When comparing her Disability Services and Writing Center experiences with the Center for Assistive

Technology, seeing an individual with her shared identities served as commendable memory. For example, when meeting regularly with the Writing Center and Disability Services, Deidra did not encounter a person of color nor an individual with a disability. However, when meeting with the Center for Assistive Technology, Deidra interacted with Gerald; an African American male who was deaf. Deidra and Gerald shared two oppressed identities together thusly creating a memorable experience for Deidra. The interaction between Deidra and Gerald is important because it supports the participants claim that seeing others with similar identities creates a unique experience for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. Deidra made the following statement regarding her interaction with Gerald: "He was viewed more so like a role model because he shared two out of three identities with me. He also had a PhD."

Mahj. For Mahj, the Counseling Center served as a disappointing experience while in college. When experiencing the financial stressors of college, Mahj sought services from the Counseling Center to share emotions and find coping mechanisms for hir anxiety. However, after a few visits hir services were terminated and zie was provided a referral service. The lack of continuity of services consequently left Mahj feeling unwelcomed and disvalued. These two compounded emotions contributed to Mahj's claim of feeling misunderstood by professors and other university staff when attempting to explain hir gender and sexual identities: "I was really disappointed in the Counseling Center. A lot of my friends are really disappointed with the Counseling Center, too."

Sarah. Having a strong support system was continuously discussed in Sarah's narrative. Although her family served as a primary support system, Sarah relied on the

recommendations and accommodations received by Disability Services to navigate her transition into college. Sarah's narrative also shared the importance of establishing a sense of relationship between the student with a disability and support staff members. Prior to college, Sarah and her family developed a rapport with support staff. Although she stated that establishing relationships is challenging at an institution with over 32,000 enrolled students, Sarah believes that establishing a relationship is important in improving the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities: "I didn't really feel connected but I definitely thought that she seemed like she had my best interest at heart."

Tyrone. Understanding that support services staff are available resources in college served as the focal point of Tyrone's narrative. Although Tyrone was aware of tutorial and writing services, he was not aware of Disability Services. However, once he gained knowledge and of their resources, he immediately scheduled an appointment to benefit from their services. Overall, Tyrone does not have any complaints regarding his experience and the accommodations received by Disability Services. Tyrone stated: "My accommodations are pretty simple and they help my condition. I haven't had any concerns with the disability staff."

Familial Support

Participants' families played an essential role in framing their disability identity. Critical events analysis revealed that many participants spoke of familial influence either shortly before or after their initial meeting with a professional staff member. Therefore, it

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is apparent that interactions with family and the initial meeting with credentialed professional staff are two pivotal components of a student's disability identity.

This section shares events when family or friends participated in mitigating specific barriers for participants. Every participant showed an appreciation for the support they received from family and friends. In most instances, parents took the initiative to support and encourage their student to complete a psychological or medical evaluation to complete preliminary steps needed to receive reasonable accommodations in college. Completing the preliminary steps and intake process are apparent because each student has met the minimum requirements to receive an approved entitlement decision from the Disability Services office at their university. As a finding, receiving adequate familial support immensely contributes to a student's matriculation through college. Familial support increases the comfort level and mitigates disability associated limitations while in college. In return, this helps students balance both their academic and personal lives. When topics are considered uncomfortable or contentious, participants reported discussing such topics with their peers in lieu of their family members.

Clifton: a touchy subject. The shared family experiences of Clifton included high levels of respect for and loyalty to his parents. Overall, Clifton's parents were emotionally and financially supportive of Clifton's academics. However, topics that focused on romantic relationships and openly disclosing his disability outside of family were frowned upon. Clifton found friends with identities similar to his and with them shared his developmental disability while also freely discussing challenges with romantic relationships. According to Clifton, he has never encountered a romantic relationship;

conversations focused on singleness is difficult to facilitate with his parents. The framing

of Clifton's disability identity was created by his ability to effectively balance the request

of his family and understanding his personal desires. Hence Clifton's ability to converse

with peers about his singleness. When reflecting about his parental relationship, Clifton

stated the following: "My mom and dad… it's just a touchy subject but I just talk to more

of my friends, honestly."

Cynthia: it's comforting. Entering college as a first-generation student with

limited guidance, Cynthia regularly stated feelings of confusion in her academic program.

However, Cynthia found pleasure in her mother's ability to attend meetings regarding her

request for accommodations. Being raised in a single parent home, Cynthia shared her

mother's sacrifices that allowed her to attend meetings with Disability Services

professionals. As a single parent, Cynthia's mother used vacation days as a special

education teacher to offer support during evaluations and meetings with disability service

professionals. The following statement regards Cynthia's thoughts toward her mother's

involvement: "My mom is a single parent but always finds time to attend appointments

with me. It's comforting."

Deidra: a very proud dad. As a first-generation college student, Deidra's family

was supportive of her academic endeavors. Deidra considered her father and mother as

her primary supporters; however, her father was in complete disbelief when learning of

the participant's ADHD diagnosis. The support Deidra received from her family

contributed to her disability identity by reinforcing her belief that she is capable of

completing graduate and doctoral degrees. Deidra believed in her abilities to complete

graduate and doctoral school and this belief was reinforced by the interactions with her father: "My dad being a very proud dad was immediately offended. He would say, 'No daughter of mine…' you know."

Mahj: it makes things easier. Although Mahj has a close relationship with hir mother and appreciated the financial support received, hir narrative revealed that Mahj felt more comfortable sharing both hir sexual and gender identities with an aunt. In addition to sharing hir oppressed identities with hir aunt, Mahj also opted to spend summers living at hir aunt's residence instead of commuting to the hometown of hir mother. This experience is essential to Mahj's disability identity because it showed the strategies that were taken to prevent hir mother from finding out about hir sexual and gender identities. Hence, Mahj's attempt to protect the financial stability needed to graduate from hir graduate program: "So, I live here with my aunt and uncle during the summer when I'm not in school. It makes things easier."

Sarah: the support of friends. As mentioned in previous sections, many of Sarah's experiences involved support from her family. Sarah's family was involved in the psychological process, intake process, and college experience. Sarah mentioned that in addition to familial support, her friends contributed to her academic success. This is important to shaping her disability identity because prior to college family was the focal point of her support. However, in college and in the absence of her parents, Sarah added the support she received from friends as a component of her disability identity. To capture the importance of her friends' support, Sarah stated:

I will say that my friends really help because people think bad about you after you tell them. My friends actually help. They make sure to remind me, because I'm very forgetful because of it, they remind me when I have assignments or they ask me if I need help with anything.

Tyrone: family helps me manage my life. In scenarios when Tyrone was embarrassed to share his limitations with professors and colleagues, he recalled sharing his diagnosis with family. In response to disclosing his disability, his family responded by spending days with him to assist with house chores, self-care, and hospital visits. For Tyrone, it was easier for him to fully disclose his disability and its limitations with family as opposed to professors: "When sick, my family would drive over two hours and help me manage my life."

Reflection

Reflection is defined as an event when individuals with a disability ponder how the culmination of experiences guided them to a conclusive thought. Previous sections of this dissertation focused on interpersonal communication experiences of interviewees; however, reflective events were identified by analyzing shared intrapersonal communication. Participants typically began their reflective processes by reminiscing on services received by Disability Services and Counseling Services.

Students were adamant about their disability experiences and shared areas in which support services could improve their resources. However, unlike the experiences involving support services, participants' shared experiences that involved family excluded critique and recommendations for improvement. The lack of familial critique

was present in three participants' narratives. In some narratives, the lack of familial critique resulted in a subtle form of silence. According to the analysis, students seemed to be more accepting of family influences even when their family's ideals were not in alignment with their personal beliefs as a student with a disability who has multiple oppressed identities.

Clifton. When reflecting on the parental advice his received, Clifton accepted it by reminding himself of his their "good intentions." Clifton did not mention moments when he thought his parents' behavior or advice were from egregious intent. Therefore, Clifton consistently expressed his love for his parents and sibling. Clifton's love for his family contributed to his difficulty leaving home to begin his first semester of college. This experience is important for Clifton's disability identity because it reinforced the idea that Clifton's respect for his family supersedes his personal desires. Clifton stated the following when reflecting on the dynamics of his family: "I love my mom, even though my dad was hard on me, even my brother is hard on me too. I didn't even wanna leave my house because I love them. I respect them, I honor them…"

Cynthia. Familial support is an essential component of her college experiences, however, there were situations when Cynthia questioned her mother's support. For example, when her mother speaks positively about Cynthia's abilities to complete an engineering program, she wonders if her mother fully believes her statements or if it is a mother's duty to create a fully supportive environment for their child. When discussing this topic, Cynthia stated: "My mother supports and pushes me but I can't tell if she's just

being a mother. My teachers from high school are surprised that I'm in an engineering program at the university."

Deidra. Being reared by a caring and loving father, Deidra's primary question was reiterated when she shared her diagnosis with her father. Deidra's narrative consisted of moments when she questioned her diagnosis. Questioning the legitimacy of her diagnosis was reinforced by her father and presented itself in her interview via the following statement: "You already have a graduate degree. Why are they diagnosing you this late? How does that even happen?"

Intersectionality

Many participants routinely mentioned costs as a significant barrier with their disability identity. Even Mahj, who considered hirself a product of a middle-class family, discussed hir challenges with meeting the financial commitment associated with completing the evaluative process to receive accommodations. Consequences of financial barriers are significant and stress-inducing, including delayed, cancellation of, or denial of reasonable accommodations. Mahj recollected a memory when paying for an evaluation posed a dilemma of deciding if paying for an evaluation was more important than paying for hir semester's tuition. Mahj's experience regarding financial struggles were shared in hir event structure analysis section of this chapter. The event structure analysis section described two of Mahj's oppressed identities; socio-economic status and disability, and how they intersected when academic barriers were created.

In retrospect, because of her high school's procedures, Sarah transitioned into college without significant financial barriers. As stated in her initial interview, Sarah's

financial barriers were mitigated because of her high school's initiative to update her psychological evaluation and forward it to her university of choice. Therefore, when Sarah arrived for her initial meeting with Disability Services, her preliminary documentation met the university's guidelines and was paid for by her high school. Submitting a student's documentation prior to their arrival allowed the university's Disability Services office to review all documentation prior to the first day of class. Moreover, Sarah was able to establish reasonable accommodation the summer prior to her first fall semester of college.

However, Sarah's primary financial barrier exhibited itself during an attempt to receive reasonable accommodations from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) when preparing for college. With the assistance and motivation from her parents and high school counselor, Sarah worked arduously to ease her transition into college. However, while focusing intently on reducing psychological evaluative costs to meet the expectation of the university, she stated that the SAT's requirements and process were more stringent. Therefore, although Sarah reduced the psychological costs associated with Disability Services guidelines, she attempted to find ways to reduce costs when meeting the guidelines for the SAT. This experience is pertinent to Sarah's disability identity because she understands the level of commitment that is required when advocating for one's reasonable accommodations. Sarah stated the following when describing her interactions with SAT representatives.

I didn't run into any barriers for college. I ran into some with SAT stuff because they want a whole bunch of extra documentation. That's kind of expensive, you gotta go to a psychiatrist… I couldn't really afford doing all of that.

Sensitive Language

As mentioned in chapter two, disability professionals recommend person-first language when communicating or referring to an individual with a disability. However, in this study, half of the African American participants stated that sometimes overly sensitive language with professional staff members was interpreted as offensive. When describing their experiences with overly sensitive language used by professional staff, participants typically felt the staff member was communicating as if they were "slow" or did not understand the limitations of their own disability. Deidra referred to overly sensitive conversations as creating a false sense of belonging and also stated the following:

"'Oh, Deidra, you're such a good student. You know everything. You have all of these experiences. You know how to work with students so well. Meanwhile, I'm making horrible mistakes and you seem to do well with supervising.'"

Sarah's experience with overly sensitive language intersected with her racial identity. Due to Sarah's African American identity, people become apprehensive about conversations where race is its focal point. According to Sarah, the apprehension and over sensitivity occur during race discussions created an uncomfortable environment for her. Therefore, the same uncomfortable feeling is present when disability professionals use over sensitive language regarding her disability identity. When discussing the

intersections of her oppressed identities, Sarah stated the following: "People around you just feel like they have to be politically correct, and then I'm like, Just don't be racist."

Isolated Events

Mahj was the only participant who stated that zie identifies as non-binary and pansexual. When discussing events of silence during hir initial interview, Mahj shared that zie is growing immensely frustrated with constant mistakes regarding hir name. Depending on which university software is being used, Mahj's birth name is used in lieu of hir preferred name. According to Mahj, the improper use of hir name affects hir ability to have proper and comfortable introductions when meeting new people such as roommates, resident advisors, and professors. When sharing challenges associated with using hir preferred name, Mahj stated:

> But I feel like my teachers get confused. Because on their class roster, if they're checking it through Blackboard, then it shows up as my preferred name. But if they're checking it with whatever grading systems they have, it shows up as my real name. I had a class where my teacher didn't put in my labs because she didn't realize that I was the same person.

Clifton's isolated event focused on his challenges finding a romantic partner. According to Clifton's narrative, not only is it challenging to for autistic students to find love, it is also difficult for autistic students to converse about their love challenges. However, when engaging in conversations where relationship challenges are shared, Clifton stated that he typically discussed this topic with his peers in lieu of his family. When explaining the challenges of conversing with family about his relationship woes,

Clifton stated that it is difficult because his sibling has relationship challenges of his own and his parents would not understand because of their inability to accept his autism.

For these two reasons, Clifton shared thoughts and concerns regarding peers who are also enrolled in a support program for students with autism. When reviewing participants' demographics, Clifton was the only participant in this study who was diagnosed with autism. Therefore, Clifton was the only one who could have contributed to the limited conversation centered around relationships among students with autism. Clifton stated the following when sharing his relationship challenges:

> A girl who just cared for me and just looked up to me and just always checked up on me to see how I'm doing. People never do that, that was my first ever time feeling loved… Who could love someone like me?

Secondary Interviews

When soliciting participants for secondary interviews, four out of six participants agreed to meet. However, only three of those participants attended their scheduled interview time. Similar to initial interviews, participants met in a private study room at the university library or academic building. After using critical event analysis to discover common emergent events across research participants, the most difficult, salient, and reflexive event was labeled as silence. Experiences of silence also served as the nucleus of each secondary interview.

Secondary interviews consisted of one lead-off question and, if necessary, the lead-off question was followed by two probing questions. Prior to asking the lead-off question designed for each secondary interview, participants were informed that every

interviewee shared an experience of silence during their initial interview. Although participants were not directed toward a specific event of silence, they were informed that silence was defined as an experience where feelings of angst, confusion, frustration, or lack of authenticity was exhibited. Defining silence was a tactic used to allow participants to situate themselves in an event of silence without me denoting a specific event or memory.

The initial question was, when thinking about your disability identity, if you were to describe an experience when you may have been silent, what would it be? Probing questions included (1) if experiences of silence existed, were there recommendations that you may have to break one's silence? And (2) in your experiences, were there consequences for remaining in silence? If so, what were they?

Breaking Silence

When asked the first question, Deidra immediately referred to her experience as the notion of representation while also focusing on the location in which silence occurred. According to Deidra, the location of silence considered the representation of an oppressed identity within the particular space in which the silence is occurring. For example, when in an environment of students who identify with a higher socioeconomic status, an African American student from a low-income family may choose silence in regards to sharing the influence financial barriers has on their academics.

Participants suggested that silence was alleviated by their ability to see representation that resembled their oppressed identity. Interacting with professionals who have oppressed identities that resemble those of the research participants created a sense

of comfort. According to participants, the increased sense of comfort led to authentic

conversations between the student and professional staff. Therefore, resembled oppressed

identities motivated students with disabilities to break their silence when conversing

Disability Services professionals.

This section provides statements from students' interviews that explicate an

experience when their silence was voluntarily broken or an experience with students felt

comfortable with being their authentic selves. Some statements were found during the

initial interview while others surfaced during secondary interviews. During secondary

interviews, Deidra and Clifton stated that their silence ceased after noticing that there is a

sense of empowerment associated with their disability. Both Clifton and Deidra provided

an outline of reflective steps that assisted in the enhancement of their confidence and

loquaciousness about their oppressed identities. Albeit no particular order, the following

steps were identified in the secondary interview stage as beneficial components of self-

empowerment.

Steps Toward Self-Empowerment

- *Recognition* (Step 1): Psychologically accepting that your disability and other

  oppressed identities exist.

- *Define Disability* (Step 2): Creating a suitable life by situating one's diagnosis in

  their daily life activities.

- *Support System* (Step 3): Identifying individuals who assist in advocating for

  equity for students who have a disability and an additional oppressed identity.

When discussing a moment when he broke his silence, Clifton reiterated his experience of being informed that he should not disclose his disability to others. Clifton's silence broke once he reflected and defined his disability for himself. When defining his disability for himself, Clifton began to view his disability as a sense of empowerment and stated the following: "Understand what your diagnosis means to you. I initially used it as a defense mechanism but now I use it as encouragement... I just want to empower myself. This is who I am."

As for Deidra, during her initial interview she shared an experience with receiving services from an African American male who she immediately connected with. Deidra stated the following to capture her experience with a support staff member who shared two oppressed identities with her: "So, I felt very comfortable. I guess what I would say is… having someone who also has a disability and being an African-American woman would be ideal."

Remaining in Silence

When asked about experiences when a participant had remained in silence, many responses derived from feeling as if silence was the only option. Also, some participants also stated that in some situations choosing to break silence was not a task that was worth tackling. For example, in situations where parents were involved, many participants shared narratives where silence was presented as the only option. In most cases, silence with parents exhibited itself because of the level of respect students had toward their families. In another circumstance, Deidra resorted to silence because she was exhausted

from compensating her other oppressed identities; she lacked self-motivation to challenge mainstream behavior shared in her narrative.

Clifton and Tyrone both agreed that remaining in silence for prolonged periods of time is unhealthy. According to Clifton, knowing the unhealthy consequences of remaining in silence contributed to his ability to become expressive with his peers. When reflecting on his experiences regarding silence, Clifton addressed the positive consequences of silence by stating the following: "You'll tremble in your mental thoughts. I've gone through this myself… but silence can help you guard yourself."

Chapter Five: Summary of Findings

This chapter provides a summary of this dissertation's findings while also sharing my reflections as the researcher. After gathering and analyzing data, I returned to disability literature as well as my reflexive research notes to put everything into conversation with each other. Conclusions will reflect these conversations. This chapter will conclude with research implications for the experiences of college students with disabilities who also have multiple oppressed identities.

After using critical events analysis to gather insight on the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, silence, professional support, familial support and reflection are referred to as the Core Considerations of this research study. The participants' narratives included at least one the Core Considerations categories which immensely contributed to their disability identity. In many instances, participants connection to a Core Considerations category derived from its association with at least one of their oppressed identities other than their disability identity. For example, Cynthia's experiences related to the professional support category was expressed through a narrative which involved her gender and racial identities because her academic environment included males who did not identify as African American.

This chapter will not only provide a summary of the research findings but it will also explain how its findings resemble previously conducted research. Additionally, this

chapter will provide implications for higher education administrators to better serve students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. Silence, professional support, familial support, and reflection are critical aspects of the participants disability identities and also depicts their most salient experiences. However, it is essential to understand that the disability identities of this study's participants are not stable. An individual's thoughts regarding their disability identity can change over time by acquiring influential knowledge and experiences.

Silence

As previously mentioned, participants exhibited silence in experiences where they did not share their feelings of angst, confusion, or authenticity. Silence, the most difficult of the Core Considerations to identify, was apparent in narratives and experiences because derived from events that conjured feelings of compounded consciousness, safety, respect toward family members, lack of worth and comfortability. Compounded consciousness refers to a student's exhaustion that derives from their constant focus on one of their many oppressed identities. Therefore, their exhaustion resulted in their inability to fully communicate their concerns and needs to disability counselors and other university administrators.

Silence was also used when participants felt a need to maintain a safe and stable academic environment. For example, a student who identified with a lower socioeconomic status was reluctant to share their LGBTQ status with close family who provided financial security to complete their academic program. In this scenario, the consequences associated with revealing their LGBTQ identity was too great and not

worth risking their academic success. Moreover, another participant referred to the level of worth that was associated with breaking their silence. While the words "safety" and "worth" were used to describe the experiences of two participants, the different terminology strongly referred to the level of worth that was associated with the consequence of breaking one's silence. The narrative that focused on safety as a determinant to not break silence was associated with negative consequences.

However, the narrative that focused on worth as a determinant to not break silence was associated with neutral consequences. When referring to neutral consequences, it was imperative to understand that neutral consequences do not pose a significant gain or loss for students with disabilities who has multiple oppressed identities. The inability to identify rather a consequence poses a significant reward or hindrance also contributed to a student's decision to remain in silence about certain thoughts.

In addition to silence toward family exhibiting itself in an effort to maintain safety within an environment, it was used to show respect. Depending on one's cultural upbringing challenging the ideology of one's parents is considered demeaning and disrespectful. Therefore, in this study, silence was used to establish a level of respect, love, and peace between a student and parent. However, outside of home, the student was more gregarious about his disability and expressed immense proud of his identities. Although one participant considered respect as a reasonable variable to determine one's silence, another participant directly stated that the embarrassment associated with his disability resulted in silence. In this study, embarrassment presented itself when one's

disability influences an adult's inability to control bodily functions that are typical controlled by individuals of a mature age.

Overall, silence is a critical component in shaping the identities of individuals with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. However, because it occurs surreptitiously at times, those who are experiencing silence do not always recognize when it is occurring. In many narratives, silence was used as a protective measure toward family, academic success, and personal reputations. Since silence typically operated in an individual's subconscious, a continuous review and analysis of the transcription helped to identify the temporality, place, and sociality that silence typically occurs. When engaging in social interactions with some professional services, students were silenced due to the short-term counseling policy that is in place at the university's Counseling Center.

However, the data showed that as students' understanding of their oppressed identities evolved overtime, so did their silence. Some interviewees discussed their break of silence when learning of resources that they deemed helpful in mitigating barriers to their oppressed identity. Sharing additional ways to accommodate their oppressed identities with university staff was many participants way to engage in self-advocacy. Therefore, advocating for oneself broke their silence and increased as their understanding of their disability and other oppressed identities developed overtime.

Professional Support

Although many participants did express their concerns with interacting with professional staff and professors, overall, they stated that their experiences were mostly pleasant and agreed that establishing a healthy relationship is beneficial in

accommodating their disabilities and other oppressed identities. When sharing interactions with professional staff, some interviewees spoke simultaneously about their counselor from the Disability Services office and their counselor from the Counseling Center. Followed by collecting and submitting tedious evaluative documents, some students expressed different experiences between their communication with a disability counselor in comparison to their counselor from the Counseling Center. Disability counselor typically focus solely on the student, the disability, and their academics. However, students with disabilities are asked to discuss their personal challenges, which is usually connected to their additional oppressed identities, with the Counseling Center who services are terminated after an allotted number of sessions.

Services that resume beyond allotted number of sessions are typically facilitated outside of the college or university and are associated with an exorbitant cost. Costs, which many interviewees expressed as a major concern, were not only associated with continuing therapeutic services. In this research study, students stated that exorbitant costs were not only associated with continuing services but they also played a role in making gathering evaluative document a challenging process. The inability to pay high costs for services to obtain services and accommodations may result in an extreme delay in receiving appropriate academic accommodations for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. Moreover, lacking the funds to maintain on-going services ultimately results in terminated services. Finally, more than one interviewee shared feeling demeaned or incompetent when communicating with university administrators and disability professionals who overly used sensitive language. Although

students enjoyed most of their time with disability professionals, it is important to communicate with students as if they are adult individuals and not individuals who view their disability as the nucleus of their identity.

Family Support

In addition to professional support, support from family and friends was deemed influential in the disability identities of the research participants. Narratives shared by interviewees typically included familial influence occurring shortly before or after communicating with a Disability Services professional. Similar to professional support, students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities expressed immense appreciation for the support they received from family and friends. Some participants even referring to familial support as comforting. Interviewees' feelings of comfort derived from a plethora of factors which included support financially and mentally. In many narratives, supportive family members also experienced a transitional phase when learning of their loved one's disability or when identifying ways to accommodate the limitations associated with their disability.

Reflection

Reflecting on life experiences played an essential role in shaping the disability identities of students with disabilities who had multiple oppressed identities. Narratives that included moments of reflection allowed participants to evaluate and identify transient moments in the progression of their disability identity. Evaluating and identifying these moments were typically shared while identifying individuals who played vital roles in understanding the limitations of their disability and other oppressed identities. Moreover,

vital individuals also contributed to identifying resources to accommodate and mitigate academic barriers.

Implications for Research

Currently, research uses the term human aggregate to refer to the collective characteristics of people within an environment (Strange, 2000). Human aggregate is important in understanding that how a person experiences the environment is dependent on the degree in which a person is similar to other people within the environment (Strange, 2000). Data gathered from this research study aligns with the human aggregate philosophy. For example, some participants shared feeling more comfortable interacting with Disability Services professional who they shared similar oppressed identities with. Therefore, as a doctoral student, an African American female interviewee with a disability felt most comfortable requesting accommodations from an African American male who had a hearing impairment and doctoral degree. The human aggregate in this narrative not only increased the student's level of comfort but it also provided a sense of hope in regard to achieving academic success.

In regard to the idea of human aggregate, 881 students at a northeastern university were surveyed and reported that although they have positive attitudes toward students with disabilities, approximately 79 percent stated feeling pity or a sense of awkwardness when communicating with peers who have disabilities. This research is important in developing research topics that focus on the use of overly sensitive language by able-bodied individuals. Is it common for disability professionals to excessively use sensitive language as a consequence of feeling pity or awkward when conversing with students

who have disabilities and other oppressed identities? If so, why? In many instances, students with disabilities did not report feeling belittled when requesting services to accommodate their needs. However, the excessive use of sensitive language is when some students recalled feeling demeaned or ostracized from those with mainstream identities.

Expanding research on self-advocacy amongst students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities is an additional topic of interest implied by this research study. Disability professionals advocate for individuals with disabilities by creating accessible learning environments and teaching students with disabilities about the university's internal and external resources. In response to sharing additional resources, students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities cultivate transferable skills to self-advocate (Evans et al., 2017). Another research implication from this study is identifying interactions with professional staff as a pivotal moment in shaping one's disability identity. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to enhance disability research by questioning if the interaction with professional staff is more pivotal when it occurs prior to transitioning into college or afterwards. The same question is also essential regarding the interaction between a student with a disability who has multiple oppressed identities and their family.

When digressing to the idea of human aggregate, research regarding the details of its influence on the willingness of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities to advocate for themselves is also important. Labeling and identifying components that are associated with the stages of self-advocacy that are influenced by the

idea of human aggregate, is an important future research topic that is implied by this study. Although self-advocacy was discussed immensely in regard to one's disability, when thinking of compounded consciousness, some participants advocated on behalf of not only their disability but also their gender or race identities. Therefore, the experiences of individuals who knowingly express frustration with the idea of compounded consciousness is an additional research implication that derived from this study.

Lack of LGBTQ Representation

Although this research study focused on exploring the experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, analyzing the data has identified experiences and identities that are under-researched in the postsecondary realm of education. For example, although not an exhaustive list, additional research on the experiences of students with disabilities who also identify as LGBTQ, pansexual, or nonbinary. The intersections of disability identity with LGBTQ identities are not only diminutive in this research study, but also scholastic disability literature.

When recruiting research participants for this study, only one student self-disclosed their identity with the LGBTQ community. As a disability advocate and researcher, the lack of LGBTQ representation caused some concern. Is the lack of LGBTQ representation because participants did not feel comfortable sharing this identity with me? Perhaps participants chose to be silent about their LGBTQ identity because of a presumptuous thought that there was a lack of LGBTQ representation in the room? Thirdly, maybe the lack of LGBTQ representation is merely a consequence of unforeseen circumstances that were out of my control as the researcher? The lack of LGBTQ

representation is a concern related to this immediate study but should also play into the decision's future researchers make as they seek to add to the growing body of disability literature. This is a glaring omission that needs to be rectified.

Differences between Study and Literature

When considering the human aggregate, students with disabilities are usually the minority and are surrounded by colleagues, professors, and administrators who appear as able-bodied (Evans et al., 2017). Current research suggests that individuals' attitudes toward individuals with disabilities are often negative (Evans et al., 2017). However, many participants in this research study did not express a significant concern regarding routine negative treatment from colleagues, professors, and administrators. Although this research study was not designed to challenge the idea that students with disabilities receive negative attitudes from able-bodied peers, it is important to notate the overall experiences of students who participated in this study.

Suggested Implications for Practice

The academic successes of students with disabilities is often dependent on focused institutional attention and resources (Ware & Valle, 2010). According to Starr (2015), students with disabilities can expect increased stress and frustration when entering college environments that are not welcoming or accommodating of their diagnoses. For example, frustration levels of medical or law students with disabilities are expected to be higher because of the academic program's rigor (Lovett & Lewandowski, 2015). According to Lovett and Lewandowski (2015), the academic rigor of medical and law programs focus less on advocacy and focus more-on "tough love." The

administrators of these types of professional programs often argue argument that lawyers are not given more time to conjure an appropriate response to an objection in the courtroom and medical doctors are not allotted extended time to react to unforeseen circumstances while in an emergency room, so students must be prepared accordingly (Lovett & Lewandowski, 2015).

Although students with disabilities should be integrated in every aspect of an institution, Ware and Valle (2010) stated that institutions should develop a list of strategies to integrate students with disabilities in their curricula design, in creating policies and procedures for increasing access, and in engaging with parents and caregivers. When integrating students with disabilities in an institution's curricula, policies, and procedures, higher education administrators must encourage faculty and staff to understand how a student's disability can limit their academic success (Ware & Valle, 2010). Understanding myriad disabilities and their limitations is beneficial in helping educators establish appropriate strategies when developing curricula, increasing students' access to education, and integrating students in the learning process (Webberman & Carter, 2011). Focused institutional attention and resources are needed when integrating students with disabilities in higher education. As higher education research shows, students with disabilities may experience low retention rates, disproportionate high course failure rates, and low graduation rates (Bialka et al., 2017; Madaus, Grigal, & Hughes, 2014).

Literature shows that disability resources and organizations are evolving, therefore, it is important that our disability theories and frameworks are just as mutable

and updated (Evans et al., 2017). The findings from this research study will contribute to the future development of disability frameworks by encouraging Disability Services professionals to use a multi-dimensional approach toward students when determining reasonable accommodations and providing academic support services. Multi-dimensional approaches will influence the Core Considerations experiences of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities.

Silence. As the most salient outcome of this study, students experience myriad levels of silence. Recommending suggestions for mitigating one's silence is challenging because many times individuals are operating in the subconscious while it is occurring. However, many participants suggested that communicating with professionals who have similar identities immensely contributed to their break in silence. As a reasonable suggestion, Disability Services offices are encouraged to employ a diverse staff of individuals with multiple identities. Students may have a natural affinity toward a specific staff member. Therefore, when students complete their form to request accommodations or call to schedule an initial meeting with a Disability Services professional, they should be provided with options.

Contingent upon the structure and influx of accommodation requests, students who are seeking accommodations should have the option to designate a specific Disability Services professional to facilitate their initial meeting or denote their comfortability with visiting a professional who has the first available appointment. When provided with these options, students who are requesting accommodations are afforded an opportunity to have a voice in creating a suitable environment for an initial

conversation about their disability and its limitations. As a researcher, it is my hope that giving students with disabilities the opportunity to create a suitable environment will increase their level of comfort during and initial meeting. Moreover, increasing students' level of comfort will enhance their ability to convey authentic and candid conversations during initial discussions with Disability Services representative. Authentic and candid conversation are needed to encourage students to break their silence and to assist in identifying moments of silence that are operating in the subconscious.

Professional Support. For students with disabilities, understanding the intake process prior to an initial meeting with a Disability Services professional is a critical step in providing necessary academic support (Evans et al., 2017). For this research study, many students expressed a lack of understanding regarding the location and purpose of counseling services, proper documentation, and additional referral services. In response to their concerns, Disability Services staff are encouraged to designate multiple efforts to communicate, in detail, the intake process and the benefits of additional support services offered by the university and within the local community. Conveying details of the intake process may entail discussing how the department may define appropriate documentation. Also, if documentation is deemed inappropriate, what are additional support services that students can utilize while their records are being updated to meet the department's guidelines. Along with sharing additional resources to students, it is important for Disability Services professionals to share the importance of finding credentialed professionals who provide evaluative services, the location of additional support services, and resources that may mitigate barriers pertaining to costs.

For example, as mentioned in chapter four, Mahj shared that as a student who has limitations with managing multiple tasks, completing the request for accommodation letter each semester is taxing. In this instance, for students who have requested and received accommodations for the fall semester within an academic year, Disability Services offices should offer students the opportunity to sign a waiver to have their accommodations and accommodation letters automatically renewed for the spring semester that immediately follows. Currently, most students are required to request accommodations letter twice a year, in the fall and spring. However, Disability Services offices should adopt the practice of allowing reasonable accommodations to automatically renew within an academic year. Inculcating automatic renewal of reasonable accommodations as a standard office practice will reduce the amount of tasks that students are required to complete each semester. Automatic renewal is a practice that is beneficial for students with diagnoses that result in challenges with managing executive functioning skills. When given the opportunity to waive the automatic renewal of accommodations, students will also receive notice that a signed waiver can be recanted if there is a desire to amend an accommodation plan.

High School's Contribution. In efforts to eliminate financial barriers for students with disabilities who also have multiple oppressed identities, Disability Services professionals are suggested to inform students that it is beneficial to ask their high school counselors to update their psychological evaluations and submit them to their prospective colleges prior to graduating. Although some high schools may not have the resources to update the evaluative documents of their students with disabilities, many students do not

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inquire about updating their records. In most cases, when high schools update students'

evaluative records, they also provide funding. Therefore, requesting a high school to

update and forward updated evaluative records can contribute to mitigating financial

barriers associated with receiving accommodations in postsecondary education.

Familial Support. From the experiences shared by this study's participants, the

support of family and peers served a critical role in the college matriculation of students

with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities. In many participants' narratives,

parents and legal guardians were typically engaged in their student's intake process of

obtaining appropriate documentation as well as their initial meeting with a Disability

Services professional. Professionally, an intake process exists to collect and review

documentation provided by the student, identify potential beneficial resources, and to

obtain a comprehensive scope of the student's life influences. In addition to collecting

and reviewing evaluative documentation, Disability Services professionals also listen to

physical or mental challenges shared by students while also providing reasonable

accommodations.

After completing this research study, when initially meeting students who are

requesting reasonable accommodations, it is imperative for disability professionals to

engage in conversation that motivates students to be reflexive about their life's

experiences, candid relationships, and family dynamics. Evoking reflexive thoughts by

actively listening to the narratives of students with disabilities leads to identifying

moments of silence and allows students to be transparent during an initial meeting.

Identifying moments of silence is the first step to further investigating a student's

emotions and decisions that were apparent during a particular event. Understanding

emotions and decisions that are present during an event of silence is critical in predicting

scenarios that may increase or mitigate challenges for a particular student with a

disability who has multiple oppressed identities.

Reflection. Students with disabilities who are requesting reasonable

accommodations have moments in which they reflect about their initial interaction with a

Disability Services professional. When analyzing the responses of this study's

participants, students did not report a follow-up meeting where they were allowed to

reflect and share their thoughts about the initial meeting with their Disability Services

professional. Therefore, since most students meet a disability professional once without

an opportunity have a follow-up meeting specifically structured to elicit a reflexive

conversation, this study's findings should encourage professionals to end each initial

meeting by scheduling a follow-up meeting.

The structure of the follow-up meeting should focus intently on encouraging

reflection on the initial meeting. Since most initial meetings inform and encourage

students of additional support services, there are benefits to having the presence of a

representative from a referred support services office. For example, if a student with a

disability was referred to counseling services during their initial meeting, with the

student's permission, the Disability Services office should invite a counselor from the

counseling center to attend the follow-up meeting. Although students have an option to

cancel any scheduled follow-up meeting, providing this interaction allows the

opportunity for an expert from the referred support services office to lucidly explain the

benefits of their services and its limitations. Inculcating this interaction between students and support services staff will serve as the initial step to address the challenges with effective communication between students with disabilities and support services.

Researcher's Reflection

When advocating for students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities, critical pedagogy became a personal interest of mine. Critical pedagogy encourages individuals and entities to challenge mainstream behaviors and beliefs that are associated with dominant or mainstream cultures (Kincheloe, 2004). Challenging behaviors that are established by dominant cultures can be a daunting and intimidating task that motivates individuals to seek help when advocating for their needs. When studying critical pedagogy, I find it interesting to assess why dominant cultures exist, who is being oppressed, and how oppression has been created and maintained?

When analyzing a question like, "Why do dominant cultures exist?" I can sum it up in one simple way. That is, dominant cultures exist because of their insatiable desire for power. The insatiable desire for power can be exhibited through their control or how a particular culture delineates resources and knowledge. Examples of how knowledge is delineated are apparent when monitoring the United States education system. Notable resources and networking opportunities are typically associated with institutions that are financially stable via contributions from lionized donors and alumni. Although alumni and other donors are critical components in the financial stability of a university, student fees and tuition are also deemed costly essentials. Such exuberant costs allow certain

information and resources to be more accessible to those who identify with wealthier demographics.

Families with a lower socio-economic status have to overcome financial barriers when seeking to obtain privileged information. Associating costly fees with accessing education is known to be the primary way to oppress and ostracize individuals from certain economic statuses (Ribet, 2010). Many decades ago, individuals who had the mental capacity to obtain, process, and analyze information, were privileged to have access to educational resources (Ribet, 2010). This perspective can be recognized when analyzing CDT while using a CRT lens. Epistemologically, many oppressive behaviors are socially constructed through family and environmental constructivism (Ribet, 2010). Therefore, it is important to create environments with diverse representation and inclusive behaviors that contribute to giving voice to individuals with oppressed identities who are silenced. As a former director and assistant director of Disability Services offices, I often heard students express their concern of academic needs that were being overlooked. Through this qualitative research study, it was my intention to allow the voices and concerns of students with disabilities to emerge.

In addition to the emergence of experiences, concerns, and moments of gratitude, conducting this research study contributes to progressing current disability frameworks. As mentioned in a previous chapter, currently disability frameworks are one dimensional and focus solely on students' disabilities without considering the influence that other social factors may have. Therefore, this research study is primarily designed to contribute toward the development of multi-dimensional disability frameworks that identify silence

and other social factors as factors that play a significant role in a student's disability identity.

When creating the study's research design and interview protocols, I constantly reminisced about the plethora of initial meetings that were facilitated with students who had disabilities and multiple oppressed identities. As a former director and assistant director of Disability Services, many students seemed to simultaneously talk about their disability, its limitations, and additional challenges dealing with finances or family. Constantly hearing similar challenges of students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities served as the foundation of the origins for this research design. When engaging in a reflexive thought process, I thought beyond the experiences of my students and began to ponder about my own academic experiences.

Were there experiences when my oppressed identities influenced my academic performance? Or, how many times did I choose to remain silent when my multiple oppressed identities were competing with one another? In what ways did my parents and colleagues serve as my support system while enrolled in college? Although these questions are not the extent of my reflexive thought process, they allowed me to realize that even as a practitioner, advocate, and doctoral student, I too have experiences that are similar to those shared by participants in this study.

Some researchers asked if it would behoove me to focus only on undergraduates, graduates, or doctoral students, instead of recruiting participants from each classification. As an advocate who has worked with individuals with disabilities for almost a decade, when meeting with students on a daily basis, their experiences are mostly the same no

matter what classification is displayed on their transcript. Therefore, excitement exuded when the study's data confirmed that similar events are sometimes experienced by students with varied classifications and program of study. My presumptive notion concerning the similarity of experiences amongst other students with disabilities who have multiple oppressed identities is a bias that I was mindful of when developing this study's research design. Because of this known bias, participants were allowed to be the experts of their experiences by responding to a lead-off research question that was open-ended within an unstructured interview protocol.

My first research participant was a doctoral student who spoke eloquently about her experiences, challenges, moments of gratitude, and even critical pedagogy. I remember wondering if her interview would be so advanced until her responses would not connect with the responses of subsequent interviewees. Surprisingly, although younger students did not use vernacular created by adept philosophers and researchers, their experiences and narratives were similar, valued, and beneficial to disability research.

Conclusion

This dissertation provides a clear explanation of the term *intersectionality*. As mentioned earlier in chapter two, according to Crenshaw, the incorrect use the term intersectionality results in theoretically erasing the identities of individuals with multiple oppressed identities (Bartlett, 2017). For example, viewing sexism and racism as two isolated identities, in lieu of identities that intersect, can result in erasing the experiences of being an African American woman.

There is a continuous need to engage and represent the experiences of individuals who have multiple oppressed identities. To progress disability's research and profession, I encourage advocates to use disability legislation as the minimum expectation for disability justice and equity. Disability professionals and advocates should continue to challenge and monitor mainstream behaviors and ideals when evaluating their influence on inclusive academic environments. This dissertation is intended to influence institutions and their administration to embrace the spirit of the law by meeting minimum legal standards while also providing additional adequate resources to build inclusive academic environments that intently focus on access and equity.

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Biography

Jeremy L. Rogers is a native of North Carolina and graduated from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and a minor in Criminal Justice. While in graduate school, he received a Master of Science degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. In his professional career he has served as a disability advocate while being employed at postsecondary institutions and federal agencies.