

**Holistic Identity Development in
Undergraduate Students:
A Narrative Inquiry and Self-Study**

by
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Abstract

Holistic approaches to university student development have recently gained traction in higher education research and practice, inciting the need for researchers, policy-makers and educators to understand the processes through which undergraduate students develop their identities within their institutional context. This work analyzed the narratives of upper-year undergraduate students in one postsecondary institution to determine factors that contributed to their holistic identity development. Findings revealed thematic personal and institutional factors, both in classroom environments and the broader university setting, that influenced students' cognitive, social and internal development. Participants' discussions of influential professors elicited opportunities for how educators might work to facilitate holistic identity development within the classroom context specifically. This study signifies the prominent need for higher education institutions to take an integrative approach to undergraduate students' identity development. Further research might determine variances in experiences and factors that contribute to holistic development, across institutional contexts and student demographics.

Keywords: identity; development; undergraduate; university; teaching; narrative

To the students, who will continue to grow and to shape our universities:
May the stories of our development resonate meaningfully in the lives of others.
Together, may we grow as a forest, connected by our roots and branching out
to better serve each other.

“...the images that float around them... surface so vividly and so compellingly that I acknowledge them as my route to a reconstruction of a world, to an exploration of an interior life that was not written and to the revelation of a kind of truth” (Toni Morrison, 1995, p. 95).

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

In recent years, researchers have developed a holistic approach to university student development. Heath (1978) defines holistic identity development as being constituted by cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Kegan (1982; 1994) expands on this definition by focusing on the intersections of these three domains of development, “[integrating] thinking and feeling, cognition and affect, self and other” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 624). In the early stages of our identity development, we construct our identities to align with others’ expectations. As we develop an “internal voice,” or personal authority over our identities and perceptions, our thoughts, feelings, and interactions evolve accordingly (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 624). This model of holistic identity development is the basis for my research on postsecondary students’ holistic identity development (Heath, 1978; Kegan, 1994; Baxter Magolda, 2009).

In this thesis, I analyze the narratives of undergraduate students to determine factors that contribute to their holistic identity development. I use a combined approach of narrative inquiry and personal history self-study to analyze narrative interviews of three upper-year undergraduate students and narratives about my own recent experiences as an undergraduate student. I wondered: Could narrative inquiry and self-study facilitate a greater awareness of how the processes of undergraduate students’ holistic development occur within the context of their institution? How might undergraduate students’ narratives about their development influence the way we practice higher education as researchers, as educators, as policy-makers?

1.2. Rationale

I intend to contribute to the literature base on holistic theories of postsecondary students’ identity development by determining themes that resonate between diverse students’ experiences, while recognizing that each identifiable factor that contributes to students’ development will be enacted and experienced differently by each participant. It is my hope that my research will contribute to enabling researchers and educators to

better understand the processes and experiences through which undergraduate students develop their identities within their university setting.

The overarching questions that shaped my research are as follows:

- How might we better understand holistic identity development in a tertiary context?
- In what ways does the tertiary institutional context facilitate and/or limit students' holistic identity development?
- What aspects of students' development might be neglected or prioritized?
- How might educators enable intersections in differing components of identity development in the classroom?

1.2.1. Why is There a Need for This Research?

I bolt out of bed to my shrill 7:00am alarm. The winter sky is just beginning to dawn. Mist rolls gently over the pavement behind my residence. I grab the stack of papers on my desk – two fifteen-page term papers, and my midterm study guide – and get ready for my day as quickly as I can, so that I have enough time to grab a smoothie in the dining hall on my way to class. I might not have time for lunch.

Walking into my English class, I place my essay on top of the growing stack of papers at the front of the classroom. Sitting down, I shuffle through my notes. I have studied for this midterm as much as possible, but with both papers due on the same day, I don't feel prepared. As my English professor lectures about the 400-page novel I haven't had time to finish reading, I recite the systems of the brain that I have to memorize for my Neurobiology midterm. The midterm and final exam are each worth 50% of my grade, so I focus fervently on studying. Suddenly, the 50-minute class is over. As we scrape back our chairs and file out, our professor calls after us, "remember to come prepared on Friday!"

I speed-walk across campus to my next English class. Pushing my disheveled hair out of my eyes, I hand in my second paper. My professor announces that we have an in-class writing assignment on the most recent five chapters of the novel we are reading. "It shouldn't be a problem for you," he says, "if you have done the readings!" Digging through my backpack for the book, which is thankfully there, I chew my lip,

wishing I didn't have my midterm immediately after class. With my hand cramping and my heart pounding, I scrawl down as much information as I can remember in the 50-minute period, hand in my writing, and rush out of the classroom to my midterm.

I stumble out of my exam in a daze, 50 minutes later. With 30 difficult multiple-choice questions and two page-long written answers, I barely had time to finish. The grade is curved, and so all I can hope is that my classmates' performance was relatively the same. The stress in the lecture hall was palpable, and I had noticed a few students with their heads buried on their desks. With a slight pang of guilt, I interpret this as a promising sign for my own success. I head straight to the library to begin studying for my next midterm, which is 24 hours from now. It takes me 20 minutes to find a free spot; the library is packed with students desperately scrawling notes, rifling through textbooks and scrolling on their laptops. Two hours pass like minutes as I frantically fill notebook pages, occasionally stopping to stretch my hand to relieve the cramps, until I notice my growling stomach. I stop for a coffee and sandwich, answering emails on my phone as I wait in line. I notice that my group wants to meet to rehearse our presentation, which is due at the end of the week. I can study tonight, I suppose.

Our group rehearsal goes by quickly, and I realize I have to leave for my club meeting. I scrawl a few to-do notes on my hand as I dash across campus, noticing that twilight is beginning to darken the sky. I run up the flights of stairs and slide into a seat. For an hour and a half, our team discusses our next major event, two weeks from now, and assigns tasks. I have to leave early to sign in, though: as a residence advisor, we under no circumstances are allowed to be late to our daily check-in. Guiltily, I slip out of the classroom amid the vibrant chatter. On the way to sign-in, I run into one of my residents, who asks me if I have a moment. She tells me that she's been waiting to hear back from counselling services for weeks now about her appointment, and I promise to help her follow up about it tonight. I feel an immense weight on my shoulders thinking about the sensitivity of this student's concerns, and the consequence of her having to wait even longer for the help she needed weeks ago.

I arrive at sign-in with seconds to spare. I am tasked with conducting hourly rounds as a residence advisor tonight, with the last set of rounds at 11:30. Our residence coordinators remind us not to be late, and announce that midterm evaluations are coming up. I check my advisor mailbox before I leave sign-in, finding a dozen posters

that I am required to put up in my halls during rounds. All of the posters are advertisements for various university events that I won't have time to attend. I walk back to my building, talking with my residence coordinator on the way about my interaction with the student. She tells me to file it into the system, and to tell the student that she will follow up with counselling services. I finally unlock the door to my room and let my backpack fall to the ground. Taking a few minutes to organize my things, I notice how physically tired I feel. It's dark outside now, already, but my day is far from done. One of my teammates knocks on my door, and I help him carry tables to set up for an event we are required to host tonight for our residents: "mental health during midterm season". I stay, eating the snacks provided as I realize I've forgotten about dinner. I bring my notes to study during intermissions, though.

Walking around the building for my 10pm rounds, I rehearse definitions for my test tomorrow, frantically trying to remember more terminology that I will likely forget as soon as I have regurgitated it onto paper or filled in the corresponding Scantron bubbles. All around me I see, in the glowing lights of the windows and throughout the long hallways of our home, hundreds of other students doing the same thing. Finally, at 1:00am, when my rounds are finished and my eyes are burning, I close my blinds, put down my notes, and set my alarm for 7:00 the next day.

Thus concludes a day in my life as an upper-year undergraduate student. All of the above experiences – my classes, my club, and my role as a residence advisor – contributed invaluable to my current self-conception. However, throughout the course of my undergraduate degree, I felt disjointed, deeply stressed, anxious, and unfulfilled. None of the skills I developed in each of these extracurricular commitments overlapped with what I learned in my traditional, lecture-style classrooms. I lamented that my courses felt so disconnected from the rest of my life as a student, and wished that I could find some way to integrate my other experiences within the classroom. With this lack of integration, I sacrificed my physical and mental well-being to perform well in my courses, while struggling to fulfill my commitments outside of class.

Many students around me – my friends, my residents, and my coworkers – shared that they felt the same way. In my institution, students referred to themselves as "just a number"; this perceived lack of individual identity on an institutional scale was coupled with the normative self-sacrifice that was definitive of being a student. Discourse

amongst my peers about what it meant to be a student was often negative: if not characterized by apathy, then sarcastic, self-sacrificial, or self-deprecating. I spent long nights taking notes for courses until my hands hurt. I talked to my residents about maintaining good mental health, while fully neglecting my own. I wondered why my fulfillment of my roles as a student required so much self-sacrifice: What I felt was an intense, and tumultuous, lack of balance between all the areas of my life; they were not united under a single purpose, and so my energy and effort was stratified across so many dimensions of my life, without overlap. This caused great dissonance in me, and I struggled to determine what to prioritize.

We were encouraged, on an institutional scale, to do *more* than just study. We were encouraged to become involved, in our residences and clubs and faculties and athletics. I perceived an immense sense of expectation to not only do this, but to do it *well*. To maintain our roles as residence advisors, we needed B averages; as student leaders, we were role models for younger students; in class, we had to strive to perform above the grade curve, to set our sights high for graduate school; in my club, even, our events were held to rigorous standards ... Ironically, it was this institutional push for development of the 'whole' person that led me to feel such pressure. Unable to determine what I could 'stop doing,' I burned out.

In my experience, the issue stemmed from two sources. First, there was the intense pressure to perform well academically in a world-class research institution, but when two term papers, two midterms, an in-class assignment and a group project aligned over the span of two days (as was not uncommon), it was extremely difficult to really learn the material. These stressful weeks indicated a lack of collaboration between faculty members, and made me feel wholly inadequate as a student as I struggled to fulfill requirements in my courses and maintain my extracurricular involvement. Second, on an institutional scale, student development was not approached from a sufficiently integrated perspective. How can we realign our practices of teaching and learning at the university so that students' experiences become holistic opportunities for development, rather than personal development in all these discrepant domains?

Amongst my friends circulated a joke that wasn't really a joke at all. It was a popular image – an internet meme – of a triangle, and on each point were the phrases: "good grades," "enough sleep," "social life." The caption below the image read, "pick

two.” Later, we came across a nonagon that included many other aspects of student life: work; family; class; hobbies; homework; extra-curricular activities; resume builders; volunteering ... I wondered: Which aspects of development are not currently being addressed, and why? How can higher education institutions best support intersections between all these disparate domains of experience, to foster holistic individual development?

1.2.2. A Need in Our Context

Research historically studied compartmentalized aspects of postsecondary students' development: focusing on their academic development, professional development, or social identities, and often generalizing to large populations. Researchers have since taken an intersectional approach to studying holistic identity development, with the purpose of better characterizing various dimensions of participants' identities, such as their ethnic and cultural identities (Torres, 2003; Renn, 2004; King & Baxter Magolda, 2007; Pizzolato et al., 2008), gender identities (Josselson, 1996), or sexual identities (Abes & Jones, 2004). Recently, intersectional, individualized approaches have focused on concurrent influences of students' university experiences upon their identity development.

In my study, I hope to contribute to this literature base by taking a subjective perspective, focusing on narratives of personal experiences within one institutional environment. My study took place in a large public research university in British Columbia, Canada. Participants were three upper-year (fourth- and fifth-year) undergraduate students and myself, all of whom I met during my undergraduate degree and who have lived on campus. There is an inherent limitation to this in that perhaps these students – all of whom I know, who have lived on campus, and who are involved in various initiatives within their university – possess similar expectations of their institution regarding their holistic development. We are privileged to reside in urban British Columbia, in a prosperous democracy; to belong to one of the world's leading research universities; to be a generation that has never experienced a World War. We live in times of abundance, and our higher education system reflects this. In a context of necessity, our system appears to have assumed a relatively industrial model. However, we have shifted from being a nation of people concerned about safety in the form of job security and a home for our families, to a nation that prioritizes personal power. The

industrial model no longer satisfies the student. The development of personal identity has evolved to become an imperative concern in North American postsecondary education.

The problem I present in this thesis is one that emerges from this particular context: a context in which my peers and myself possess high expectations of our institution and ourselves, in a setting characterized by opportunities for individual identity development. In my research I seek to examine how the institution might better address the needs, expectations, and difficulties experienced by these students in this environment. By grounding my research in a single setting, I hope to better characterize students' experiences of development as situated within, and influenced by, their institution itself. In this context, it is pertinent to determine where points of holism and integration might occur in different domains of development, to better serve those students who feel overwhelmed by a lack of integration between different areas of their identity development.

I sought to determine whether there were similarities in diverse students' experiences of the same institutional environment. To focus on themes that resonate between diverse participants' experiences of identity development could enable more tangible suggestions for educational and institutional practice within our postsecondary setting that would be conducive to facilitating students' holistic identity development. Baxter Magolda (2009) speaks to the lack of integration between "learning and student development literatures," and argues that "higher education in general and student affairs ... lack a holistic, theoretical perspective to promote the learning and development of the whole student" (p. 621). Thus, I chose to include an explicit focus on participants' experiences in the classroom, to determine characteristics of educators that contributed to participants' holistic development. I hope to inform theories of identity development from an educational perspective and to determine implications for teaching practice. This could help to determine the sorts of classroom experiences that bridge isolated dimensions of undergraduate students' development.

Individuals' experiences are points of access to understanding the bigger problems of our world, and their resolution: "the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles and to the problems of the individual life" (Mills, 1959, p. 226). By characterizing the subjective experiences of one group of

students, at one point of time, in one context, it is hoped that we can gain a better understanding of undergraduate student development and university education as a whole.

1.3. Methods

I embarked upon this research project by conducting a personal history self-study of key instances in my education and development as an undergraduate student, drawing from journals I kept throughout my undergraduate degree. My intention in choosing the self-study methodology, which derives from the field of educational research, was to focus more explicitly on processes of teaching and learning that contributed to my holistic identity development. Autobiographical and narrative research is conducive to a thorough understanding of the complexities of identity development, as the nuances of experience are best accessed by the person who lived them (Freeman, 2012). Research based in autobiographical accounts of experiences comprises the foundation for first identifying, and then resolving, systemic and societal issues. In an institution that is largely not geared to conceive of the subjective – ironically, considering its emphasis on personal development – narrative is a glimmer of possibility for humanity.

Because I began my Master's degree immediately upon completion of my B.A. degree, my experiences as an undergraduate student remain integral to my self-definition. Drawing primarily from journals that I kept throughout my undergraduate degree, I wrote narratives of key developmental instances in my development, and analyzed them using methods derived from narrative inquiry and literary analysis. Derived from the study of literature, literary analysis entails interpreting themes, patterns, and symbols through close scrutiny and analysis of the events, setting, perspectives, language, and social and political contexts described in a narrative. These methodological traditions centralize the voice of the individual, enabling me to contribute to the qualitative research base while determining context-specific findings and implications, specifically within the field of educational research.

In analyzing my personal history, however, I still felt as though something was missing: I wondered whether the nature of my experiences would resonate with others. I felt uncomfortable about the prevailing sense of monologism in my work, when my intent

is to contribute to a research base that is impactful to so many. Both narrative inquiry and self-study methodologies privilege the notion that the validity of research is based in dialogue with others. Thus, I chose to interview three upper-year undergraduate students to determine the factors that contributed to their identity development within the same setting.

1.4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I built upon a theoretical model of holistic identity development (Heath, 1978; Kegan, 1994; Baxter Magolda, 2009). By analyzing the subjective experiences of three upper-year undergraduate students as told through narrative interviews, in combination with my self-study of key developmental instances I experienced as an undergraduate student, I determined factors that contribute to holistic identity development within a North American postsecondary institution.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I review research on university students' identity development. Only in recent years have theorists established integrative and holistic approaches to theorizing identity development. The relative deficit of holistic approaches in the literature, the problematic attempts at generalizability that result from large-scale, cross-institutional studies, and the lack of focus on undergraduate students' holistic development from an educational research lens signify the need for research that determines factors that contribute to students' holistic identity development as situated in their specific university context.

2.2. Defining Identity

Erikson (1963) defines identity as “the ability to experience one’s self as something that has continuity and sameness, and to act accordingly” (p. 42). Identity “links the past, the present and the social world into a narrative that makes sense” (Josselson, 1996, p. 29). Identity is intuitively known as something that “stays constant,” and yet is difficult to articulate as it also “continually evolves” (p. 29).

Identity development theories initially focused on internal, unconscious processes, but have evolved to emphasize the role of one’s immediate and distal social contexts. Although current theories vary greatly, both temporally and across disciplines, they share commonalities between their “characteristics and assumptions about the nature of development, the social construction of identity, and the importance of considering environmental influences” (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p. 582). Below I discuss how philosophical, psychological and sociological researchers have described processes of identity development.

2.2.1. Foundational Theories of Identity

Hall’s (1992) organizational framework for the evolution of identity theories presents three historical “conceptualizations” of identity: “the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject” (Torres et al., 2009, p. 585-586). Each

of these “foundational” theories have made “enduring contributions” to the field and have informed models of holistic identity development (Abes, 2011, p. 131).

Psychosocial theories, referring to Hall’s enlightenment subject, position identity as an internal construct. Identity formation from a psychosocial perspective is “a process of personal exploration leading to the formulation of a coherent set of attitudes, values, and beliefs” (Boyd, Hunt, Kandell, & Lucas, 2003, p. 155), resulting in “perceived unity and purposefulness of the self” (Bell, Wieling, & Watson, 2005, p. 54). This relates to having “a firm sense of who one is, a purpose in life, a clear set of personal values”, and future goals (Lounsbury, Huffstetler, Leong, & Gibson, 2005, p. 502). Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial identity theory considered how cognitive development is situated within one’s environment. However, psychosocial theories still focused primarily on epistemological development rather than identity development through social interaction. In their emphasis of the internal, unconscious processes that formulate a coherent sense of self, these theories have been criticized for not adequately addressing the influences of social context as well as “social identities such as race, class, and gender” (Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012, p. 699).

Sociological identity theories acknowledge the influence of immediate and distal social contexts upon identity formation. Josselson (1996) expanded upon psychosocial theories by suggesting that identity is socially constructed: shaped by external forces, or interdependent with others (Jones et al., 2012, p. 700; see also Josselson, 1996). The sociological perspective posits that our understandings of ourselves are “constructed through interactions with other people” (Jackson, 2003, p. 332-333) and are influenced by both immediate and distal social and cultural contexts (Torres et al., 2009, p. 577). Our identities are thus “relative with respect to the environment and circumstances of our actions and behaviour” (Weigand, 2015, p. 9).

Postmodern approaches to identity posit that identity “is socially constructed and naturalized in temporal and cultural contexts” (Torres et al., 2009, p. 581). Postmodern identity theories extend sociological theories by focusing on the deeply connected, inter-influential nature of distinguishable aspects of identity, and how those identities shift and manifest differently in individual, social, and structural domains of experience. Postmodern identity theory will be treated in further detail later in this chapter, as it is pertinent to intersectional and holistic theories of identity development.

Psychosocial and sociological theories became the basis for a holistic model of identity development, first articulated by Heath (1978), who “explicitly identified the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of development” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 623). Kegan (1994) offers support for bridging the aforementioned theories of identity formation in theorizing that “growth of the mind” is based in the “integration of cognitive with intrapersonal and interpersonal development” (p. 625; see also Kegan, 1994). Kegan’s (1994) framework integrates psychosocial and sociological perspectives by addressing intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological influences upon identity formation.

2.3. University Student Identity Development

2.3.1. Foundational Theories’ Contribution to University Student Development Research

In the 1970s, the student affairs profession “embraced student development theory as its guiding philosophy”, and the development of students’ identity beyond content knowledge acquisition became a goal of the academy (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 621). University students undergo significant transitions that signify “a shift from one state of understanding, development and maturity to another”, and are “the vital events in education” (Hussey & Smith, 2010, p. 156). Erikson believed identity formation to be “the primary and universal developmental task of the adolescent period” (Bell et al., 2005, p. 54), making it a “major [challenge] confronting traditional-aged college students” (Boyd et al., 2003, p 155).

Foundational psychosocial and sociological theories contributed to current theories of university students’ identity development. According to Knefelkamp, Widick, and Parker (1978), the student development literature emerged in five clusters: psychosocial theories, cognitive developmental theories, maturity models, typology models, and person-environment interaction models (see also Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 621). Because these clusters remained separate in the research, Baxter Magolda (2009) argues that the academy “[lacks] a holistic, theoretical perspective to promote the learning and development of the whole student” (p. 621). Below I discuss how this lack of holism is apparent in contemporary university student development literature, which is characterized by an emphatic focus on students’ cognitive development.

2.3.2. Unidimensional Constructs in Student Development Literature

Although a plethora of transitions occur, from students' social integration to self-concept, traditional models of university education prioritize transitions in "knowledge, understanding and skills" above all others (Hussey & Smith, 2010, p. 157). Hussey and Smith (2010) argue that the most "obvious and important transition" in university is that from "a relative novice into a knowledgeable, skilled participant of a discipline" (p. 157). Consequently, university student development literature focuses primarily on cognitive development, and research rarely addresses the integration of academic development with other components of identity (Jackson, 2003, p. 331; see also Boyd, 2003).

There is a significant base of quantitative literature pertaining to university students' cognitive identity development. The contextual shift into university, especially, disrupts "existing social networks and learner identities" (Scanlon, Rowling, & Weber, 2007, p. 224). Because of this, the majority of postsecondary student development research focuses on first- and second-year students: specifically, on adjustments in learning style and identity that occur upon students' arrival at university. Jackson (2003) determines that "shifts in external frames of reference can have deleterious consequences" for new female undergraduate students' sense of academic competence (p. 342). Boyd, Hunt, Kandell, and Lucas (2003) determine a relationship between 2818 incoming first-year students' "identity processing styles" and their "self-perceived academic efficacy and academic performance" (p. 155). Lounsbury, Huffstetler, Leong, and Gibson (2005) find that "in a sample of 434 university freshmen, Sense of Identity [is] ... positively related to GPA" (p. 501). Scanlon, Rowling, and Weber (2007) employ a quantitative survey to 602 first-year students, then conduct follow-up interviews with 27 of these students to examine "their experiences of transition to university, specifically in terms of the learning context and themselves as learners" (p. 229). They find that the change in learning context experienced by first-year students may "necessitate the crafting of a new situated identity" (p. 228). This research confirms the significant influence of the transition into the postsecondary context upon students' cognitive development and overall sense of identity. However, this research does not explicitly examine how cognitive development co-occurs or intersects with interpersonal or intrapersonal development. Furthermore, in these immense sample sizes, the voices of individual students and the nuances of their particular context are lost.

Other veins of postsecondary student development research have focused on interpersonal and intrapersonal identity development. Bell, Wieling, and Watson (2005) explore processes and patterns of identity development by conducting longitudinal interviews with students during their first two years of university (p. 53). They conclude that “the posing of contradictory meanings about the self”, generated through social engagement and relationships, is “significant” to identity development: The resulting internal conflict regarding one’s self-perception is “a necessary precondition for developmental change” (p. 56). Christiaens (2015) examines “how a student’s identity development in college is informed by the social and cultural location of their upbringing”, finding complex, shifting relationships between “upbringing, a core sense of self, and social identities” (p. 41). This research demonstrates the significant influence of social context upon identity development.

Holton (2015) determines a relationship between undergraduate students’ sense of place attachment within their campus and their interpersonal and intrapersonal development. He finds that “the relationships first year undergraduates begin to establish with” and within the physical setting of their university “are often experienced intensely” (p. 21). As these relationships with and within the campus setting change, they “shape and challenge students’ identities” (p. 21). A sense of groundedness, “rootedness” and belonging arises from “[p]lace attachment or a ‘sense of place’... whereby close, long-term relationships become reliant on intimate and emotional connections with place” (p. 22). This indicates reciprocity between interpersonal and intrapersonal identity development and place attachment. Also related to one’s context is the impact of extracurricular involvement upon students’ identity development. Kilgo, Mollett, and Pascarella (2016) discern the relationships between measures of student involvement and well-being, concluding that “being an RA ... participating in intramural sports”, and membership in “student organizations” are “significant, positive predictors for psychological wellbeing at the end of the students’ fourth year” (p. 1046). Barber, King, and Baxter Magolda (2013), similarly, determine that opportunities to “[engage] in meaningful roles and experiences that demanded an internal voice” (p. 878), “including undergraduate research internships, relationships, and leadership or work roles”, were conducive to students’ development (p. 886). These findings suggest that various forms of engagement with one’s campus promote interpersonal development (social interaction and relationships with other people and organizations on campus) and intrapersonal

development (a sense of place attachment, belonging, and well-being). These findings signify the importance of explicitly situating student development research within a particular context.

2.3.3. The Need for a Holistic Approach to University Student Development

My examination of the research on student development demonstrated that aspects of development – especially cognitive – are often studied in isolation. However, in recent years, theorists began to advocate for a holistic approach: one which “incorporates social context and epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal developmental dimensions” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 633). Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) speak to “the importance of creating theories, based on diverse samples, that integrate the domains of epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development”: Rather than isolating components of identity development, focusing on their “complex and fluid intersections” in a given context (p. 17).

Baxter Magolda (2009) argues that “when learning is defined as participation in meaningful social practices, all three” developmental dimensions are key components of learning (p. 625). Thus, a holistic approach to studying university student development provides insight into how meaning-making occurs in the context of one’s social environment (p. 626). Holistic theories of student development enable the integration of separate focal points in research, to better understand the processes of students’ learning and development and to inform the practices of various administrative stakeholders, student affairs practitioners and faculty members.

2.3.4. Holistic Identity Development: An Intersectional Approach to Identity

Historically, sociological identity theories “were typically investigated and presented as independent, one-dimensional, and discrete dimensions of identity” (Jones et al., 2012, p. 700). Theorists later suggested that dimensions of identity, such as one’s race or sexuality, “cannot be separated from structures of inequality and social locations” (p. 700). Postmodern approaches to identity extended sociological theories by acknowledging the complex relations between differing components of identity.

Researchers of holistic university student development, in attempting to understand the intersections between cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development, have drawn upon the theoretical framework of intersectionality.

An intersectional approach to identity, constituting Hall's (1992) postmodern subject, focuses on the shifting, fluid relations between differing components of, and influences upon, identity. Jones (2009) posits that "the complexities of identity development in a postmodern world are not fully captured without attention to multiple and intersecting identities and the sociocultural contexts in which identities are constructed and negotiated" (p. 287). Intersectional theory acknowledges "the presumed reality of multiple identities; that is, individuals inhabit multiple social locations that are lived and experienced simultaneously... [these] are constructed as integrally connected and carry meaning individually and in relation to one another (Shields, 2008)" (Jones et al., 2012, p. 698). An intersectional framework links "individual, interpersonal, and social structural domains of experience" and therefore "more completely and accurately captures the complexities of everyday life and identity" (p. 702). Components of identity cannot be adequately examined in isolation due to the "complex interplay between contextual influences, meaning making, and social identities" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 626).

An intersectional framework is important when considering the relevance of merging differing aspects of identity development within the university context. An intersectional lens "seeks to view the whole student with complex and intersecting identities (social and personal) rather than segmented by race, gender, or sexual orientation" (Baxton, 2009, p. 573). An intersectional framework calls attention to the influence of contextually-enacted privilege and power upon identity formation, with attentiveness to "marginalized populations ... as well as the societal structures and dynamics that produce and perpetuate marginalization and oppression" (Torres et al., 2009, p. 583). Due to its focus on "intersections rather than separate constructs", an intersectional perspective is conducive to a holistic examination of identity development (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 621).

2.3.5. Holistic Identity Development in the Research

Intersectional research has sought to develop models for identity development that integrate epistemological, interpersonal and intrapersonal domains. Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2000; 2004; 2007) establish their Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity using an intersectional framework. In this model, identity is encapsulated by “intersecting rings around a core”, demonstrating “the dynamic construction of identity and the influence of changing contexts on the relative salience of multiple identity dimensions” (Abes et al., 2007, p. 3). Their model highlights “the complex interplay between contextual influences, meaning making, and social identities” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 626), providing a detailed examination of intersections between aspects of identity.

Baxter Magolda’s (2001) notion of self-authorship contributes to a holistic understanding of identity development. Self-authorship is defined by Baxter Magolda (2008) as “one’s internal capacities to define one’s beliefs and values, identity, and relations with others through reflective judgments” (p. 271). Self-authorship theory depicts individuals’ progression from “simple and external constructions of self to more complex and internal ones in the domains of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive development” (Jones, 2009, p. 288). Rather than the experiences themselves, individuals’ interpretation of their experiences influences self-authorship (King, 2009). Individuals rely primarily on different dimensions when working through developmental problems: in “[tracing] multiple relationships of the three dimensions in her participants’ lives”, Baxter Magolda (2009) describes that participants “who were naturally self-reflective often began with their intrapersonal dimension” (p. 634). Each individual constructs understandings of their life with different dimensions of their identity in the foreground.

2.4. Characterizing the Institutional Context

... we cannot assume what ‘self’ is without examining the ways in which self is defined by the social environment within which the individual is embedded (Zaytoun, 2003, p. 79).

2.4.1. The Institutional Context and Identity Development

It is important to consider how immediate and distal social contexts within postsecondary educational settings influence students' intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive identity development. Renn (2004) articulates a relationship between social context and personal development, drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's ecology model to argue that "the environment and the individual shape – and are shaped by – one another" (2004, p. 29). By exploring mixed-race students' identity development using this model, she situates "the complexity of individual development in the context of student culture and institutional milieu" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 626).

Identity construction is "closely associated" with "institutional practices" (Lacasa, del Castillo, & Garcia-Varela, 2005, p. 288). Institutions play a key role in generating identity as they are sites that encompass "person, culture and practice" (p. 289). Furthermore, institutions convey "canonical ways of thinking, feeling, acting and affiliating with others", leading individuals to possess contextual "obligations" that influence their identity formation (p. 289). This warrants an examination of the institutional context in which university students' identity formation occurs. The university context encompasses the canon of the institution itself; one's recreational involvement with teams or clubs; one's area of residence; one's faculty of study; one's classes; one's jobs or internships; the relationships one develops with peers, classmates, roommates, and instructors; opportunities elicited for spiritual exploration or religious affiliation; and participation in cultural events.

Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus (2004) "defines learning as a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each other" (p. 2). The disparity between student development and learning theories has implications for students' development. Conceptualizing student learning and development as synonymous enables the consideration of avenues for holistic student development which do not separately categorize experiences inside and outside the classroom, and call attentiveness to the intersections between experiences that inform students' development. To do so also better enables consideration of the classroom as a site for holistic student development.

2.4.2. Identity Development in the Classroom

University classrooms constitute institutional microcosms, as it is within the classroom that individuals come to embody certain roles and values that enable the fulfillment of institutional imperatives. Classroom structures typically promote “the symbol of the instructor – the body at the ‘front of the room’ with power, influence, and knowledge” (Kannen, 2012, p. 642). These spaces’ “fixed or cumbersome furnishings, arranged in tightly packed rows ... tell learners that they are passive recipients of knowledge” and thus “reify power dynamics ... hinder[ing] physical interaction with the environment and fellow learners” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 338). Lecturers impart information upon dozens or hundreds of students simultaneously, and students are expected simply to listen and take notes; this inhibits interpersonal and intrapersonal development. On an institutional scale, academic performance is correlated with students’ ability to memorize information and to adhere to rubrics and guidelines. This top-down, non-interactive mode of education has harmful implications, propagating accordance to institutional values rather than instigating true learning and individual development. Paulo Freire (1970/2005) refers to this type of education as “prescription”, stating that it “represents the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness” (p. 46-47). Traditional classroom dynamics are not conducive to holistic development. Without opportunities to interact with others and to truly engage with knowledge on a personal level, identity development stagnates.

The conditions of apathy in traditional classrooms indicate that essential components of student development are not being adequately addressed. Freire (1970/2005) writes that “the more students work at storing the deposits” of information “entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (p. 73). Students are not granted opportunities for transformative personal development, as “the more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is” (p. 73). This form of education imposes a single viewpoint that disseminates a predetermined set of content information. This is inadequate for fostering holistic development, as it fails to elicit true engagement with knowledge, nor does it facilitate internal and social factors of development such as dialogue, embodied knowledge, and perceived efficacy in enacting influence in one’s world.

Perhaps this explains

... the alienation and cynical frustration of North American college students who no longer care about education or their place in its perceived system. Sitting silently and helplessly in our classrooms, such students consider university credit as conferred by their right or by instructor fiat ... disengaged and apathetic – they lack the ability or the will to enter fully into dialogue and take responsibility for their own learning (Bowers, 2005, p. 374).

An isolated emphasis on academic achievement, as it is defined by the institution, is not conducive to holistic student development. Learning “is about more than developing a set of cognitive skills that can simply be transferred”; it is “social, context specific, patterned by power relations, historically situated and ... dynamic” (Christie, Tett, Cree, & McCune, 2016, p. 480). It is a participatory “social and relational process” that influences identity development (p. 486). Although “engaging across difference and social identities” plays a “key role ... in the lives of students, faculty, staff, the institution, and ultimately, society ... institutions are falling short in reaching this goal” (Jones et al., 2012, p. 699). By focusing on instances of holistic identity development in the educational context, I hope to identify how institutional stakeholders might work to address these deficits.

2.5. Conclusion and My Contribution

2.5.1. Students’ Demographics

Many quantitative studies have centered around characterizing the development of first-year students from various institutions. Intersectional studies have sought to further our understanding of how social, sexual, and ethnic identities influence holistic development; for example, examining the experiences of lesbian students (Abes et al., 2007); Latino/Latina students (Torres & Hernandez, 2007); and high-risk college students (Pizzolato, 2003). In my study, I intend to determine factors that contribute to diverse upper-year undergraduate students’ holistic identity development within a single institutional setting.

2.5.2. Context-Specific Implications

Many studies attempt to make generalizable conclusions. McInnis (2001), in a review of university student development literature, argues that the research appears to create a “cumulative picture of what is happening in the first year experience, but in reality adds fragments of research shaped by the idiosyncrasies of the local researchers, their local conditions and the constraints of their institutional stakeholders” (p. 112). His claims indicate that student development literature is not actually generalizable to the extent to which it implies to be. All instances of research are situated within a particular educational and cultural milieu and therefore are not necessarily generalizable to a broad population. Though McInnis (2001) believes that this lack of generalizability in the university student development literature risks “creating a ‘massive but trivial’ literature”, I argue that non-generalizable research is not “trivial” given that researchers remain better aware of its context-specificity (p. 112). Researchers would be wise to focus on the tangible, institution-specific implications of research findings within their respective settings, and take action accordingly. What could we, as researchers, educators, and students, do to facilitate students’ identity development in light of what we know? As our institutions and students differ, this becomes a context-specific question.

Generalizable research is certainly crucial to establishing a core basis of disciplinary knowledge. The constructs, concepts, and categories established through generalizable research provide us with the opportunity to understand how we, as humans, are similar. These foundational categories, in turn, enable us to take one step further in our work: to focus on the particular; on our individuality. It seems to me that it is impossible to fully generalize processes of identity development. For these reasons, I choose to move away from quantitative research and even from qualitative research that attempts to draw broad conclusions. Instead, I turn to narrative inquiry and personal history self-study, due to the hybrid methodologies’ privileging of the individual, and emphasis on contextual action and trustworthiness.

Recognizing the lack of generalizability between contexts and participants, even as we work to construct and broaden our models of holistic development, is critical to intersectional and postmodern studies of identity development. Abes et al. (2007) state that, in studying identity development, “an unintended presumption of unity arises within the categories introduced to demonstrate differences (McCann & Kim, 2002)” (p. 2). They preface their research with the clarification that “there is not a singular meaning associated with the experiences” of participants “by nature of the socially constructed

categories” of various aspects of identity (p. 2). The “failure to study identity as difference implies a unity in identity that overlooks variations within identity” (p. 2). They argue that “[c]ategories are insufficient because differences within those categories cause them to have ‘multiple and contradictory meanings’ (Fuss, p. 98)” (p. 2). I preface my work with the recognition that, in order to honor the individuality of experiences, “it is necessary to explore differences within each aspect of identity as each is influenced by the simultaneous experience of the other dimensions (McCann & Kim)” (p. 2). Ultimately, even as we seek to determine thematic factors that contribute to students’ holistic identity development, it is important to recognize that each student experiences these themes differently.

Chapter 3. Methodology

To know the past is to know oneself as an individual and as a representative of a socio-historical moment in time ... each person is a victim, vehicle, and ultimately a resolution of a culture's dilemmas (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, p. 25).

3.1. Introduction

My research is based in the methodologies of narrative inquiry and personal history self-study. These traditions centralize the voice of the individual, enabling me to contribute to the qualitative research base while shifting away from generalizability and toward context-specific implications. In this chapter, I discuss these research traditions with the aim of providing insight into their potential to inform research in identity development in higher education.

3.2. Self-Study and Narrative Inquiry: A Hybrid Methodology

The “intersection of narrative methods, those most connected to literature... seem to hold particular promise for richly representing the self” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 16). Freeman (2012) argues that “narratives often seem able to give us understandings of people in a way that more ‘objective’ methodologies cannot”, as they “[practice] fidelity not to that which can be objectified and measured but to the whole person... in all of its ambiguous, messy, beautiful detail (Freeman, 1997, 2005)” (p. 17). Similarly, the “diverse methodological, subjective, and practical nature” of self-study research “is antithetical to scientifically based research and doctrines of positivism, measurement, quantification, and predictability” (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004, p. 913; see also Cole & Knowles, 1998, p. 47). Weintraub (1975) writes that “[t]he essential subject matter of all autobiographic writing is concretely *experienced* reality and not the realm of brute external fact. External reality is embedded in experience, but it is viewed from within the modification of inward life forming our experience; external fact attains a degree of symptomatic value derived from inward absorption and reflection” (p. 822-823). Narrative inquiry and personal history self-study reject generalizability in favour of

cultivating a holistic, experientially-based – yet, paradoxically, always unfinished – picture of the complexities of human life.

These methodologies, in their departure from empirical determinism and generalizability, embody the sentiments of a postmodern research climate. “The core of postmodernism,” writes Richardson (1998), “is the doubt that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the ‘right’ or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (p. 348). She argues that “homogenization occurs through the suppression of individual voices” through “the omniscient voice of science” (p. 347). To conduct research that holds space for individuals’ unique identities, we must depart from a modernist search for singular truths and instead embrace disunity, the specificity of each iteration of identity as it is grounded in a particular time and place. Human experience is “open to contradictory interpretations governed by social interests rather than objective truth” (p. 349). Influenced by “multiple and competing discourses ... one’s subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid” (p. 349). The researcher, in exploring this changing subjectivity, may elucidate the contextual processes which influence the construction and expression of differing components of identity.

A postmodern perspective “directs” qualitative writers “to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times; and ... frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone” (Richardson, 1998, p. 349). Here, writing is not a vehicle for the portrayal of findings, but a fundamental source of knowledge, with which the researcher’s voice is inextricably intertwined. The act of writing “is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self”, and therefore can be understood to be integral to identity formation (p. 349). Language and narrative “[construct] the individual’s subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific” (p. 349). One’s sense of self is transformed through the act of engaging in autobiographical narrative (Freeman, 2012, p. 13). “Nurturing our own voices” thereby “releases the censorious hold of ‘science writing’ on our consciousness”, validating the narrative process “as a method of knowing” (Richardson, 1998, p. 349).

To privilege subjectivity in postsecondary student development research is, I believe, a necessary shift: Freire (1970/2005) argues that “to deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It

is to admit the impossible: a world without people” (p. 50). Despite the researcher’s aspiration to achieve objectivity, “there nevertheless remains the stubborn fact that these same data will be shot through with subjectivity, interpretation, and imagination ... in autobiographical understanding there is no object, no ‘text,’ outside the self” (Freeman, 2012, p. 11).

It is crucial that the researcher not only remain conscious of this, but that she privileges it as a necessary attribute of knowledge. Polanyi (1958/1962) argues that “into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known ... this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge” (p. v). One must turn inward, especially in seeking knowledge about identity development; “such is the personal *participation* of the knower in all acts of understanding” (p. iv). Keeping this uppermost in my thinking, I have chosen to combine narrative inquiry with personal history self-study.

3.3. Research Context

3.3.1. Self-Study in North American Higher Education

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) articulate a relationship between self-study practices, identity formation and the university context, writing that “self-study’s appeal is grounded in the postmodern university’s preoccupation with identity formation and a Foucault-inspired (see Colin, 1977) recognition of the linkage of person and the play of power in self formation” (p. 14). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) quote Foucault, who “offers a rationale for self-study work: ‘if one is interested in doing historical work that has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question’ (p. 64)” (p. 14). These authors posit that transformative change in teaching and learning can only occur when the researcher is situated within the relevant context.

Identity construction is tied with “institutional practices”, as institutions encompass “person, culture and practice” (Lacasa, del Castillo, & Garcia-Varela, 2005, p. 288). Institutions convey contextual norms, or “obligations” in the form of “canonical ways of thinking, feeling, acting and affiliating with others” (p. 289). These “rules or norms ... constrain [individuals’] actions”, influencing individuals’ identity formation,

enactment, and relationships with others (p. 289; see also Creed & Scully, 2000). Classrooms, too, are relevant sites to consider, as they constitute institutional microcosms: It is within the classroom environment that individuals come to embody certain roles and values, fulfilling institutional imperatives. Because identity is inseparable from context, it is important to determine the influence of the classroom and of the broader university setting upon identity development.

Bullock (2009) argues that self-study “provides a *basis-for-knowing* rather than a knowledge base” (p. 280). In differentiating between “propositional”, or research-based, and “professional”, action-based knowledge, Bullock (2009) questions the applicability of a unitary, generalized core knowledge base across educational contexts (p. 278). Self-study is a tool for elucidating professional knowledge, prioritizing the role of experiential knowledge in articulating and “creat[ing] flexible principles of practice” that are relevant for students and educators in their respective settings (p. 275).

3.3.2. The Importance of Stories

Stories are integral to the realization of experiential knowledge: “by writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it” (Richardson, 1998, p. 345). Recognition of the ways in which our university contexts affect us can be achieved in large part through careful attentiveness to the routines that constitute our lives. Zajonc (2006) writes that “The ‘ladder of love’”, which ultimately leads us to “embody our highest ideals ... not only leads up to the realm of pure forms, but it also descends to the mundane” (p. 1755). The importance of examining the mundane is exacerbated by Connelly and Clandinin (1994), who argue that “ordinary” stories are “rather, the reverse” (p. 153). The day-to-day instances and routines that constitute our learning and teaching are in fact “profound”, as studying them reveals “the cultivations... and the prisons they create in how we live our everyday life”, (p. 153), enabling us to transform through “living out these new ways of seeing in our stories” (p. 154-155). The importance of stories extends beyond the personal. Kearney (2004) argues that stories “are what make us human and allows us to create a ‘shareable world’” (p. 276). “The result of self-study”, derived from narrative, “is knowledge-in-action constructed through reflection-in-action” (p. 279). Storytelling is a powerful means by which one can (re)constitute oneself in relation to one’s context, while contributing to the professional knowledge base in higher education.

3.3.3. Myself in the Research Context

Dunlop (2002) writes that in the “tradition of women-centered narratives ... the act of writing is intimately related to living and being in the world; the flow of language becomes an act of life” (p. 3). With this in mind, I foreground my work by discussing how I, as a writer, student, educator, and woman, have developed through university.

Somewhere in my parents’ garage, there is a Tupperware box with a binder containing a number of small leaflets. These are my first pieces of creative writing. My mother would cut pieces of coloured construction paper then staple them together to create little storybooks. At the age of five or six, I would spend hours busily filling them in, drawing pictures to accompany my shaky, large letters. As I grew older, I transitioned into writing within the faint blue parameters of lined exercise books – repeating the same letters over and over in my classroom, my hands committing the shapes to muscle memory. My collection of diaries began to grow around the age of seven or eight. As the years passed, journal after filled journal was accompanied by typed stories on my secondhand iMac computer, and eventually on the clamshell laptop that my father gifted me. My stories grew more elaborate, and my journalistic reflections more deeply personal. I was placed in an accelerated creative writing program at the age of nine, and continued in the program well into my teens. In adolescence, my journals and fictional stories blurred as I developed a style of descriptive prose that was free-flowing, poetic and imaginative. I would spend hours writing daily after school, even crafting a full-length novel over the course of a year. In late adolescence, I took inspiration from beatnik authors: their striving to grasp the ever-fleeting, ever-magnifying, hopelessly sweet complexity of life captivated me obsessively.

When I began university, my efforts were redirected into writing academic papers. I received a C- on my first university English essay, which prompted me to shift abruptly into learning how to write a highly structured academic essay. I have forever felt a discrepancy between the act of filling in a predetermined outline to write an academic essay, and the boundlessness of writing as I had known it. As the years passed and the C- turned into B’s, then A’s, I wrote creatively less and less, until my only engagement with fiction was restricted to the creative writing courses that I took when my elective requirements permitted it. I was still inspired, but struggled to prioritize my creative writing over course demands. Writing for pleasure was restricted to my journal, a habit

that I still clung to stubbornly, despite my entries shortening. I have fought – really fought at times – to maintain that identity as a writer, as it has been an integral component of my self-definition for as long as I can remember. I still often feel as though I have lost that imaginative capacity that used to flow so freely. Institutional demands throughout my undergraduate degree stifled my nurturing of that creativity. Like Richardson (1998), I “write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn’t know before I wrote it. I was taught, however ... not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, until my points were organized and outlined” (p. 347). I was positively reinforced for adhering to rigid structures and outlines expected in an academic essay; a “static writing model” that “coheres with mechanistic scientism and quantitative research” (p. 347). I practiced crafting logical arguments, rather than viewing writing as an infinite expanse of potential to seek to find something essential about myself and my world.

With my own students, too, I have struggled. Working as a graduate teaching assistant in language arts-based courses, I have constrained my students as I have been constrained, by predetermined rubrics that depict which ideas should be fostered and rewarded. The idealized prosaic form and content is based in the rational ideals of hegemonic European norms, and does not privilege multiple ways of knowing, communicating, or being. As a woman and aspiring critical educator, I have found that the standardized format of academic writing does not “emphasize historical, holistic, and collective orientations to experience” nor does it “value considered experience as knowledge” (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2012, p. 5). As a teaching assistant, I do not have the authority to rewrite the rubrics in a way that privileges my students’ unique forms of knowledge and communication. This troubles me deeply.

When, in my second semester of graduate school, one of my professors suggested I preface an essay with a narrative introduction, I was taken aback. I actually asked him how using narrative could relate at all to my argument. It was in that moment that I realized the extent to which four years of rigorous undergraduate study had affected my perception of what it meant to be a writer. Now, as I redefine myself as a graduate student and as an educator, I keep this at the forefront of my mind. I can nurture my identity as a writer, while also pursuing success within an institutional context. My graduate supervisor affirmed this to me by encouraging me to select a research methodology that “privileged [my] author voice”. I came to (re)realize the importance of narrative in authentic inquiry and discovery; the importance of stories in

seeking to articulate our indeterminate selves. This is relevant as I try to affect meaningful change in the context in which I work.

Richardson (1998) argues that the traditional model of empirical writing is a “sociohistorical invention that reifies the static social world imagined by our nineteenth-century foreparents” (p. 347). This model of writing “has serious problems: It ignores the role of writing as a dynamic, creative process; it undermines the confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research is inconsistent with the writing model; and it contributes to the flotilla of qualitative writing that is simply not interesting to read because adherence to the model requires writers to silence their own voices and to view themselves as contaminants” (p. 347). Schnee (2009) describes that “writing the personal [is] one way for adult students to begin to locate and critically interrogate their educational experiences and begin to revise their understandings of their educational journeys” (p. 36). In exploring my shifting self-conception throughout my life as a writer, student, educator, and woman, I further my understandings of the ways in which my schooling contexts have influenced my development in each of these domains. Doing so, in turn, enables me to learn how I, as an educator, might provide opportunities for my students to develop likewise. To break away from traditionally-held standards and structures of academic writing is to contribute to a liberatory shift in our educational paradigm. My choice of methodologies that depart from traditional notions of academic research and writing makes this thesis an act of reclamation.

3.4. Narrative Inquiry Methodology

3.4.1. Narrative Inquiry: Writing as a Method of Discovery

Narrative inquiry is defined by Connelly and Clandinin (1988) as “the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future” (p. 21). Freeman (2012) writes that “the interpretation and writing of the personal past, far from being a dispassionate process of reproducing what was, is instead a product of the present and the interests, needs, and wishes that attend it” (p. 21). This “multi-dimensional exploration of experience” involves “temporality (past, present and future) ... interaction (personal and social), and location (place)”, and is thus conducive to a dynamic study of identity development within a specific milieu (Connelly & Clandinin, 2004, p. 576).

From a postmodern perspective, narrative inquiry works to elucidate the many intersecting influences that comprise an individual. Leggo (2012) writes:

Life is abundant, and narrative inquiry is a way of focusing on some particulars of that abundance in order to recognize some of the possibilities of meaning that lie always in the seemingly tangled messiness of lived experiences (p. xiii).

We may come to a more holistic understanding of identity development by parsing out differing components of, and influences upon, one's personal growth through narrative inquiry. Reflection is a key constituent of narrative practices. Freeman (2012) writes that "the truest rendition of experience comes not from the immediate reality of the moment, flesh-and-bone solid though it may be, but from reflection, memory, narrative ... human existence may be characterized as involving a delay, or 'postponement,' of insight into its affairs" (p. 14). Because narrative inquiry is based in reflective practice, I am able to retrospectively examine the many intersecting influences of my educational experiences upon mine and my participants' personal development. Leggo (2012) urges that "We need to compose and tell our stories as creative ways of growing in humanness. We need to question our understanding of who we are in the world. We need opportunities to consider other versions of identity" (p. xx). Narrative inquiry is such a method of discovery. It is a generative tool for self-realization in relation with one's context.

Narrative practices themselves are influential upon identity development. I carry this notion into my work, as one who experiences my world largely through a textual basis. Narrative practices are conducive to self-authorship: Engaging in narrative enables one to "refine their personal, internal authority in determining their beliefs, identity and relationships", facilitating their establishment of "an internal foundation" for self-knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 280). The self is "transformed" by engaging in narrative: "dimensions of being are disclosed that literally would not have existed, would not have reached articulated form, had the autobiographical process not taken place (Bruner, 1992; Freeman, 1993)" (Freeman, 2012, p. 21). This echoes Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) notion that "there exists a dialectical relationship not only between past and present but between past, present, and future" (p. 21). Hence the transformative opportunities of narrative inquiry: "in a distinct sense, a new self is fashioned" through the process (p. 21).

Narrative not only enables internal personal development, but also influences one's relations with others and understanding of one's world. Dunlop (2002) states, "We write ourselves as we read", and in this process "lies an aperture of hope ... open[ing] us to the complexities, the richness and multiplicities of human nature and its possibilities, the infinitely diverse ways of knowing the world" (p. 6). Richardson (2001) writes, "[w]riting was the method through which I constituted the world and reconstituted myself ... my principle tool through which I learned about myself and the world" (p. 33). Individuals are enabled, through engaging in narrative inquiry, to gain "a high degree of self-awareness, respect, active feedback, and acceptance of diverse experiences and backgrounds", enabling one to better understand and relate to others (Beer et al., 2015, p. 163). Narrative plays a key role "in demystifying teaching and its political and social constraints", enabling the critical examination of educational practice (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 908; see also Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 16). Ultimately, narrative research elicits "greater levels of self-awareness and consciousness of society" (Beer et al., 2015, p. 166).

Lastly, narrative inquiry privileges voices that have been left out of postsecondary student development literature. Dunlop (2002) posits that "By writing about the things that haunt us, saying what must be said, we can speak eloquently as researchers, writing and speaking the voices that are often unheard" (p. 5). The voices of individual students especially have often been unheard, as they have had insufficient space to come into being. Using narrative inquiry, I privilege the voices of individuals as the central tenet of my research. The voice of the individual is a necessary component of meaningful inquiry. Narrative inquiry contributes the voices that are often left out of educational research, the voices of those who are affected most.

Narrative is crucial not only in learning about individual growth, but in understanding the bidirectional impacts between one's identities and one's context. In order to further elucidate relationships between individual and context, and because I desire to critically evaluate my being and practice with the hope of asking bigger 'so what' questions pertaining to teaching and learning practices in tertiary contexts, I infuse narrative inquiry with personal history self-study.

3.5. Personal History Self-Study Methodology

In self-study research, one's personal, autobiographical experiences of teaching and learning become a vehicle for first identifying, and then addressing through meaningful action, problems related to education. Self-study research is "aimed at the production and advancement of knowledge to improve education, to expand the knowledge base of teacher education, to explore programmatic reform, to construct personal and professional knowledge, and to model complexities of education" (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004, p. 913). Ideally, self-study "is self-initiated and focused; it is improvement-aimed; it is interactive; it includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods; and it defines validity as a validation process based in trustworthiness (Mishler, 1990)" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 817). Self-study allows for the (re)formation of self-knowledge and of identity; it serves as a platform for "modeling and testing effective reflection" as it privileges personal reflection as a source of knowledge; and, lastly, it aids in "pushing the boundaries of teaching" through its attentiveness to teaching practice and its goal of productively influencing the educational landscape (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 907).

3.5.1. Personal History Self-Study: The Social in the 'Personal'

Self-knowledge, in the end, is not important. As means it is all important ... the researcher's obligation, his or her responsibility, is to be concerned with what is out there. 'Looking in' must take its place as shedding light on what is out there. 'Looking in' must make for a better professional landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 597).

Personal history self-study involves the identification and analysis of "formative, contextualized experiences that have influenced teachers' thinking about teaching", with the aim of informing and transforming professional practice (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 65). Since practitioner knowledge "is uncertain, complex, dynamic, responsive, and context and culture dependent," educators must "see themselves as lifelong learners engaged always in the 'troubling' of their own practice and the imagining of different possibilities for teaching and learning (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 11)" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 827). I argue that by exploring themselves as learners through a critically reflective lens, students too can inform practices in higher education. Knowles and Holt-Reynolds

(1994) write that learning to teach consists of “ongoing, perhaps life-long, processes and practices where intensely human, personal meanings are created and influenced by a myriad of prior experiences and meanings”; this is true of meaningful learning in all domains (p. 6). Although the methodology is traditionally used by educators with an explicit focus on their practice, I see personal history self-study as valuable to my research on undergraduate students’ experiences due to its privileging of contextual, experiential knowledge through autobiographical methods, with the goal of elucidating and informing educational practice.

Self-study can elucidate the “powerful”, implicit, experientially-based “lay theories about good practice” that students and teachers bring to the educational setting (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 326). This “dormant” knowledge is “based on untutored interpretations of personal, lived experiences” (p. 326). Explicating these tacit beliefs, through careful reflection and analysis of one’s personal history, can influence one’s perceptions of their role as a student or as an educator. Becoming conscious of influences upon identity formation enables a liberatory awakening to “the forces that appear to dominate” one’s being or practice (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 915). As one’s understanding grows of the “contextual factors that [impinge] on their development,” their conception of their “identity changes” (p. 917). This facilitates attentiveness to “the politics and constraints of [one’s] institution” and an emergent understanding of “professional community” (p. 917). Personal history self-study facilitates the meaningful examination of institutional privileges and constraints, which in turn enables authentic, conscientious teaching (Bullough, 1994, p. 110). Furthermore, the realization of lay beliefs about teaching and learning “can act as powerful checks on the validity of the research-based principles” disseminated in teacher education (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 346). Students’ and teachers’ “lived experiences ... retain the personal and social features of classrooms that far too often our research-based principles have eliminated from the general store of professional knowledge” (p. 346). Due to the “experiential base of the self knower”, self-study permits the construction of a “nuanced” data base that contributes to narrative knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 597). These assertions challenge the stand-alone value of propositional knowledge.

Although self-study has personal impacts, it also transcends the individual (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 584). Personal history self-study is inherently collaborative, as “self-knowing towards personal and professional growth ... is

necessarily enriched through conversation and critique” within the scholarly community (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 910). Self-study “entails the opportunity to disrobe, unveil, and engage in a soul-searching truth about the self ... [legitimizing] the personal voice of the writer ... while *also* engaging in critical conversations” (p. 910). Personal history self-study researchers must “be critically reflective, authentic, and attuned to outside interpretation promoted through discourse” (p. 909). Dialogue is crucial to eliciting alternate reference frames and viewpoints, eliciting the “experience and interpret[ation] of the world from multiple perspectives” (p. 910). Correspondence in self-study has the “aim of pushing toward a greater clarity and shared understanding”, with the ultimate goal of transforming education (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 19). A contextually-situated self-understanding, once established, is drawn out to offer insight to others who are in similar situations, contributing to the broader educational landscape by developing “a concept in general as it emerges from a personal life” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 585). In Vygotskian (1981) terms, self-study facilitates a movement “from intrapersonal to interpersonal knowledge” that enables educational transformation *beyond* the transformation of personal identity (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 931). Like narrative inquiry, personal history self-study “is a means not simply for reflecting on the past but a vehicle for shaping the future” (p. 914). Ultimately, “self-study is important not for what it shows about the self but because of its potential to reveal knowledge of the educational landscape” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 597).

Why should the researcher even bother with the personal, then, when ultimately self-study seeks to develop or change educational practice? Should an exploration of theories and contexts not bear weight over the attributes of individual educators? Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) argue that “for public theory to influence educational practice it *must* be translated through the personal [emphasis added]. Only when a theory can be seen to have efficacy in a practical arena will that theory have life” (p. 15). Bullough and Gitlin (1995) state that “[t]he writing of autobiographies ... enables [individuals] to take charge of [their] histories, to assert ownership, and to recognize their place as actors who can shape contexts” (p. 25). Again, this is illustrative of the shortcomings of research that attempts to make generalizable claims in the field of education. Samaras et al. (2004) write that “the variable, context-specific nature of every individual, multiplied exponentially when you think of collaborative educational contexts, requires research that is as complex and multifaceted as its subjects” (p. 934). LaBoskey

(2004) states that “we do not engage in the process of self-study research solely for the purpose of theorizing” (p. 819). She emphasizes the immediate, practical purpose of self-study, stating that “we have pedagogical imperatives” that we must fulfill (p. 819).

It becomes apparent that a focus on *either* person or context is not enough. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) state that only “when biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of a time, then self-study moves to research” (p. 15). The “nexus of self-study” exists in “the balance between the way in which private experience can provide insight and solution for public issues and troubles and the way in which public theory can provide insight and solution for private trial” (p. 15). Overall, self-study research has a “moral” intent: “to gain understanding necessary” to make student-teacher interactions “increasingly educative” (p. 15).

3.6. Research Methods and Data Generation

Stories of individuals and their relationships through time offer another way of looking, but we need ways to tell stories that are interwoven and recursive, that escape from the linearity of print to incite new metaphors. I believe that the choices we face today are so complex that they must be rehearsed and woven together in narrative (Bateson, 2000, p. 247).

3.6.1. Data Collection: My Personal History Narratives

I take a social constructionist approach to my work. Initially based in my personal history narratives of my development as an undergraduate student, my research unfolded cyclically. I generated, analyzed, and revisited my data periodically. Mills (1959) argues that “methods must not prescribe problems; rather, problems must prescribe methods” (p. 72). As a “hybrid” methodology, self-study provides the researcher the opportunity to draw upon whichever methods are most suitable to addressing the research problem at hand (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15).

The underlying “assumption” of memory work “is that the accuracy of our memories does not matter; whatever shape they take, they influence the construction of

our identities, our current thinking, and our future behaviour” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 843). Because I generated my data through memory work, it was important to involve the appraisal of memories for a purpose similar to narrative inquiry to “examine what was, change what is, and shape what is to come” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 925-926).

A number of journal entries, collected from the journals I kept throughout my undergraduate degree, became the basis of my personal history narratives. My journals extend as far back as my schooling career itself, providing a strong data foundation when considering influential experiences and tracing the course of my development. My journals are an outlet for my emotions, my perspectives, my reactions, and my decisions (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

I engaged in personal narrative writing as a representation of my lived experience (Pithouse, Mitchell & Weber, 2009). Writing, for me, is a stream-of-thought exercise that incites a ‘flow’ state. Free-written, stream-of-consciousness narrative practice enabled me to recall memories and discuss personally relevant experiences in a way that was unconstrained and uninhibited, eliciting a holistic representation of my lived experience. These free-written narratives also informed my final personal narratives of key developmental instances in my history as an undergraduate student.

I listened to songs and collected photographs that facilitated my memory recall and aided in my construction of personal narratives. In recent decades, qualitative social science research has paid increased “attention to the use of images to enhance ... [researchers’] understanding of the human condition” (Weber & Mitchell, 2004, p. 980). The “reflexive nature of artistic inquiry” offers a valuable avenue for engagement in self-study (p. 982), as arts-based methods “hold up another mirror to facilitate self-reflection, and force critical consideration of the social and cultural dimensions of personal experience” (p. 980), ultimately “increasing the potential for a deeper self-analysis” (p. 984). Photographs and songs “[demand] our sensorial, emotional and intellectual attention” (p. 984) and thus “can be used to communicate more holistically” (p. 985). These arts-based research methods aid in the fulfilment of the purpose of self-study research by “making the personal social and the private public” (p. 986).

3.6.2. Data Collection: Entering Into Dialogue

Collaboration plays a crucial role in narrative inquiry and self-study research. Narrative inquiry research has demonstrated “how conversations in relationship with others influence identity construction” (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2012, p. 15). In self-study research, conversations with critical friends influence the research process. A critical friend is “a colleague who will provide support and listen, be a sounding board, a critic, an evaluator; whatever role is deemed necessary (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1996)” to facilitate the researcher’s movement “beyond self to examine practice” (Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 70). Critical friendships enable self-study to become “an experience with the potential to create an informed, attuned, opened *self*, interacting with others in ways that encourage and sustain learning for self and others” (p. 70). My conversations with my supervisors enabled me to identify the sources of my discomfort, and my burning questions, in my research and experiences by providing support and guidance, and sharing stories that led me to explore my own situation from different perspectives.

In discussing the role of narrative inquiry in self-understanding, Freeman (2012) argues that “the ‘isolated being’ that emerges out of the socially cohesive, interdependent web of human relations itself bespeaks a mode of existence problematically disconnected from others” (p. 5-6). His words resonate with the unsettling doubt I felt upon concluding my first round of data collection and analysis. I felt that my research was not representative of my professional goals: to privilege the voices of others in illuminating, and holding space for, their unique developmental needs. I felt that my work was disconnected from those whose stories I hoped to honor. Craig and Huber (2012) argue that “the relational deeply informs our reflections, conversations, and actions as researchers” (p. 14). Bateson (1984) defines “relationship as knowledge, achieved and exchanged through information exchange – through conversation and communion ... as if we were parts of a single whole” (p. 292–293). This is representative of the Freirean (1970/2005) philosophy that knowledge is formed and advanced through dialogue. I sought to mitigate my problematic feeling of isolation and enhance the meaning of my work through incorporating others’ stories. At this time, I had come to think about the process of my development through the metaphor of the growth of a tree: I had rooted myself in relevant theory, solidified my self-concept as a student and researcher, and determined factors pertaining to my holistic identity development – but

lastly, I desired to branch out to others within the same context. As my supervisor said, “a biological metaphor speaks of life itself: there is no life without reaching out.” I decided to conduct semi-structured narrative inquiry interviews with three upper-year undergraduate students.

Participating in interviews is transformative to the identities of those who tell their stories, as well as to the researcher; “conversations in relationship to others influence identity construction” (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2012, p. 15). One way in which “narrative inquirers [honor] the relational aspects of their inquiries is by consciously inviting participants to live as coresearchers” (Craig & Huber, 2012, p. 25). This inspired me to think of my participants as “co-researchers” and “*core*-searchers”, and framed the purpose and conduct of my interviews. I hoped that my participants and I could search for a meaningful core, a current of insight pertaining to identity development in our postsecondary context that tied our experiences together while retaining our uniqueness.

My interview conduct was grounded in feminist research methodology; I believe in “the importance of making the social relations between the researcher and researched transparent” and adhered to feminist criteria for research relationships (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2012, p. 13). Carger (2005) “encourages a kind of truth telling that includes the ‘emotion inherent in a caring relationship ... without removing it from the realm of respectable research’ (p. 232)” (Craig & Huber, 2012, p. 24). I attempted to maximize care and trust, and mitigated power differences in our positionalities through the following means. First, I chose to interview undergraduate students whom I had met during my own undergraduate experience. Hoping to maximize comfort, honesty, and trust, that would facilitate maximal comfort in my participants as they shared their experiences, I conducted interviews in the participants’ preferred locations. As Craig and Huber (2012) suggest, “connections such as these offer richness and depth and allow insights that would not otherwise be possible” (p. 5). Also tied to this choice is the notion that, rather than making general empirical claims, I hoped to determine resonances between my self-study and the experiences of others within my local public research institution. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) speak to my research process:

... merely listening, recording, and fostering participant story telling was both impossible (we are, all of us, continually telling stories of our experience, whether or not we speak and write them) and unsatisfying. We learned that we, too, needed to tell our stories. Scribes we were not;

storytellers and story lovers we were. And in our storytelling, the stories of our participants merged with our own to create new stories, ones that we have labelled collaborative stories. The thing finally written ... is a collaborative document: a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant (p. 12).

In engaging with participants, I was able to gain insights that I would not have by solely focusing on my own experience, facilitating further authenticity and meaning in my exploration of postsecondary student identity development.

3.6.3. Interview Protocol

I conducted one interview per participant in order to “minimize the effect of the project in students’ lives” (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2012, p. 14). At the time of their interviews, participants were finishing their first semester of their last year of studies. I was sensitive to the fact that participants were very busy at this time of year, and wanted to ensure that their participation in this research was not a stressful commitment. I was also aware that participants’ involvement with this research project would exceed the hour that I estimated the interviews to take, as I would be contacting them subsequently to clarify points and verify transcriptions. Lastly, I chose to conduct one interview per participant because I wanted to ensure the authenticity of participants’ answers: were they given more time to consider their answers, or if they had prior exposure to similar questions, perhaps their approach to subsequent interviews would have differed. Interviews lasted from 26:45 minutes to 46:27 minutes. Occasionally, I contacted participants subsequently to ask clarifying questions and to ensure that I was not misinterpreting them. In conducting my narrative interviews, I was attentive to the process outlined by Jovelovitch & Bauer (2000). The narrative interview “encourages and stimulates an interviewee ... to tell a story about some significant event in their life and social context” (n. p.).

I began by briefly describing the context of my research, explaining the purpose of our interview, to explore their experiences of identity development as an undergraduate student. I described that I might jot down notes and ask additional clarifying or expanding questions after the telling of their initial narrative, but that I would not interrupt. I ensured participants’ consent to the recording of the interview, and told participants that they “can begin wherever you want and include or leave out whatever

you want – I'm just interested in hearing about your experience". I asked the following initial questions to prompt my interviewees' narratives:

- I'd like you to tell me about your key experiences of being an undergraduate student. Can you describe a salient/key experience in which you can remember discovering or learning about some aspect of your current identity?
- Have you had an instructor that you feel has really reached you or impacted you in a meaningful way? If so, what did they do or what were they like? How did they influence you?
- Have you found that these experiences in and out of class coincide, intersect, or inform each other?

3.7. Data Analysis

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) state that "the purpose of the telling and interpreting" of narratives "is to enable the reader to experience the narrative as if they lived it with insight of the interpretation" (p. 16). Taking an inductive approach to my data generation and analysis processes, I identified salient experiences and themes in participants' stories of their identity development through the process of generating and revisiting data.

I, a graduate of English Literature, conducted literary analysis upon my narrative data. Irvine (2014), an English Literature teacher and educational researcher, "proposes that within narrative inquiry self-written narratives could be made richer by literary analysis or close reading of the narrative itself" (p. iv). I felt that literary analysis would facilitate a sense of personal distance from my own personal history self-study narratives to allow me to gain further insights and to mitigate my inherent biases. It felt intuitive for me to first analyze narratives through a literary analytic process: by determining overarching themes, symbols, and story arcs through examining the plot and setting; by determining characterization and perspective; by analyzing the meaning of descriptive language, metaphor, and scrutinizing the choice of certain words; and by remaining attentive to the social and political context of each narrative.

In engaging in literary analysis, I also drew inspiration from McCormack's (2004) feminist analytic procedure, "storying stories" (p. 219). Whereas she designates this process for transcribed conversational interviews, I also adapted her approach to

analyze my self-study narratives. She examines data through the lenses of “active listening, narrative processes, language, context and moments” to “highlight both the individuality and the complexity of a life” (p. 219). I adapted her process, examining my data to identify narrative processes/language, context, moments/instances/happenings, feelings, reactions, and overall understanding of identity/salience to identity development. Doing so enabled me to articulate the salience of each instance as it related to my participants’ identities, and to write about our experiences “with insight of the interpretation” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 16). This process enabled me to identify salient factors and to “develop a concept in general as it emerges from the personal” to determine implications for higher education practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 587).

I transcribed each interview myself in order to gain an initial understanding of each narrative. For these first two steps of data analysis, I printed each narrative, and manually analyzed them, highlighting and underlining words and phrases, and writing notes in the margins. I then typed up all of these notes, printed them, and repeated this process of manual analysis upon my notes in order to consolidate, determine, and articulate core themes that emerged within each narrative.

I additionally uploaded each narrative into the qualitative coding software NVivo, and coded each narrative. Coding using software is a rigorous process that researchers often use in the analysis and interpretation of narrative data. NVivo seemed appropriate as it offers many different opportunities for rearranging and analyzing data. In selecting categories of data, I drew deductively from Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda’s (2001) theoretical framework of holistic identity development (interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive). Beyond this theoretical basis, I analyzed the data inductively, determining recurrent themes, threads, and tensions as they emerged from each narrative.

I conducted analysis on word frequency and repetition in each narrative, and used the software to construct a mind map by which I could visualize all themes and sub-themes among the narratives. I compared this data with the findings that I had elicited from my previous methods of analysis. My supervisor conducted a coding reliability check on all data. In combining these processes of literary analysis, my adaptation of “storying stories,” (McCormack, 2004, p. 219), and coding with the NVivo software, I determined factors that contributed to holistic identity development.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posit that the research texts of narrative inquirers exist in a process of “becoming” rather than “being” (p. 145). As discussed in Chapter 2, I experienced tension surrounding the process of determining themes between narratives while respecting the uniqueness of individuals’ stories. Though I choose to base my discussion of findings specifically on these overarching thematic similarities, with hopes of informing educational practice at the institution, I do so with the recognition of the diversity of experience.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

3.8.1. Ethical Considerations in Self-Study and Narrative Inquiry Research

Self-study and narrative inquiry researchers face “unique methodological challenges” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). Connelly and Clandinin (1994) write that “the most important things in our lives, what we value most, have equal power for hurt or for healing” (p. 150). Engaging in narrative research is an intensely personal, vulnerable process; and measures must be taken to ensure accurate and just interpretation and representation.

How can we minimize harm and ensure validity in the intensely personal, vulnerable work of autobiographical research? Challenges arise from the “hybridization of methods” and the recognition of the researcher’s subjectivity, meaning in that “researchers face the difficulty of representing, presenting, legitimating, analyzing, and reporting one’s own experience as data ... in honest, not self-serving, ways” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). Britzman (1986, 1989) describes the “prisons of our biographies,” discussing “the ways our lives give us freedom and creativity but also lock us in and limit our horizons of knowing” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 151). In “engaging in a process of self-reflection ... one risks creating a dangerous product, an authoritative autobiography” (Casey, 1995, p. 219). Connelly and Clandinin (1994) identify two additional “prisons” in self-study research: “our personal myths and stories” of our educational experiences, and “the cultural myths and stories of education” (p. 151). To avoid engaging in exhibitionism, it is crucial that the researcher understand “autobiographical reflection ... not just as an individual exercise but as a process that always takes place within a social context”, with the core intention of productive self-

fashioning in relation to that context with the ultimate goal of effecting meaningful change (Casey, 1995, p. 220).

The construction and interpretation of narratives merit major ethical consideration as narratives are initially constructed “in relation to others” and “to available social and cultural narratives”, which influence their telling (Hunter, 2010, p. 45). “The process of telling the narrative is believed to have the potential to transform the participant’s experiences” (p. 44). There is often mutual influence affecting one’s context; one’s telling and rendering of experience; the interpretation of the narrative; and one’s self-understanding. The researcher is wise to remain sensitive toward the transformative power of engaging in narrative. Narrative research is “filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 24). The issue of validity arises in the co-construction of contextually situated knowledge: how can researchers legitimately represent participants, when our own lenses filter our interpretation of narratives? Freeman (2012) writes that even in our aspiration to achieve “some measure of objectivity vis-à-vis these data”, there is inherent “subjectivity, interpretation, and imagination” in our attempts to “render ... autobiographical (i.e., first-person) data ... in biographical (i.e., third-person) terms” (p. 11). I recognized the importance of acknowledging this complexity when engaging in narrative research. Objectivity and validity are two complex issues the researcher confronts in postmodern research methods.

Polanyi (1958/1962) discusses the notion of objectivity in postmodern research texts, arguing that “the personal *participation* of the knower in all acts of understanding does not make our understanding *subjective*” (p. iv). Personal knowledge is indeed “*objective* in the sense of establishing contact with a hidden reality; a contact that is ... the condition for anticipating an indeterminate range of yet unknown ... true implications” (p. iv). This notion is a stark departure from modernist understandings of objective knowledge.

Regarding validity, Richardson (1998) proposes:

[T]he central image for ‘validity’ for postmodern texts ... [is] the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating

different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose (p. 358).

The narrative self-study researcher must advocate that “story telling is the way to put shards of experience together, to (re)construct” and to complicate “identity, community, and tradition” (Casey, 1995, p. 216). To crystallize means to gain “a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know” (Richardson, 1998, p. 358), posing a challenge to traditional notions of validity. In recognizing the influence of our shifting frames of reference and contexts upon our perception and interpretation of phenomena, postmodern researchers recognize the impossibility of “ontological objectivity”, meaning that “there cannot be one truth due to the influence of the frameworks or perspectives through which we seek understanding in a particular situation” (Campbell, 2017, p. 56). Accordingly, the purpose of this research is “to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 20).

Samaras et al. (2004) suggest that self-study researchers work to “avoid the problems of simple story telling by addressing the multiple selves, the never-ending, complex, and incomplete self”, discussing “the surprises, failings, contradictions, and the desire to know relevant to a particular space and time” and “[raising] alternative interpretations and visions” of their experiences (p. 911).

The researcher’s existence within a messy space of discovery becomes “an ongoing story, which speaks of a process and highlights mistakes, understandings, tensions, and insights”, and “is honest and specific to the context and time in which it is placed”, rather than possessing an uncomplicated, linear beginning, middle, and end (p. 912). Meaningful inquiry occurs in the complication of one’s practice and the navigation of those complexities.

Drawing upon Richardson’s (1998) image of the crystal, I combined and compared multiple sources of data – journals, photographs, songs, narrative free-writes, conversations, interview notes, and transcripts, assuring I encompassed multiple angles of data collection and interpretation (see also Miles et al., 2014). In analyzing my narrative data both deductively and inductively, I attempted to understand each narrative from a multitude of different perspectives. Each layer of coding and analysis enabled me to remove myself from my own narratives in order to examine them from an objective

perspective. This process of analysis, coding, and re-coding through different means facilitated my understanding of the complex influences that impacted the telling and interpretation of mine, and my participants', narratives. Gitlin and Russell (1994) write that "the validity, or 'truthfulness' of the data" in self-study research can be conceived "as a mutual process, pursued by researcher and those studied, that recognizes the value of practical knowledge, theoretical inquiry, and systematic examinations" (p. 122-123). I further ensured the validity of my work by engaging in critical conversations with my supervisor and research participants during the process of data analysis (Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 70). As Silko (1996) writes, I have come to understand "truth not as absolute but as communal" (Craig & Huber, 2012, p. 24).

3.9. Conclusion

Self-study and narrative inquiry are methodologies that, in contrast to the majority of student development literature, privilege the individual as central to the research. Identity development is not a generalizable construct; rather, it is influenced by a myriad of differing contextual factors that constitute selfhood. A postmodern theoretical perspective rejects generalizability in favour of crystallization (Richardson, 1998). Our understanding of university student identity development is furthered in privileging the complex, intersecting stories that constitute our selves. Narrative inquiry elucidates the stories, situated within their respective social and temporal contexts, that influence identity. Personal history self-study positions these stories as a basis for shaping oneself and one's interactions in relation with one's contexts, ultimately affecting positive social change in the world. By turning inward, we grow outward.

Chapter 4. Findings: Holistic Identity Development and the Institutional Context

4.1. Introduction

Holistic identity development is a contextually-situated phenomenon that occurs when cognitive, social, and internal domains of development intersect (Kegan, 1994; Baxter Magolda, 2001). The first part of this chapter identifies factors that contributed to undergraduate students' holistic identity development in a North American postsecondary institution. The latter part of this chapter characterizes undergraduate students' experiences of the context in which they developed. Certain aspects of development were found to be implicitly and explicitly valued by the institution, which impacted students' development. Though I have identified thematic commonalities in participants' discussions of their identity development, I also acknowledge that individuals' experiences of these themes were unique.

4.2. Part One: Cognitive, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Development

In this section, I expand on Kegan's (1994) and Baxter Magolda's (2001) framework of holistic identity development by identifying factors that contributed to undergraduate students' cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development. There is value in examining students' identity development with the understanding that aspects of identity development are inextricably linked and inter-influential. The experiences, or factors, defined in this section of the thesis contributed to *holistic* identity development in that they did not simply address one aspect of development. Undergraduate students' narratives elucidated their experiences of simultaneous cognitive, interpersonal, and internal development, all of which intersect to varying degrees within a given context.

4.2.1. Tracing Holistic Identity Development Using the Tree Metaphor

The following pattern emerged from analysis of salient experiences that indicated the *progressive* nature of holistic identity development: A sense of establishment in their physical setting enabled participants to develop an understanding of themselves as

situated within their university, which in turn influenced their pursuit of additional opportunities for personal growth, such as community involvement. To bridge the cognitive, interpersonal, and internal aspects of development and examine their intersections, I began to theorize the process of holistic identity development through a metaphorical lens: the metaphor of a tree, inspired by my noted repetition of words such as “rooting” and “reaching” in my personal history narratives. Metaphors are “reflections of elements of personal histories” (Knowles, 1994, p. 38), and can serve to distance researchers from our situation, enabling us to better understand ourselves and our data as well as to elicit implications for, and resonances with, a broader audience.

When planted, a tree’s roots must dig into the soil for the tree to survive. The deeper the roots grow, the more permanently attached the tree becomes to that place, and the more nutrients it gains from the soil. Place attachment is salient to the process of development: the further established participants became in their setting, the more opportunities for growth they became aware of, accessed and pursued. In turn, this further facilitated their sense of belonging as situated within their context. When a tree gains enough nutrients from its roots, it solidifies and grows taller. The trunk of the tree becomes established as a stable feature of its setting. Animals interact with the trunk as a source of food and shelter: This equates to the establishment of one’s self-concept and social relationships within the institutional setting. Once a tree’s trunk grows and solidifies, its branches begin to reach upward and outward, expanding its reach and influence beyond its initial capacity. Likewise, participants’ permanence in the campus setting enabled them to interact in communities that widened as the years went on.

In recalling factors that contributed to their identity development, participants focused on a salient thread or theme: A.G.¹ on her evolving conceptions of culture, gender and sexuality; Jennifer on her perceptions and practice of mental health care; Ben on his involvement in his campus community; and myself on the relationships I established and my attachment to my campus setting. Identity development was experienced as a progression, in which participants’ experiences informed their current actions and pursuits and their future intentions. Below, I briefly describe how the progression of each participant’s identity development was revealed in their narratives.

¹ Names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of research participants.

A.G. described, “a lot of my identity now has been shaped by a lot of the things I’ve learned throughout my undergrad.” As she pursued her interests in the fields of gender, sexuality, and cultural psychology, she described how her learning influenced her approach to her social relationships and interactions, and even her intrapersonal development as she came to terms with her own sexuality. She stated, “a lot of the things that I’ve learned in psychology I apply to my personal life, like family relations, or intimate relationships, or anything to do with culture ... it definitely gives me a better understanding of why people act the way they do, or think the way they do ... that’s definitely helped me gain a better sense of self, and a better sense of the people that I interact with.” Furthermore, her learning in class “made [her] a lot more comfortable with [her] own identity.” Her initial pursuit of these interests, in her psychology courses, influenced her self-definition and eventually her pursuit of opportunities to enact a broader influence in her academic and social communities: she embarked on a clinical research project in her fourth year of studies, examining “how culture influences sexual functioning.”

Having established a core group of friends, through his cohort program and living in residence in his first year, Ben pursued involvement opportunities on campus in subsequent years “in order to continue that, rather than to create ... a new experience.” He describes that “a lot of [his] degree has” consisted of “growing with all these positions I’ve had and finding new groups of friends ... or continuing old groups of friends in new contexts ... a lot of the things I’ve done have been a progression.” Furthermore, he sought opportunities to “give back” to his “community” and to “create” similar, positive social experiences for other students; a purpose that remained as he branched out to become involved with campus organizations beyond his residence.

Jennifer’s narrative centered around her realization of her desire to pursue a career in holistic mental health care. Various influences included her interaction with patients in a clinical lab, alongside her coursework in brain and behaviour. Her practice of meditation also influenced her development: her “own self-exploration through meditation ... helped [her] heal”, which “made [her] want to share that with other people.” As she grounded herself in each of these settings, she began to define herself in relation to these practices. She learned and grew as a researcher and practitioner, developing her preference for an individualized, holistic healthcare approach over a research-based career, which she found to be “meticulous.” Her experiences led her to honor patients’

individuality, stating that “everyone’s very complex and very different ... I do think that we need to find methods to make clinical care more individualized ... seeing the person as a whole and not as a sum of parts.” These experiences led her to seek experiences to positively influence others’ lives as a meditation teacher and mental health practitioner.

My own narratives focused on the relationships I established with others, including peers, classmates, coworkers, teammates, students in residence, and faculty members. These relationships strengthened throughout the course of my degree, as did my attachment to my campus setting. Events described in my narratives were key developmental instances that influenced my understanding of myself as situated within my university.

Though at first I saw this as a separate process from my studies, I eventually “began to dive independently into course material” when my growing sense of belonging and autonomy enabled me to “finally [see] my learning as connected to my place in the world” as well as to my “self-knowledge”. The further I progressed through my time as an undergraduate student, the more aware I became of the reciprocal relationships between myself and various aspects of my community: “places on campus became saturated in meaning, taking on special significance,” and as I interacted with others and developed relationships through the years, I came to believe that “our connections were what made us grow.” This sense of reciprocity inspired me to further my involvement as a residence advisor, club member and research assistant: “I had never felt so connected, so rooted, and from that, so able to grow.”

To summarize, the growth of a tree is a helpful metaphor to visualize the process of undergraduate students’ identity development as situated within their specific settings. I preface this chapter with this illustration of the progressive nature of participants’ identity development, in order to better visualize the arc of participants’ growth throughout and to demonstrate intersections between areas of development.

4.2.2. Cognitive Development

Disciplinary knowledge, often acquired in class, impacts students’ conception of other aspects of their identities. A.G. describes the impact of her learning in a “sociology

of sexuality course” upon her awareness and acceptance of her own sexuality. She discusses how her knowledge gained in this course about the politics of gender and sexuality, including “female sexuality being fluid, and how heterosexuality is an institution” influenced her self-acceptance when she entered her “first intimate relationship... with a girl.” She shares how her education contributed to her sense of comfort and acceptance of her sexuality:

I definitely think that ... the education I had [and] ... the awareness that I had about the history of sexuality ... made me a lot more open to the idea of this ... I wasn't conflicted, I didn't think 'oh, what is this', it made me a lot more comfortable with my own identity.

Her cognitive development in this course facilitated her comfort with her realization of her sexual identity. She states that “it wasn't ... a painful, scary experience cause of everything that I'd learned in school.” This demonstrates the impact of A.G.'s knowledge acquisition in class upon her self-perception and her acceptance of her sexual identity.

Taking courses outside of their subject major provided unique opportunities for students' cognitive development by enabling the exploration of alternate disciplines and modes of inquiry, as well as by facilitating interdisciplinary connections. Taking an elective course outside of her major led Jennifer to realize that she “wanted something completely different” than the career that she had long intended to pursue. Taking this course instigated a total shift in her academic path and future career plans, which she had assumed to be concrete for as long as she could remember. Thus, her cognitive development and overall changes in her self-concept were elicited in exploring subject areas beyond the scope of her academic major. Ben, a history major, stated that a science course requirement was “really important” to him. He used material from his science course in an essay for a humanities course, indicating that his exposure to an unfamiliar discipline enhanced his capacity to draw interdisciplinary connections. He related this course requirement to his personal life, too, discussing the significance of learning about “popular science and where science affects your life.” This demonstrates that personal connection to course content is an important conduit to students' meaningful engagement with learning, regardless of the discipline.

Cognitive Development: From Absorption to Production of Knowledge

Students' cognitive development throughout the course of their degrees was characterized by a shift from an external to an internal locus of control (Reich & Infurna,

2017; see also Rotter, 1966). They shifted from the absorption of knowledge to the production of knowledge. Once they had established a foundational knowledge base by learning material in their classes, participants were inspired to pursue research in their respective disciplines. All participants in this study, remarkably, had engaged in research during their undergraduate degrees. Research was characterized as a co-curricular learning opportunity that contributed greatly to students' holistic development. Engaging in research contributed to participants' knowledge base, both within and beyond their discipline. Conducting research, working with faculty members and in clinical labs, also fostered participants' interpersonal connections and contributed to their intrapersonal development by enabling the growth of their sense of autonomy and professional identity. I will discuss students' participation in research further below in relation to the development of autonomy.

Cognitive Development Through Intrapersonal Reflection

Independent study and reflection contributed to participants' holistic identity development. Rewriting notes alone, by hand, was a method that physically connected me to my learning, enabling me to draw visceral connections between the concepts I studied. Uninterrupted, independent study was crucial to my cognitive development, and led me to "dive independently into course material," realizing that "connections would happen if I sought them." The first time that I created and interacted with a study guide in this manner in university, I journaled: "I felt so immersed into what I was doing ... I hadn't learned like that or been engaged like that in coursework ... I felt like I was making real discoveries ... that frustration in what I always strive for and struggle for- it clicked" (December 11, 2014). Studying independently was also conducive to intrapersonal development, specifically, participants' capacity for reflection and sense of autonomy.

Cognitive Development Through Social Interaction

The narratives of the undergraduate students demonstrated a close association between cognitive development and social interaction. Some of Ben's classmates were individuals that he worked with in different organizations on campus. This integration between his courses and his social context enabled him to better learn the material. He spoke of the importance of studying alongside others as a source of focus and understanding: "when you're a part of a community that kind of is going through the same thing that you are, it helps you focus on those things ... it helps you sit down and

study, it helps you understand the content a little bit better because you can talk to people about it.” Spending time with his classmates facilitated his reflection upon what he was learning in class.

Ben emphasized that the intersections between his cognitive development and his social development were facilitated through his involvement on campus, describing that “being a part of that community has helped me ... look at my classes differently than someone who would be commuting to campus just to go to class.” To Ben, the difference between perceiving his institution to be a “school building” rather than a “campus community” is his extracurricular involvement. His extracurricular involvement afforded him a positive change in his perception of his learning on campus, as a process that was integrated with various aspects of his social context. This suggests that studying with peers is conducive to integrating knowledge with one’s social environment and overall sense of self, beyond the simple acquisition or memorization of content knowledge. This resonates with the following excerpt from my narrative:

As I interacted with the people within the physical space of campus, our connections grew ... I studied with my friends ... We engaged in wild conversations ... about philosophy, our existence, our purpose and place ... I finally saw my learning as connected to my place in the world.

In these instances of studying with friends, our conversations often digressed from the course content we intended to focus on. However, these instances of gathering with peers to discuss our knowledge were a significant influence upon my identity as an undergraduate student. Studying with others enabled me to determine a sense of purpose to accumulating knowledge that encompassed, yet extended beyond, studying for my courses. This suggests that social interaction in the campus environment for the purpose of studying course content enables content-knowledge acquisition that becomes personally relevant as a result of the reflective and social opportunities provided by a peer study group.

Identifying another instance of intersection between cognitive and social development, A.G. discussed an experience in which an interaction with another person confirmed implicit biases that she held. She recalled an impactful memory of meeting an individual who told her that they had changed their name. When A.G. asked them what their name had been before, they told her a name of the opposite gender than she had perceived them to be. A.G. explained, “[they] ran away, [they] left with [their] partner...

and that was the moment where I realized that *all* the things that I preach and I talk about and learn about – you forget ... this was during the time where I was taking all these social justice courses, and ... learning about gender stuff and trans issues and, you don't – assume things about people, don't ask certain questions.” This experience revealed to A.G. her implicit biases and assumptions, which manifested despite her learning in class. She stated that prior to this experience, she had assumed that she was “in tune” and “would never” make such assumptions, “naturally as your ego goes.” This powerful realization demonstrates an important link between cognitive and social development, in which her perceived cognitive development was ‘tested’ and her implicit biases elucidated through interpersonal interaction.

4.3. Interpersonal Development

Relationships with others in the campus environment are greatly influential upon university students’ holistic identity development. The word “community” was repeated often in students’ narratives, and encompassed friendships, learning situations, and living situations. Participants’ sense of community was related to their interactions with friends, classmates, and roommates; their participation in campus clubs, research labs, and other extracurricular activities; and their overall sense of belonging and attachment to their university. Communities offer both academic and emotional support: Jennifer stated, “it’s been so nice to kind of grow with other people along the way as well, and help each other, and kind of have that support system ... understanding that in the end we’re all ... in the same boat.” Below, I outline qualities of participants’ communities that contributed to their interpersonal and holistic development.

My social development related closely to my involvement in residence and a community events club. I developed a sense of place attachment and belonging as my social ties strengthened. At the beginning of my second year, as a new residence advisor, I “welcomed an audience of parents and nervous first-year residents to campus.” My positionality changed significantly within the span of a year from a new student who “peeked furtively” at a campus map to one who felt “an overwhelming sense of home” as “I shared my perception of the campus community with my residents.” This demonstrates a reciprocal relationship between my place attachment and perception of my belonging, which encouraged me to contribute to my campus community and to further strengthen my social bonds. I benefitted greatly from my involvement in my

campus community, developing close relationships with my teammates and expanding my social networks. These experiences elicited opportunities for personal growth and significantly influenced my self-definition as an undergraduate student.

Ben's social involvement on campus was central to his self-definition. His social experiences in first year influenced his subsequent pursuit of involvement opportunities. He spoke of "meeting everyone and trying to get an understanding of where I would fit in a new environment ... finding friends in residence and friends in my classes and realizing I didn't, at the time, have a need to do anything else." This indicates that his social needs were fulfilled in his first year. Having "realized that [he is] very much a social person" through his first-year experiences, he strove to "continue that" by "getting involved in residence life" and "in other things on campus ... rather than to create kind of a new experience, to continue the experience I'd already had." Ben's involvement with various organizations on his campus stemmed from his initial positive experience in residence, which spurred his desire to "share the same with others", to "recreate that [positive] experience for a new first-year." He stated that his various arenas of involvement intersect in that they "centrally [relate] to me creating a community for myself, and creating a community for others."

Interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds was conducive to undergraduate students' holistic development. Relating to diverse others exposed participants to alternate frames of reference for understanding the world, which influenced their self-perception. I wrote that meeting people from around the world in university "made me think, for the first time in my life, about how big the world was, and how all the choices in our disparate lives had led us to the same place ... As a local, I was suddenly the minority; I felt that I had so much to learn." Having grown up in a small community, as I had, Jennifer discussed the influence of meeting people "from *everywhere* around the world," which she stated has "made [her] way more open-minded to different ways of thinking and different ways of living ... more open and compassionate."

It is interesting to note that students' social development encompasses friendships with peers and classmates, as well as professional relationships with faculty, administration, and other stakeholders in professional environments. Working in a clinical lab, Jennifer traced the progress of her patients' improvement as she interacted

with them over months. She stated that she “would look forward to interacting with the patients and seeing how they were feeling that day.” These relationships influenced her sense of purpose and led her to realize that she wanted to “help people like this someday,” and she shifted from a research-oriented to a practice-based career path. As I will describe more completely in the next section, participants’ holistic development was also facilitated through interactions with faculty members.

4.4. Intrapersonal Development

Factors related to intrapersonal development which contributed to students’ holistic identity development included their sense of belonging, autonomy and reflective practice. These findings resonate with the notion put forth by Baxter Magolda (2009) that a “balancing of agency and communion (Bakan, 1966) is an ongoing quest for young adults as they compose their own realities in connection with important others in their lives” (p. 626). Below, I will describe each of these factors as they emerged in the narratives, discussing how they contributed to participants’ holistic identity development.

4.4.1. Belonging

Wenger’s (1998) Communities of Practice theory “portrays learning as the interconnection of acting within a practice context, making meaning of one’s experiences in that context, and developing an identity in the context of belonging to that community” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, pp. 624-625). The development of a sense of belonging was a factor that contributed to students’ holistic identity development. A sense of belonging was elicited through participants’ sense of place attachment and the relationships they built within their setting.

Establishing a sense of belonging at the university shaped students’ subsequent experiences by facilitating their access to involvement opportunities, and by influencing their priorities for engagement on campus. My growing familiarity with my setting and frequent interactions with the people within it led me to feel that “I could belong.” Situated social interaction is crucial to one’s sense of belonging in the institutional setting: these places were not conducive to my sense of belonging as physical settings alone; rather, my sense of belonging was fostered through establishing relationships in these places over time. As a new residence advisor, I marveled at the “voices and

warmth and open doors in the hallways that were empty a day before.” As the weeks passed and I developed relationships with my residents, I referred to our floor as a “community.”

Extracurricular involvement was definitive to Ben’s sense of belonging: “I think if you’re not involved in other things outside of classes you can kind of look at it as a school building rather than a campus community.” He stated that he’d “always wanted to be a part of ... organizations on campus doing amazing work.” His sense of belonging was facilitated through involvement with these organizations, which influenced his subsequent pursuit of similar opportunities: “that’s why I continued the next year doing [sic] getting involved in residence life, and getting involved in other things on campus in order to continue that, rather than to create ... a new experience.” Social overlap between his “interconnected” areas of involvement further reinforced his sense of belonging, as the more inter-organizational connections he experienced, the more deeply situated he felt in his community. At the onset of his fifth year, when he became involved in an organization that did not have as much overlap with the others he was a part of, he stated that he “felt like a first year” again. This suggests a disruption in his sense of belonging within this context. The connection between intersections in areas of involvement and overall sense of belonging is further reinforced by the fact that Ben felt disenchanted by his participation in certain organizations when his peers graduated: “Once your friends leave it’s kind of like ‘why are you continuing this’ ... it’s lost that kind of luster ... it’s lost the community and it’s lost the reasons why you’re there.” This demonstrates the connection between involvement on campus, social relationships and sense of belonging.

Belonging is also relevant in relation to students’ academic and professional engagement with their discipline. I describe this further below in my discussion of autonomy.

4.4.2. Reflective Practice

Engaging in reflection influences students’ development of their self-concept. My identity as an undergraduate student and writer was shaped through participating in a class on eco-poetics, which facilitated my understanding of myself as grounded in place. My professor “encouraged us to embark on our own exploration of the places we held

dear ... I felt like I had grasped onto an idea I had been seeking indefinitely to articulate. I journaled, '...now I can somewhat define how my writing takes shape – how the moments I cling to are grounded in place' [September 11, 2014].”

Having structured opportunities to reflect on my identity as an undergraduate student facilitated my awareness of the bidirectional impact between my selfhood and setting. I often journaled about my experiences and relationships in order to integrate these into my overall sense of self. The personal significance of journaling became very clear to me when my hard drive failed and I lost my journals: I felt that “my memories were just gone, along with my work, that everything quantifiable about my life had just been ripped out under my feet” and I had “lost everything by which I defined myself.” This experience reaffirmed to me just how influential journaling, as an act of reflection, was on my overall sense of self.

Jennifer’s “self-exploration through meditation” led her to a greater sense of self-awareness, demonstrating how reflective practice can take many forms beyond writing. She began to practice meditation during a time of stress at the beginning of her undergraduate degree. Meditation enabled her to observe and “learn a lot about [her] own negative thought patterns.” This practice provided her with internal clarity that “allowed [her] to change.” She spoke to the importance of self-awareness of feelings through observation of the mind: “We're taught in school so many things but no one ever teaches us how to relate to our own mind.” Practicing meditation enabled Jennifer to reflect upon and to pursue changes in her life while mediating her stress. Her experience suggests that she perceives a lack of reflective opportunities in her educational context, but believes that reflective practice is vital to the integration of experiences into one’s overall self-concept, and thus contributes to holistic identity development.

Reflective practice also occurs in contexts of social interaction. Every Monday evening, our residence coordinator “printed out sheets for us from a book about goal-setting, and played soft music as we reflected upon our lives, identifying feelings that we wanted to base our days around.” She provided our residence advising team with a structured experience in which we set goals, reflected on and articulated our feelings, and explicitly linked these goals and feelings to our intentions and interactions within our campus community. These reflective sessions were transformative to my identity, as I had never before practiced deliberate intention-setting. I spoke to the “power of

grounding us and helping each of us fulfill our potential” through identifying, articulating, and thoughtfully pursuing our goals. These evenings of communal reflection enabled me to concretize a “a sense of self that encompassed my studies, my role as an advisor, my membership in [my club], my friendships” and my overall attachment to the campus setting. This reflection, also, was conducive to increased deliberateness in my interactions with others and in the choices I made throughout each day.

Though reflective practice takes many different forms to suit the needs and preferences of diverse individuals, one theme is clear: Engaging in reflection facilitates integration between all domains of development, contributing to holistic identity development.

4.4.3. Autonomy

Another salient factor of intrapersonal development was participants’ autonomy: their sense of personal capability to independently pursue knowledge, and to identify and fulfill personal and professional goals. This resonates with Baxter Magolda’s (2009) description of young adults’ “evolution from external to internal definition”: As students “begin to compose their own realities ... they renegotiate the relationship of their internal voices and external influence” (p. 625). Jennifer suggested that the development of autonomy occurs largely during university:

I feel like when you're growing up you have a lot of structure and people telling you what to do, and then when you're in university you start to get a little bit more freedom to choose and to do whatever *you* want to do with your life ... you can actually make your own choices.

Jennifer spoke of her autonomy in terms of her capacity to make major changes in her life during university – such as choosing to switch majors. “I struggled with it a while,” she says, “but once I decided to actually make the change, it felt like such a relief, and since then, I feel like it’s been easier for me to change ... in general ... and to transform and grow in however way I feel is good for me at that time.” Her narrative indicates that her sense of autonomy – her perceived capability to independently make choices in her life – was something that she developed through action. Research supports the notion that “many key traits that underlie autonomy may be developed by independent, student-led learning practices (NSSE 2016; Connell et al. 2016)” (Henri, Morrell, & Scott, 2018, p. 508). Salient experiences that contributed to participants’ sense of autonomy included

their involvement in research, which was often incited by positive experiences with passionate instructors in class; and their participation in extracurricular organizations, clubs, and initiatives, which participants often engaged in to benefit not only themselves, but others.

Engaging in research contributes to students' holistic development by facilitating their cognitive development, their sense of autonomy, and their perception of belonging in their academic and professional communities. Participants' pursuit of research in their respective fields was influenced by relevant experiences in their courses, which will be described in more detail in Chapter 5. Interactive engagement with professors and course material contributes to students' cognitive development, and can lead them to pursue further opportunities outside of class to engage in research. Jennifer described an influential class in which she engaged in "critical thinking" rather than "just memorizing stuff." This class was based around learning "tools that will help you when you graduate ... things [she hadn't] learned in any of [her] other courses," which included writing a research proposal and paper and giving formal presentations. This experience enhanced Jennifer's capacity to learn independently and proactively, skills which "translated into the lab because in the lab ... you have to come up with things ... by yourself."

The sense of reward that Ben gained from taking a challenging history course resulted from his "engagement with a more advanced history as a research," participating in the production of disciplinary material "rather than" understanding his course material "as something to consume". Doing so led him to "feel more confident in what I was doing in school"; without this, he says, "I might have looked at my degree more as like the piece of paper that will get me a job later" rather than as an "opportunity" to take initiative and attribute meaning to his learning. In this course, he was provided opportunities to "delve into old books and records" by conducting primary-source research. These opportunities to conduct research led him to "feel more confident in what I was doing in school, and made me feel like this was somewhere I wanted to be, and like happy in what I am doing right now, I think if I hadn't had that experience ... I might have looked at my degree more as like the piece of paper that will get me a job later" than as an opportunity to engage in meaningful "learning experiences."

A.G.'s autonomy developed, too, through her pursuit of research. She was inspired by a passionate professor to "contribute in some way to the field":

He sparked this interest in me ... now that I look back ... two years down the road, I had this vision in my head when I was in his class- I'm like 'I want to do this research!' and then here I am, doing research with people that I was learning about in my lectures ... that was really ... the most significant learning experience throughout my undergrad.

As a research assistant, my sense of autonomy grew as I came to realize my capability of independently fulfilling the requirements of my role. My supervisor "gradually scaffolded me to complete tasks of increasing complexity." Though at first I "questioned his absolute trust in me, when I had no experience to prove," I "always tried my best to rise to the challenge." I gradually grew "more comfortable and capable in my role" until finally, I did not question my ability to independently conduct research.

Students' autonomy was also fostered in extracurricular experiences. My own sense of autonomy was related to my capacity to fulfill all my roles as a residence advisor, a research assistant, a community builder, and a student. Jennifer's autonomy was developed as she was inspired to "advocate for" the practice of meditation. She described that, "since meditation helped [her] heal", she desired "to share that with other people" and in her fourth year of studies became "the president of the meditation club" at her university. She says, "I feel really good when people learn these techniques and have them work in their own lives as well." This indicates that students' sense of autonomy is related to their perceived capacity to help not only themselves, but others. This resonates with other participants' contributions in their respective areas of involvement for the purpose of benefitting others: A.G.'s research on culture and sexual functioning; and Ben's involvement in social initiatives for first-year students to help others have similar positive experiences to his own.

To summarize, the development of undergraduate students' autonomy occurs through involvement in various aspects of university life which include the pursuit of research and extracurricular involvement. As an aspect of intrapersonal development, autonomy relates to students' pursuit of experiences that foster their holistic identity development.

4.5. Part Two: Situating Identity Development in the Postsecondary Institutional Context

In part two of this chapter, I will focus on participants' discussions of their university context as it related to their identity formation. I will examine contextual influences and constraints that arose in participants' narratives, and describe how these constraints and influences impacted students' holistic identity development at their university.

4.5.1. Situated Development

Awareness of contextual influences and constraints upon undergraduate students' identity development can be gleaned through attentiveness to students' initial and evolving conceptions of their institution and their developing sense of place attachment.

Initial and Evolving Conceptions of the Institution

My initial conception of my institution included the prestige and reputability that was publicly associated with it, in addition to the advertised opportunities for engagement and connection with others in the campus space. These archetypal images are suggestive of opportunities for physical and mental well-being, holistic learning and growth, and socially situated belonging. My prior conceptions of my institution influenced my actions when I arrived on campus, as I chose to pursue opportunities which I felt would fulfill my expectations of what university should be. My personal history narratives demonstrated a gradual shift over the years in my perceptions of my institution, which was initially very idealistic. Subsequent feelings of disconnect and even resentment occurred when the reality of my experience did not match the canonical image that I held. Though this opportunistic perception of my university remained, it also evolved to encompass my belief that on an institutional scale, social and intrapersonal development was not of equal priority as academic achievement in the form of content-knowledge acquisition. The discourse amongst my peer group evolved to include such statements as students being "just a number." Participants' evolving conceptions of their university often elicited a balance of idealism with criticism.

Ben states that “once you’re there for a long time ... you’re noticing these things not changing, or people who are out of touch making decisions, who kind of affect your life”. These inhibitive “issues” became increasingly clear throughout his degree, in relation to his extracurricular involvement as well as in his courses. He explains his disillusionment by stating, “it just comes to a point where five years of exams and then going back to class and then going back to exams ... gets repetitive.” Here, he suggests a loss of perceived meaning and autonomy in this reiterative process.

Despite resonances with Ben’s statements, participants also spoke optimistically of their evolving conceptions of the institution, in terms of their exposure to novel opportunities. As Ben progressed through his degree, he became involved with social organizations that he had “never really had considered as ... something I’d want to do ... as part of my degree,” but which had been suggested by peers in overlapping areas of campus involvement. Jennifer spoke of her evolving conceptions of her institution in terms of her learning about different campus resources: From tutors to counsellors to librarians, she stated, “it took me a while to understand that there were so many people that can help you.” Participants’ conceptions of their institution were overall shifting, complex and multivalent, and carried both positive and negative connotations. However, perceptions of certain institutional values and constraints emerged thematically. I will discuss these values below as they influenced participants’ holistic identity development.

Place Attachment

Place attachment “is often couched within the context of rootedness whereby close, long-term relationships become reliant on intimate and emotional connections with place (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Anderson, 2010)” (Holton, 2015, p. 22). Place attachment is influential upon students’ interpersonal and intrapersonal development. Holton (2015), in examining the influence of place attachment upon undergraduate students’ identity formation, finds that “an evolving relationship with place may encourage an intense involvement with student-centric activities or serve to create barriers” (p. 28). Hay (1998) “recognises that weak ties exist for those who are transient through places” (p. 22). This theory resonates with my sense of isolation as a long-distance commuter student before I moved onto campus: “I couldn’t afford to become involved when an hour-and-a-half long commute awaited me at the end of each day ... I wondered if this was how university was supposed to feel.” My geographical transience

evoked a liminal sense of identity in me: I felt a conflicting pull between my home and school lives due to my “partial” engagement with each place and my “attachments in other locations” (p. 22).

Spatial establishment on or near campus is conducive to students’ development of a sense of belonging in their institution, as being situated on campus maximizes one’s accessibility, familiarity, and personal investment in the setting over time. This became clear as I compared my initial descriptions of my campus setting to later sentiments such as referring to my campus as “home.” From my second year of studies onward, I lived on campus, and experienced increased accessibility to on-campus events, services, and involvement opportunities. Ben, having “always been in this environment where [he has] been involved on campus”, describes this as his “best situation”. Participants’ experiences suggest that being physically situated on or near campus is conducive to involvement, which resonates with Holton’s (2015) findings that more time spent on campus facilitated undergraduates’ “involvement with student-centric activities” (p. 28).

Longitudinal physical establishment on campus enables reflection upon different interactions within that setting over the course of individuals’ degrees. This establishes a sense of reciprocal interaction between individuals and their contexts. Ben spoke to his desire to “recreate” his own experiences for other students, stating that “it’s great to give back to a community and meet people doing that, because ... you’re kind of helping to create that community while also being a part of it.” Jennifer’s narrative evoked a similar sentiment, in that her prolonged establishment at her research lab on campus enabled her to experience the progression of patients’ healing. I, too, sensed a progression of my impact in certain areas of my campus involvement as I reflected upon the years I spent at my institution. Each place I described in my journals and narratives was evocative of some aspect of my development: “Places on campus became saturated in meaning, taking on special significance” whether these places symbolized moments of reflective solace, traditions that marked the progression of time, or my relationships with my residents, teammates or friends.

4.5.2. Reconciling Experiences In and Out of Class

The courses that participants identified to be the most meaningful to their development integrated their learning in class with their social contexts, and influenced their pursuit of opportunities for development outside of class.

Integration of Coursework with Social Context

My eco-poetics class was my first course in which the professor's "teaching was grounded in our immediate context." This class facilitated my sense of place attachment by encouraging me to become deliberately attentive to my surroundings: we walked around campus, observing our surroundings as we reflected upon our environment. Our ungraded writing facilitated reflection that was unmediated by any expectations on the part of our instructor; I was free to write without adhering to a rubric. This inspired me deeply, and led me to grow conscious of the relationship between my sense of self and my environment; our coursework held tangible relevance to me as it was grounded in my immediate context.

Alternative classroom structures, such as seminar-style classrooms in which students have an active role in deciding the structure and content of the course, were conducive to undergraduate students' holistic identity development. The student-directed seminar that I took portrayed a sense of immediate relevance to my life, as the course content was created around our personal interests; each student facilitated a lesson based on their chosen topic. Its collaborative format ensured our commitment to and engagement with the course, and I gained a sense of fulfillment and autonomy through active participation. Jennifer, too, noted the positive influence of a student-directed seminar upon her desire to participate and to learn. Interestingly, these classroom environments were similar to other settings that I found to influence my development: for example, an impactful sharing circle at my club's yearly retreat, and instances of group reflection in my residence coordinator's apartment. These experiences demonstrate that small-group discussion between trusting individuals, centered around topics that are personally meaningful to participants, facilitates holistic development by integrating individuals' needs, interests, and learning with social interaction and personal reflection, autonomy, and belonging.

A.G.'s narrative elicited a relationship between her coursework and social context, as she discussed how "the knowledge" she "accumulate[d] throughout the years" of her education has influenced the ways in which she chooses to interact with others. In regards to her increased knowledge of gender identity and politics, she states that "the way I interact with people is very different from how I would have interacted with them ... four or five years ago." Her coursework "definitely informed [her] how to interact with people in a much more ... socially aware and inclusive manner." Her experience exemplifies intersections between her cognitive, social and intrapersonal development.

The above examples demonstrate intersections between students' development in class and outside of class. Jennifer noted, "I definitely think there has been overlap" between her experiences in class and outside of class – "but I also think there's not enough." Jennifer's statement suggests that experiences for students' identity development outside of class do not always intersect with in-class experiences. Below, I discuss opportunities for holistic identity development that did not intersect with experiences in class.

Extracurricular and Community Involvement

The skills that Jennifer learned in her research lab "were way more practical and ... actually meant for a job than the things I learned in class." She described that her classes were largely based on "memorization" rather than "critical skills and practical skills"; thus, her coursework was rarely integrated with her experiences outside of class. As a research assistant, I also developed critical research, writing and analytic skills that differed from the structure and content of writing that had become familiar to me in my coursework.

Though diverse, the nature of my extracurricular experiences had some similarities in that they enabled me to engage in interpersonal connection and discussion; led me to reflect upon my personality, my interactions, my values, and my goals; and provided me with opportunities to practice professional communication skills. These organizations enabled me to develop close relational bonds with my peers, as my teammates and I participated in personal discussions that required us to be fully vulnerable. These were powerful experiences that influenced my understanding of myself, my relationships, and my worldview. Engaging in vulnerable, personal connection with peers contributes to holistic development in that it enables individuals to

grapple collaboratively with issues and inspirations that are deeply relevant and applicable to their lives. These experiences enabled me to develop qualities such as sensitivity, listening skills, and empathy, which informed my self-concept. These areas of involvement, in retrospect, significantly influenced my identity as a woman and educator in regard to my pedagogical practice, my pursuit of a career in community development, and my beliefs surrounding the importance of social connection and personal growth in educational settings.

Clearly, my extracurricular experiences enabled me to address, bridge, and reflect upon different domains of my development. However, I generally experienced a disconnect between these areas of my involvement, and my classes. In my lectures, I found it difficult to connect personally to course material, and sometimes skipped class to learn independently. As a student I felt that there were “two separate versions of me”: I perceived a dichotomy between the ‘me’ that “worked all day, and the one who raced outside the house” to interact with others, to host events in my residence and campus communities, to spend time with my friends and residents, and to journal and write creatively. This separation between students’ scholarly and extracurricular pursuits is important to keep in mind as I shift into a discussion of participants’ perceptions of institutional constraints and values, and their impact on holistic development.

4.6. Institutional Values and Constraints

Certain institutional values that impact holistic development, expressed in the form of dichotomies, emerged from participants’ narratives. I draw upon Butler’s (1990) theory of socially constructed, dualistic binaries in my discussion of the institutional values that impact individuals’ actions: Values manifest dualistically, each positive value possessing an opposite which is rejected on an institutional level. Though she refers to the inner/outer boundaries of the human body, Butler draws upon Mary Douglas (*Purity and Danger*, 1966), who “remarks that ‘the body is a model that can stand for any bounded system’”; in this case, the university (p. 168). Institutional values exert often-implicit “social regulation and control” upon those who exist within the setting in question (p. 170). Work/leisure dualisms became apparent in participants’ institutional setting, which impacted participants’ ability to strive for balance and to pursue opportunities for holistic identity development. Additional values that were encompassed under this include productivity vs. creativity, and breadth vs. depth of involvement, which impacted

participants' holistic identity development. These values became clear in the institutional constraints that participants identified upon their development. Institutional constraints upon undergraduate students' identity development emerged along four dimensions: structural constraints, spatial constraints, temporal constraints, and relational constraints.

4.6.1. Structural Constraints

Participants described that they felt impacted by the “bureaucracy” in various aspects of their institution. That is, they felt that some of the higher-level operational processes of their institution or organizations within it constrained some aspect of their life as a student. Ben spoke of structural constraints in relation to his extracurricular involvement on campus. He stated that, in his “large institution”, he became aware of “the underlying ... bureaucracy ... that's involved in a lot of these organizations.” He felt, as an employee of his university, that the organization with which he was involved “has a lot of issues when it comes to the way that it's run ... at a professional level.” Although he suggested that perhaps “students don't notice in their first couple years,” he explained that “once you're there for a long time and you're noticing these things not changing, or people who are out of touch making decisions, who kind of affect your life as a staff member ... you ... feel like it's lost that kind of luster.” This suggests that he perceives constraint upon his sense of autonomy and his interactions within his setting.

Jennifer spoke to the impact of the structural constraints of her courses. “Most courses,” she says, “I've learned that if you learn how to take the test, you will do well.” High-stakes assessment tasks shift students' priorities from genuine learning to strategic memorization. This constrains cognitive development: Jennifer says, “if you understand how the professor is going to ask you questions, and how he tests, you're going to do well ... if you know the material but you don't know how to answer the test, then you're not going to do well.” Tension was also elicited between students' engagement in class, and the acquisition of testable material. A.G. described a course she took that had a “fascinating topic”, but she “dreaded going to class” because her professor “read off the slides.” In my narrative, I described a professor who filled his lectures with long, powerful narratives about his experiences, but did not provide direction regarding our assessment: I wrote that this was both inspiring and “frustrating, as ... we still desired measurable objectives to fulfill in our papers and tests.” Structural constraints in the form

of assessment is highly impactful upon students outside of the classroom, too. Participants spoke frequently of the stress and anxiety that arose from the constant pressure to achieve in their courses. Oftentimes this inhibits engagement in activities which contribute to holistic development. Students prioritized their academic achievement over their physical and mental health, their social engagement, and their extracurricular activities.

In the institutional culture of achievement, cognitive development is measured on an achievement/failure binary, rather than through the more fluid lens of progress. The aim to fulfill measurable objectives in courses often impacted participants' ability to depart from standardized course content or to engage in divergent thinking. Participants spoke of memorizing course content to perform well on tests, or taking courses for sake of "easiness". Jennifer states, "it ended up becoming like 'okay, I need to learn how to take this test' instead of 'I need to learn the material and I want to learn it because I'm interested in it'." Institutional prerogatives related to assessment divert students from practicing innovative or creative thinking, or embracing challenge, in favour of maximizing performance in their assessment.

4.6.2. Spatial and Physical Constraints

A "structural division between work and leisure (Elise 2003, 166; Veblen 1899)" is enforced in the university, in which leisure practices such as running errands, leaving work early, conversing with colleagues, taking proper breaks to eat meals, or simply relaxing, are negatively valued (Douglass, 2016, p. 110). Individuals "learn that they must take themselves out of relationship (to their bodies and to others) in order paradoxically to be in relationship", or, in other words, to participate fully in the university context (Franklin, 2003, p. 19). The work/leisure dualisms in the university context prevent students from pursuing the necessity of attending to their physical needs. Individuals are expected to "push through discomfort and work the long hours necessary to be 'productive'", while ignoring the "tension and tiredness that accompany a near constant stream of work" (Douglass, 2016, p. 109). As an undergraduate student I often ignored my bodily needs. I sat for hours on end in lecture chairs, "starting wistfully out the windows as my legs grew stiff". I stayed awake all night to study. I experienced sharp physical pain in my hands when taking countless pages of notes to study for exams, writing "for hours until my hand was swollen and my nerve twinged in my thumb." My

belief – though not representative of all students – was that if I pursued balance in this area of my life, I would compromise my success in my studies. Perhaps more emphasis needs to be placed, on both individual and structural institutional levels, on the necessity of balance and integration between work and those practices that are deemed ‘leisurely’ in this context. Narratives revealed experiences of physical and spatial constraints that impacted participants’ holistic development.

Spatial constraints within higher education institutions limit students’ capacity to engage with their physical surroundings. My narratives elucidated the influences of the classroom and wider institutional environments upon my interactions with course material, peers, and professors. Spatial constraints were prevalent in classrooms. I “sat in the back of a 200-person lecture hall, cramped in an uncomfortable, squeaky chair, utterly distracted by my laptop” as my distant professor’s “hand clutched emptily in the air.” The structure of the lecture hall inhibited potential interactions with my instructor and my peers, with whom I “did not exchange a word”, and also prevented me from interacting physically with course materials as could be possible in a lab or seminar setting. My lack of engagement in class, even with topics that I was passionate about – for example, creative writing, in which I “had trouble paying attention” – was probably related to my physical distance from my instructor and the lack of opportunities to interact with my peers and course material during class.

The student-directed seminar course that I took exemplified a physical setting which was conducive to my holistic development. Rather than a 200+-person lecture hall, our 10-student classes “consisted of round-table seminar-style discussions, where students collaborated to determine and to teach course topics. Jennifer stated of her experience in a student-directed seminar course, “I felt in control of my education.” In these collaborative spaces, we rearranged the desks so that we were all sitting in a circle and facing each other. Our course facilitator sat alongside us students, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and equality. These contrasting experiences exemplify some ways in which a classroom’s physical structure restricts, or facilitates, students’ interactions within it. The physical structure of large lecture halls assumes a hierarchy in knowledge transmission, whereas smaller, round-table classroom settings are more conducive to mutual dialogue and active participation in learning.

4.6.3. Temporal Constraints

A tension between breadth vs. depth of involvement becomes apparent, in that students are socialized into a culture of achievement in which they are implicitly expected to “do everything.” I sacrificed my wellness in pursuit of high grades, despite not yet possessing intrinsic motivation: “my mind pushed dully to complete my assignments,” and the effort spent memorizing my notes led me to feel “numb” and “defeated.” In my efforts to simultaneously fulfill all my roles, I neglected my physical and mental health. I continued to “do everything” despite a peaking stress level, as well as awareness of my neglect of self-care. A sense of “martyrdom” is attributed to those who proclaim: ‘I haven’t slept in *weeks!*’ or those who are told: ‘wow, you do *everything*’ (Franklin, 2003, p. 19). Alternately, those who engage in acts of leisure are deemed lazy, insufficient or underproductive by those who claim to retain discipline over the body to consistently prioritize work (Douglass, 2016).

Temporal constraints impacted many areas of students’ lives including the pursuit of extracurricular activities, physical and mental wellness, reflective practice, and ability to delve meaningfully into course content beyond the necessary completion of assignments. As a residence advisor and full-time student with a research assistantship and club commitments, I “began to feel estranged ... as I hunkered doggedly into the constant barrage of obligations ... running from one commitment to another without adequate time to feel grounded or present in any given situation.” This illustrates a tension between the breadth and depth of undergraduate students’ involvement in university: students strive to fulfill a breadth of roles, but may simply not have enough time to ground themselves adequately in each area of their life. Simultaneous commitments to many courses limits students’ engagement with course material. My “mind pushed dully to complete my assignments ... I worked constantly, never feeling like I had accomplished anything substantial.” Outside of the classroom, temporal constraints result in an implicit prioritization of those tasks which are deemed to be most important: I sacrificed my physical and mental health and social connection in order to achieve high grades. Though I “recognized the need for balance in my life,” stating my desire for “a wellspring of social connection ... that quelled my stress and gave my life structure,” I was “constrained ... from being able to pursue that balance” without negatively impacting my grades or withdrawing from my professional commitments. Jennifer, too, spoke of being “very stressed with school,” which caused her “a lot of

anxiety.” Temporal constraints impact holistic development: compromising cognitive depth and integration of learning; interpersonal engagement with friends, peers, and extracurricular activities; and intrapersonal reflection and well-being.

4.6.4. Relational Constraints

Relational constraints often arise alongside spatial and temporal constraints. Temporal and spatial constraints make interactions with professors and peers difficult. A.G. spoke of the disengagement that she felt in certain lectures when her professors read off of slides rather than engaging with students. Jennifer discussed the importance of “participation and having students interact,” but described that this “lacked in a lot of [her] classes since classes are normally really big – like 100, 200 students – it’s really hard to have small discussions.” In a large introductory course, “I felt frustrated and helpless about the absolute lack of connection between myself, my TA, and my professor,” as individuals who “I barely knew and yet who possessed full authority over my grades.” Outside of class, temporal constraints restricted my interactions with my peers in residence and my participation in my club’s meetings and events. Students are limited in their capacity to engage in social relationships without fear of negatively impacting their academic performance: as I journaled about a study group, “we’ve been spending twelve hours a day together trying to learn all this information but I haven’t made a connection like that with somebody in god knows how long.” Despite the importance of dialogue to my authentic learning and reflection upon course material, I perceived dialogue to be a distraction and felt pressured to spend my time studying in isolation: this is again evocative of a work/leisure dualism in which dialogue was perceived to be an act of leisure. Jennifer described relational constraints between herself and other students due to competitiveness in her faculty: “sometimes in university it gets kind of competitive between students ... you don't even help each other ... it gets to that point where everyone's just like 'oh I want to do [well] in the exam so I'm going to study more than she did.’” Alternately, her description of her student-directed seminar exemplified a classroom setting that did not appear to possess relational constraints:

We were all super super interested in the topic, and it was very self-motivated ... and we all kind of helped each other learn ... each person took on a different sub-topic, and they would share with the class, and

the point was that we would all be experts in every sub-topic by the end of it ... So it was [a] really cool exchange of ideas and information.

This experience contributed to her holistic development by fostering her cognitive development, interpersonal development, and intrapersonal development. This speaks to the potential inherent in non-competitive educational settings in which relationships between students are posited to be a fundamental source of learning.

To summarize, the institution's valuing of work over leisure manifested in the form of structural, spatial, temporal, and relational constraints; which inhibited students' holistic identity development. Structural constraints were found to impact autonomy and participation in various aspects of campus life (organizational structure), as well as cognitive development (classroom structure and forms of assessment). Spatial constraints elucidated a work/leisure and mind/body dualism in which students are expected to ignore the needs of their body in favour of maximizing their productivity. The spatial constraints of classrooms were found to impact students' engagement with professors and peers. Temporal constraints also emerged in relation to a work/leisure binary, in which cognitive development (academic productivity and achievement) is prioritized above all else, often leaving students with inadequate time to pursue other aspects of their development while tending to their physical and emotional needs. Lastly, relational constraints emerged in close relation to spatial and temporal constraints. Various qualities of classroom settings and temporal demands limited students' relation. As a result, opportunities are limited for visceral connection of person to content and context through a lens that encompasses, and positively values, all forms and aspects of development.

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed factors that were found to contribute to undergraduate students' holistic identity development, as they emerged from my personal history self-study of key developmental instances and undergraduate students' narrative inquiry interviews. Additional themes emerged from the data regarding how participants' postsecondary institutional context influenced and constrained aspects of their identity development. In Chapter 5, I will discuss findings pertaining to the qualities of influential educators that contributed to students' holistic identity development.

Chapter 5. Findings: Influential Educators

5.1. Introduction

Because the classroom is a specific site which is largely overlooked in studies of holistic identity development, I wondered about the role of instructors in fostering undergraduate students' holistic identity development. I hope to bring light to educational practices that are conducive to students' holistic development with a specific focus on the classroom environment and student-teacher interactions. When conducting interviews, I asked participants, "Have you had an instructor that you feel has really reached you or impacted you in a meaningful way? If so, what did they do or what were they like? How did they influence you?" In this chapter, I present the findings from this question.

5.2. Three Overarching Attributes

Participants described their influential educators as motivational, passionate, and relational. These attributes, and their sub-categories in the narratives, were consistent regardless of the instructor's discipline and class size. The three overarching attributes framed the following sub-categories that emerged from participant's narratives:

Table 1: Qualities of Influential Educators

Overarching Qualities	Sub-Categories	Description
Motivational	-Autonomy-Independence -Divergent Thinking -Challenging -Accountability	-Facilitated students' independent pursuit of inquiry. -Encouraged students to practice divergent thinking. -Presented students with challenging material. -Held students accountable to a high standard of work and participation in class.
Passionate	-Inspiring -Accessibility	-Instructors' passion about the subject inspired students. -Taught course content using language and resources that were understandable to students, and made themselves personally accessible to students.
Relational	-Narrative -Research -Dialogue	-Engaged in narrative/storytelling to share information. -Discussed their own research frequently. -Engaged in dialogue with students and encouraged class discussions as a method of learning.

5.3. Motivational

Influential educators motivated students by encouraging them to pursue independent learning; by presenting challenging course material and providing students with opportunities to pursue creative inquiry; and by holding students accountable to the quality of their work through establishing rapport and sharing about their own contributions to the discipline.

5.3.1. Autonomy-Independence

Influential educators motivated students to pursue independent inquiry, and in encouraging them to take ownership over their learning, facilitated students' sense of autonomy and belonging in their discipline. Ben described a professor that encouraged students not to passively accept "prescribed" knowledge. This experience enabled Ben to shift from understanding learning to be a process of "consumption," to a process of independent engagement with, and production of, knowledge. Jennifer explained that the development of critical thinking skills through her independent pursuit of knowledge was beneficial to her. "In high school they ... feed you everything," she explained, whereas in university she "learned how to learn on [her] own a lot." Rather than just absorbing information, she was challenged to develop her own conclusions about material. For example, she described a course in which students were asked to interpret research papers. Their professor then facilitated comparisons between students'

interpretations. The process of recognizing and justifying differences in interpretation facilitated Jennifer's critical thinking skills and her sense of autonomy as a learner.

In their review of events that contribute to student autonomy, Henri et al. (2018) describe that students' "interaction with literature resources and learning independence, potential measures of self-management ... [increase] as a result of studying at University (Thomas et al., 2015)" (p. 508). As students progress through their degrees, they are "more likely to engage with feedback", which is indicative of taking "ownership" over their "progression and learning (Brown 2007)" (p. 508). In this study, being encouraged to discover their interests through independently pursuing knowledge facilitated students' sense of motivation, autonomy and belonging in their discipline, as they realized their capability for learning independently.

Notably, not all students take up such opportunities to develop their autonomy. "Students with greater self-efficacy are more likely to view their own capabilities as being changeable"; that is, students who believe that they are capable of accomplishing tasks, making sound decisions and achieving their goals are more likely to pursue their development of autonomous behaviour (Henri et al., 2018, p. 508). The population of involved, motivated students in this study likely possessed some sense of autonomy and self-efficacy prior to these experiences.

5.3.2. Creative and Divergent Thinking

Students' intrinsic motivation and autonomy was fostered when professors valued creative and divergent thinking. Ben described that it felt "tedious" when he could not examine topics from the "perspectives that I want to look at things with." He stated that in his discipline, "you can't really be wrong, but then everyone in the class is looking at it the way the prof is looking at it," which results in the "connotation that other views of things are wrong." This perceived pressure to conform to one line of interpretation caused him to feel unmotivated.

Creativity can take the form of a novel, distinctive idea, action, or product, which results in a valuable artistic, spiritual or material response (Cropley, 2001; Galbraith & Jones, 2003; Kao, 1996; Garnett & Pelsner, 2007; Couger & Higgins, 1993). Social constructionist definitions of creativity situate creativity as something that is developed

contextually; “formal training” increases one’s “level of creative potential” (Donnelly, 2004, p. 165). Research has argued that creativity is “systematically prevented” through traditional, didactic pedagogies and forms of assessment (Haertel, Terkoswky & Radtke, 2015, p. 137). Freeman (2006) articulates that “university teaching too often functions as a denial of creativity ... in this increasingly modularized, prescriptive and conveyor-belted sector, universities are producing reactive rather than proactive students, graduates wise to the belief ... that success through high grades comes to those who are best able to master memory and recall” (p. 91). The university must function for more than content-knowledge provision. Though the process of institutional restructuring is a long, hard-fought battle, there is hope: Even within the current structure, certain contexts and pedagogies can promote creativity.

In participants’ narratives, influential educators encouraged divergent and creative thinking processes in students through the following means. The educators described in this study “encourage[d] risk taking, independence, and flexibility”, conditions necessary to foster creativity (Haring-Smith, 2006, p. 24). One of Ben’s professors gave assignments that required students to “[challenge] perspectives” about course topics through formulating their own unique viewpoints and conducting independent research. This led Ben to “[grow] more interested in” his field as he was able to discover subject niches that were of personal interest to him. Jennifer spoke of a professor who engaged his class in inquiry, rather than simply disseminating information on lecture slides. His frequent questions “opened [her] curiosity to understand how ... humans work,” which prompted her to pursue her degree in neuroscience.

Participants were intrinsically motivated in classrooms that supported their creative and divergent thinking. Inquiry-based environments “are recognized as providing students with positive feelings of achievement”, which likely increase their commitment to further skill development and learning (Freeman, 2006, p. 95). Additionally, creative inquiry allows students to develop and pursue their personal interests. Research illustrates that “creative people produce better work when they are motivated by personal commitment rather than extrinsic rewards” (Haring-Smith, 2006, p. 25; see also Amabile, 1983). Participants’ narratives illustrated that a stifling pressure to conform arose when professors focused on a unilateral interpretation of a course topic; this incited both anxiety and disengagement from course material in participants.

Facilitating creative and divergent thinking is conducive to cognitive and intrapersonal development through genuine, in-depth personal exploration of material.

Creativity, intrinsic motivation, and autonomy are interrelated (Donnelly, 2004; Sternberg & Lubart, 1991; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990; Liu et al., 2012; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Ahmad, Zafar & Shahzad, 2015). Encouraging students to pursue areas of personal interest fuels “their intrinsic motivation and love of learning” (Cavagnaro & Fasihuddin, 2016, p. 12). The “accumulation of new knowledge, methods and perspectives” through creative inquiry stimulates “life-long passion for learning about being oneself in the world”, and therefore impels autonomy (Clarke & Cripps, 2012, p. 114). Intrinsically motivated “individuals who consciously control and take responsibility for their own learning” are in turn “most inclined towards creative practice” (Freeman, 2006, p. 93).

5.3.3. Challenge and Accountability

Challenge has been proven to be a necessary factor in higher education classrooms “to prevent boredom and to stimulate learning” (Scager et al., 2017, p. 318). Research has found that three factors “are conducive to challenging students to produce their best work in higher education: high levels of complexity, student autonomy, and teacher expectations (Scager et al. 2012, 2013)” (p. 318). Participants in this study were motivated by classes that challenged them with complex content and high instructor expectations. Striving to accomplish these challenges, in turn, contributed to their sense of autonomy and belonging in their discipline. Influential educators challenged students by making their high expectations clear, often through demonstrating their own hard work and motivation in the discipline and by trusting and encouraging students to produce quality work. A sense of personal accountability toward instructors was an important factor in motivating students to meet challenges. I believe that this form of personal encouragement by professors could help to mitigate students’ stress, by providing students with a reinforced sense of purpose and capability in striving to meet their academic challenges.

Students were motivated to engage when their professors challenged them to learn difficult content. A.G. stated that the course she received her best grades in was her most challenging course: she actively sought to contribute, as both she and her

professor were passionate about the course content. Ben described the value of “not just [choosing] the easiest thing,” stating that “a lot of people choose classes or choose topics or choose books based on what’s easy,” but “that’s not necessarily what you’re going to enjoy the most and get the most of.” He stated, “I chose a lot of classes because I thought they were really interesting even though I knew they’d be difficult.” The challenging nature of these courses, when it was clear that his professor was passionate about the content, “really motivated” Ben “to do well.” Research has found that “offering students consistent challenge” and “focusing on depth and complexity” are practices that benefit postsecondary students’ learning and development (Scager et al., 2012, p. 660).

Furthermore, “providing opportunities to work independently” is conducive to students’ engagement and learning (p. 660). As a research assistant, my supervisor asked me to “complete tasks of increasing complexity throughout the months” with minimal supervision. At first anxious about the lack of guidance, I responded to his trust by prioritizing my research and “always [trying] my best to rise to the challenge.” I felt pleased when my supervisor was satisfied with my work. These instances illustrate that challenge motivates undergraduate students to engage in their work and validates their capabilities, contributing to their sense of autonomy and belonging.

Motivational professors held students accountable for producing high-quality work and engaging in the classroom, through establishing rapport with students and by demonstrating their own efforts in contributing to the discipline. A reason Ben cited for his increased level of effort was that his professor knew him “personally,” through Ben having taken one of his courses before. This lack of anonymity encouraged Ben to actively participate in his learning. Similarly, in my position as a research assistant, the personal rapport that my professor and I established motivated me to work hard. In addition to the sense of accountability that arose through personal relationship, awareness of their professors’ contributions to their discipline motivated students to try their hardest: Ben described that he “did not want to disappoint” a professor whose course was based in research that was “his life’s work.” As a result, Ben “put a lot more effort into his papers than other profs’ papers,” who did not “share their research or share what they’re passionate about.” Ben was motivated, by his professor’s dedication to his discipline, to produce high-quality assignments. Likewise, as a research assistant, I was motivated by awareness of my supervisor’s extensive knowledge of the topics. I

“questioned his absolute trust in me, when I had no experience to prove,” and dedicated myself to producing consistently high-quality work. When he responded with positive feedback, I “associated this position with a sense of pride,” and was further motivated in my role.

These participatory practices are exemplary of learner-centered pedagogies, which position the student as an agent of their own learning. “Engaged teaching strategies”, such as establishing personal rapport with students and constructing the classroom around students’ active participation in the generation of knowledge, can facilitate the development of critical thinking skills by providing “opportunities for students to practice constructing and evaluating knowledge” (Holt et al., 2015, p. 20). Furthermore, higher-order thinking skills are “scaffold[ed] through support and modeling by student peers and instructors” (p. 20). A sense of personal accountability and responsibility for one’s own learning is conducive to meaningful cognitive and intrapersonal development.

5.4. Passionate

Let him who would move the world first move himself. – Socrates

Passion, in educational research, is conceptualized “as a mixture of positive emotions and commitment toward a subjectively valuable target” (Keller et al., 2016, p. 749). Professors’ demonstration of passion about their teaching and their research was conducive to students’ holistic identity development. Participants discussed that passionate professors inspired them to seek out their own academic niche and to pursue inquiry in ways that were personally meaningful to them. Passionate professors were described in regards to their accessibility: These professors sought to share course content in ways that students could easily understand, and further aided students’ development by remaining personally accessible outside the classroom.

Though participants in this study used the word “passion” to describe their professors’ energetic and enthusiastic teaching style and commitment to their discipline, their descriptions accorded quite closely to research on teacher enthusiasm. Research on teachers’ enthusiasm (see Keller et al., 2016 for a comprehensive review) has described passion as the “affective component” of enthusiasm (Keller et al., 2016, p.

751). Enthusiasm is expressed both nonverbally and verbally through qualities such as the use of humor, expressive and emphatic speaking, and “energy and excitement” (p. 746). Enthusiasm also manifests in instructional behaviour in the form of frequent “verbal interaction” and “regular praise and encouragement” of students (p. 747). Participants used the word “passion” to describe these same qualities; perhaps instructors’ expression of enthusiasm was indicative, to students, of their passion.

5.4.1. Inspiring

Influential professors inspired students by causing them to realize that they, too, could become passionately engaged with their learning. A.G. described a professor whose passion “inspired” her to “figure out something that I want to learn more in depth about”, prompting her pursuit of research in her field. She explains:

He was one of the most passionate instructors that I've had, and I think ... when students see that it kinda like ignites this... *thing* in them, this spark ... “How awesome would it be for me to be this passionate about something?” It just makes them wonder ... “Why is this person so passionate about this, maybe I could explore it.”

Her experience in this class “inspired [her] to ... contribute in some way to the field” as her professor’s passion “sparked an interest in [her].” Ben, similarly, was inspired by a “very passionate” professor who “shared a lot about” his personal interests in his course. “The way he taught ... wasn’t a boring lecture where you could tell he was just reciting information,” Ben described. His professor “was actually very into it and wanted to share this with us.” Ben was inspired by this professor’s passion, which exemplified to him that “you *should* be passionate about those things.” Overall, influential professors inspired students to seek and pursue their own passion.

Participants described that oftentimes, their professors did not convey passion in their teaching. Ben stated that many of his professors “don’t share ... what they’re passionate about.” Jennifer described the detrimental impact of some of her professors’ lack of demonstrated passion, stating that “they knew the material, but they were boring, dry, they would read out of the slides, or the textbook ... by the intention you could tell they didn’t like being there, so then if they don’t like being there you don’t like being there.” Likewise, A.G. described a professor who “was very monotone and read off the slides.” Although she “loved the topic,” A.G. “dreaded going to class” due to her

instructor's lack of engagement. These findings accord with research (Murray, 1983) that found a negative correlation between an instructor's choice to "[read a] lecture verbatim from notes" and students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm (Keller et al., 2016, p. 746). These experiences indicate that professors' demonstration of passion inspired students' engagement with their discipline.

5.4.2. Accessibility

The notion of accessibility emerged in two ways in participants' narratives. First, participants spoke of professors that disseminated course content in a way that was easily understandable to students. Second, participants spoke of their professors' accessibility as people: their physical accessibility for interactions in and out of class, as well as dispositions and qualities that facilitated students' ease in interacting with them.

The ways that professors chose to share information influenced students' ability to understand course content. Jennifer described that some of her professors "had a hard time communicating" to students "that don't know that much" about the topic, signifying the importance of scaffolding course material. She explained that professors "have to be able to translate material ... in a simple way" so "that students can understand." One of her memorable professors "knew exactly how to connect different aspects of psychology and put them together in a way that makes sense" by relating them to real-life anecdotes. She added, "that's important for any subject that you're taking, and for life ... It's really good to integrate different aspects of something and make it coherent and ... applicable to your own life as well." Her professor's choice to explain concepts by relating them to real-life scenarios contributed to Jennifer's understanding of the course content. Research supports that incorporating lived experiences into classroom learning is conducive to scaffolding students toward increased academic rigor and complexity (Castillo-Montoya, 2018, p. 37). Drawing upon students' lived experiences also enables inquiry into more diverse perspectives on course topics. This results in a more equitable classroom environment that explicates the relevance of course topics to diverse students (p. 40).

The use of humor is another "behavioural [component] of enthusiastic teaching," which again participants discussed in relation to their perceptions of their professors' "passion" (Keller et al., 2016, p. 746). Jennifer stated that a professor's use of humor

“made it [the course content] click in your brain more ... you remember that joke, and then it just [is] easier to remember things.” One of my professors captured my class’s attention by coming to class on the first day with a bottle of ginger ale and a bag of raisins, ingredients for an interactive experiment that “made us laugh and clap like children.” By beginning the class in this way, my professor set the stage for an engaging semester, in which our class participated in frequent discussion and interactions with our professor in a comfortable environment. These narratives exemplify techniques by which these professors established a sense of accessibility, both to course content and to themselves.

Professors’ accessibility outside of class was also significant to participants. A.G., Jennifer, and I all mentioned instances in which we worked with instructors on research projects, and professors often attended social events in Ben’s small program. These interactions with professors outside of the classroom contributed to participants’ sense of belonging in their academic and professional communities.

5.5. Relational

5.5.1. Narrative

Influential professors shared personal stories with students, relating course topics to their lives. Narrative pedagogy is “an approach to learning that emerges when teachers and students publicly share and interpret stories of their lived experiences” (McAllister et al., 2009, p. 158). Narratives are a touchstone from which individuals can “engage in real dialogue while reflecting”, which contributes to their interpersonal and intrapersonal development (Jones et al., 2012, p. 705). Engaging in narrative is conducive to meaningful learning as it enables connections between course material and real-life relevance.

One of my professors in an anthropology course “was an incredible speaker.” He “did not deliver any measurable objectives” but instead recalled his experiences working with Indigenous peoples around the world, powerfully calling awareness to capitalist cultures’ infringement upon Indigenous cultures’ ways of life. Jennifer’s courses valued objectivity and generally lacked “connecting science to being human and feeling.” She describes how one influential professor juxtaposed his discussion of the progression of

Alzheimer's disease with the story of his grandfather's worsening symptoms. He invoked empathy by describing how the disease was "connected to the suffering of his family," which reiterated to Jennifer the importance of studying Alzheimer's, and facilitated emotional connection with the class. She describes:

He made it applicable to life, and more relatable, cause then people [were] like "oh my god yeah, his grandfather" ... There [were] people crying at the end of the class, cause it was so emotional ... It was just very beautiful to bring that all together.

Her professor's vulnerability in sharing about his grandfather's experience had a significant effect on the class. First, students engaged emotionally with the topic: rather than learning about disengaged facts, they realized quite clearly the impact of this disease on peoples' lives, even including their own relatives. This increased Jennifer's sense of purpose in learning about the topic. Students were able to "relate" to the topic through the professor's "stories and examples", which Jennifer described as "a big key to teaching and learning." By establishing an interpersonal connection with his students through telling this narrative, the professor fostered an environment of vulnerability in which his students felt comfortable expressing their emotions and reflecting upon similar experiences. Narrative represents "the interface between personal and social worlds" (McLean, 2005, p. 689), and has both "personal functions (e.g., reflecting on a past event in private to better understand oneself) and social functions (e.g., developing intimacy through sharing past events; Alea & Bluck, 2003; Pillemer, 1992; Webster, 2003)" (p. 684). Practicing narrative fosters opportunities for intrapersonal and interpersonal development in concurrence with cognitive development in the classroom.

5.5.2. Research

In Chapter 4, I discuss research as a form of knowledge production that contributed to students' cognitive development and their intrapersonal sense of belonging and autonomy. Engaging in research also facilitated interpersonal interactions with professors and other stakeholders in the university community. Research has shown that "engagement in authentic research can have profound effects on students' career choices and the contributions they make to their disciplines and to society (Taraban & Blanton, 2008)" (Taraban & Logue, 2012, p. 499). Because "the success of

research experience depends on good mentoring,” it is important to explore how influential professors interacted with students in regards to their own research (p. 500).

Participants’ discussions of influential educators gave insight into how students’ pursuit of research positions and projects were first incited: Mainly, through professors’ modeling, encouragement, and sharing passionately about their own research. There is a relational aspect to describing one’s research. Participants felt better able to relate and to interact with professors that shared about their own research, as this gave students a better understanding of why their professor inhabited their role, and made apparent the hard work and dedication that was necessary for them to achieve their current position at the university. Professors’ choice to share about their own research was conducive to fostering relationships with their students, and promoting a sense of personal accessibility. Additionally, participants felt encouraged to pursue their own interests when their professors actively discussed their research pursuits. Professors that shared about their research were described as “passionate” and “interesting,” which in turn inspired students to seek out their own passions, to engage actively in the production of knowledge and to explore their academic niche.

5.5.3. Dialogue

Dialogue enables interaction with course material in a way that helps students integrate the course content with their social context and their personal beliefs and experiences. An individual’s identity “is mutually constitutive with identity regulation (the discursive practices of identity definition) and identity work (the interpretive activities involved in reproduction of self-identity)” (Beech, 2008, p. 52). Creed and Scully (2000) establish that there is a “performance-based element to identity work” which is “fundamentally interactive” (p. 51). Identity is therefore “a process that is both the outcome of, and the input to, dialogue” (p. 54). Influential professors in participants’ narratives facilitated dialogue in their classrooms. Jennifer stated that “having students interact is really important,” as it enables students to “think critically... and come to your own conclusions” while learning from others’ perspectives. Dialogue empowers students to develop “questioning, facilitation, opposition, and response” skills, “[facilitating] dialogic civility, mutual tolerance, unprejudiced exploration, and participatory interaction” (Bowers, 2005, p. 373).

However, “balance” is necessary “between structure and interactive techniques”: When class discussions occurred without professors’ guidance, Jennifer “felt like [she] didn’t learn anything and it was all just kind of out in the air.” This suggests that professors must assume a facilitative role to ensure that discussions are generative. By engaging in dialogue with students, professors can destabilize inherent classroom hierarchies between instructor and learner, honor students’ experiential knowledge, and privilege meaningful cognitive, social, and emotional development in class while calling into question dominant systems of knowledge (Bowers, 2005, p. 373). Dialogue enables recognition of shifting relationships between understandings of the self, knowledge, and social contexts, ultimately enabling self-, other- and sociopolitical awareness.

5.6. Conclusion

The attributes of influential educators identified in this chapter carry implications for how university educators might facilitate holistic identity development in their students. By contextualizing my findings in relation to current educational theory and research, I hope to have illustrated some avenues by which university instructors might work to foster undergraduate students’ cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal identity development within their classrooms. The attributes and their effects discussed in this chapter were thematic, and are relevant, across a variety of educational settings and student demographics. In Chapter 6, I will discuss the contributions and broader implications of this research.

Chapter 6. Contributions and Implications

In this concluding chapter, I discuss various implications of this study for research and teaching practices, as well as directions for further research.

6.1. Summary and Contributions

I have identified intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors that contributed to upper-year undergraduate students' holistic identity development. I have built upon Kegan's (1994) and Baxter Magolda's (2009) theoretical model of holistic identity development and have identified participants' experiences of intersections between cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal domains of development as they occurred within the context of a higher education institution.

Cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal development are not experienced in isolation. Each of the experiences that participants discussed portrayed the development of multiple aspects of their identities. Using the metaphor of the growth of the tree, I outlined how participants' sense of rootedness, or physical establishment in their campus setting, enabled them to solidify a core sense of self in relation to their context, which in turn empowered them to branch out to become further involved in different areas of their communities.

Participants' cognitive development, often facilitated in class through acquiring epistemological knowledge, impacted their understanding of other aspects of their identities. Cognitive development was often experienced as a shift from the absorption of knowledge to the production of knowledge through engaging in research and independent inquiry, which was also conducive to participants' intrapersonal development, especially their sense of autonomy. Cognitive and intrapersonal domains of development were further linked by participants' engagement in independent study and reflection.

Narratives demonstrated a close link between cognitive and interpersonal development: Studying with peers and participating in learning cohorts enabled participants to better learn and interact with knowledge through engaging in dialogue and challenging their prior perspectives, as well as to integrate this knowledge with their

social environment and overall sense of self. Interactions with others were found to broaden participants' worldviews and to elucidate implicit biases, facilitating deeper self-awareness.

Factors that contributed to participants' holistic development included the development of an intrapersonal sense of belonging. Reciprocally, participating in extracurricular activities facilitated students' sense of belonging, which motivated students in turn to pursue further opportunities for extracurricular involvement. Participants' sense of autonomy was a major part of their intrapersonal development that emerged in the narratives, linked closely to participants' engagement in research and extracurricular experiences. Lastly, reflective practices were linked to holistic development. Reflection facilitated greater intrapersonal self-awareness, through the deliberate integration of experiences and their relevance to students' overall sense of self; and enabled deeper awareness of relationships with others, as well as students' sense of belonging and intentions within their campus community.

The site of this study, a large public research institution, possesses and transmits values, of work over leisure and mind over body, to students as is the norm of most institutions of learning. The challenge lies in not having these institutional values impact students' holistic development by deemphasizing the importance of seeking balance between areas of development in students' lives. Structural, spatial, temporal, and relational constraints embedded in this setting limited participants' ability to develop holistically within their institutional context. This occurs regardless of whether institutional values are explicitly stated, or implicitly transmitted to students within their context. The constraints and values identified in this study accord with maximizing productivity and academic output, and prioritizing content knowledge acquisition over students' holistic development. It is crucial to identify these values and constraints and their impact upon students' holistic identity development as they manifest in different postsecondary settings.

I have focused optimistically on opportunities to promote holistic student development in the classroom context especially, but it is crucial to recognize that participants' positive narratives of influential educational experiences are not exemplary of the greater picture. Participants, in their interviews, emphasized that their influential educators were few and far between, and that they experienced great tension and stress

as they strove to fulfill both academic and extracurricular roles and obligations. Embedded in their narratives is a dire need for change: The prominent anxiety, stress, perceived pressure for academic performance, and lack of integration between development and learning inside and outside of classroom environments illustrates the need for broader systemic change.

In recent years, institutions have begun to call attention to facilitating students' development in all domains – social, internal, and cognitive – but without an integrative focus between these parts of development, holism cannot be achieved. As it stands, within the classroom especially, there is an overwhelming focus on cognitive development. Students' identities are influenced significantly by their participation in their social context and opportunities for intrapersonal and reflective practice, most of which occur outside of class. By analyzing participants' discussions of influential educators and classroom contexts, I hope to have provided insight into some educational practices and priorities that could help to facilitate students' holistic identity development within postsecondary classroom settings, even those which are characterized by the aforementioned constraints and values.

This study signifies the need for an integrative approach to holistic identity development for university students. Institutions might recognize that development in each respective area – cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal – does not translate to holistic development, especially when students perceive that each of these domains of identity development are valued differently within the postsecondary context.

6.2. Directions for Further Research

This study has focused in depth on a particular demographic within a particular setting, as students' experiences will vary across demographics and institutional contexts in regards to holistic identity development, institutional values and constraints, and classroom settings. Rather than attempting to generalize findings cross-institutionally, I believe it is important to focus on the nuances of students' interactions in a particular context. I recommend that researchers continue to determine factors that contribute to students' holistic identity development as situated in specific institutional settings. Postsecondary institutions vary greatly, and must determine themselves how

their physical and social environments, and the opportunities offered within them, could better serve students' cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development.

Having identified various institutional influences and constraints upon the holistic identity development of the participants in this study, the need for further research becomes clear. Where can we pinpoint the gaps between areas of students' development where there could be intersections? How, exactly, can various stakeholders and policy-makers work to facilitate students' holistic identity development on a classroom level and on an institutional level? What sorts of practices and policies could be implemented, and how would students benefit? Could these changes resonate cross-institutionally and in different contexts?

Despite the limited demographic studied in this thesis, the findings of this study have several broader implications. First, there are implications for educational practice and pedagogy: Educators might seek to address the disparity that students experience between in-class and out-of-class experiences, and to avoid the apathy that results from viewing learning as the simple transfer of knowledge rather than a "dynamic", contextually-situated "social and relational process" of development (Christie et al., 2016, p. 480). Research on student learning and development could intersect to inform educational practice, both within and outside of the classroom.

To develop practices for holistic development in university classrooms takes significant effort and commitment on the part of faculty members. It is important to consider how faculty members at the university operate under institutional influences and constraints, just as students do. In a setting that prioritizes frequent research output, the intense pressure to publish and to gain career stability forces faculty members to sacrifice balance in their lives, foregoing their physical and emotional needs to maximize output. Douglass (2016) describes these experiences of university faculty members as follows:

... so many of us do not want to feel our bodies. Our dissipated energy, bolstered by sugar and caffeine, is tied fast in knots that create tethers of discomfort that are only undone with considerable effort. The body is often treated as an 'accessory to a crime' (Peters et al. 2004, 171) that should make do with long hours of limited movement, tethered to a desk (p. 109).

The valuing of work over leisure – which in the postsecondary context is characterized as those aspects of development other than cognitive development – impacts faculty members significantly. Individuals deemed successful in the North American university context are those who demonstrate exemplary commitment to maximizing their productive output, disciplining themselves to abstain from leisure while remaining dedicated to their work. University faculty are implicitly expected to “dissipate [their] selves ... as a way of bringing heroic significance to [their] work” (Franklin, 2003, p. 19). In order to facilitate holistic identity development in their classrooms, educators must be liberated to develop holistically themselves. To enable this, though, broader institutional and systemic changes are warranted. So long as teaching remains the lowest priority on faculty members’ extensive docket, and so long as faculty members themselves are personally restrained from developing holistically by stringent institutional demands, no lasting or meaningful changes can possibly occur.

Participants’ characterization of their institutional context in this study speaks to values and constraints that extend beyond the university to institutional, systemic and societal levels. Universities, as definitive institutions of society, have the power to either reinforce or challenge the status quo. As the values and constraints identified in this study suggest, the university operates under, and legitimizes, the same capitalist model of our greater Western society. Historically, universities were established to function as places of critical debate, independence, upward mobility, and societal progress. A shift in recent decades has occurred, toward privatization and profit. Students are indebted and institutional accessibility compromised; faculty members struggle to gain job security; and the fundamental values of universities appear to have shifted generally from the publicly accessible pursuit of higher learning and societal development, to private corporations that operate under the same capitalist model that its graduates are inoculated to serve. Truly, the issue is a societal one, and we must think deeply about its ramifications.

How can we work to develop, and to deeply value, approaches to development that equally prioritize and integrate cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal components of our identities? How are these values and constraints established and transmitted in other institutions: postsecondary and beyond? How could a lack of holistic approach in our K-12 schools, our social programs, our workplaces, our prisons, our

environment affect all members of society? If we do not promote holistic and integrative approaches to individual development and learning, then who and what have we lost?

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Appendix A.

Study Detail

1. Introduction

Project Title: Institutionally-Influenced Identities: Inquiring into the Development of Multiple Identities in Postsecondary Education

Principal Investigator: Emma MacFarlane

Supervisor: Dr. Allan Mackinnon; Dr. Shawn Bullock (currently on leave)

Funding source: N. A.

Conflict of Interests: N. A.

Location where research will be conducted:

Research will be conducted at various sites in the Lower Mainland of BC. I plan to conduct interviews with undergraduate students from public research institutions to determine whether there are thematic commonalities in their experiences of identity development within their respective institution. Participants will choose where to meet for their interview: likely public settings such as coffee shops, libraries, etc.

Relationship with other previously approved studies: N. A.

Documentation of peer review or independent scientific review: N. A.

Indication of harmonized or multi-jurisdictional research (including list of involved sites/institutions): N. A.

2. Summary of Proposed Research

In my research I seek to elucidate and negotiate the complexities of identity development within a setting of tertiary institutional opportunities, influences, and constraints, as a student, educator, and woman. I hope to identify opportunities for holistic identity development within higher education. First as an undergraduate student, and now as an educator working in a university, I have come to wonder about the ways in which the tertiary institutional context facilitates and/or limits students and educators' identity development. Currently, research on identity development in the university context tends to make broad, generalizable claims. There is a deficit of limited-scope, detailed research that focuses on students' and/or educators' identities as they are situated within a particular institutional context. Additionally, the literature generally focuses on certain aspects of development- primarily academic development- rather than taking an intersectional approach that recognizes the concurrent influences of multiple components of one's identity. Lastly, research has not addressed opportunities for educators to facilitate holistic identity development within their classrooms.

The overarching questions that shaped my research are as follows:

- How can we define holistic identity development in a tertiary context?
- What aspects of the university experience influence identity development?

- What aspects of identity development in the tertiary context might currently be neglected, and which are prioritized?
- How can educators enable intersections in differing components of identity development through a process that is socially and contextually situated?

In exploring these questions, I hope to come to warranted assertions regarding the development of multiple identities in higher education: first, to elucidate the complexities of students' situated identity development and to explore the potential of an intersectional approach to identity; and second, to examine possibilities for educators' practice in light of this approach.

My research began in August 2017 as a self-study of my development as an undergraduate student and as an educator, respectively. I was approved for ethics exemption and conducted a self-study and narrative inquiry: drawing upon data sources such as journals and photographs, I wrote a series of personal history narratives, which I then analyzed using methods of literary analysis, "storying stories" (McCormick, 2004), and thematic coding. Throughout the process of conducting my self-study analysis, I came to realize my desire to extend my research to incorporate the voices of others. Therefore, I plan to conduct a series of semi-structured narrative inquiry interviews with upper-level undergraduate students in order to explore their experiences of identity development throughout their undergraduate degrees, to determine whether their experiences corroborate with the findings of my self-study.

Procedures: My choice to conduct interviews is grounded in feminist research methodology, in that I "stress the importance of making the social relations between the researcher and researched transparent" and strive to adhere to feminist criteria for research relationships (Hollingsworth & Dybhdal, 2012, p. 13). Carger (2005) "encourages a kind of truth telling that includes the 'emotion inherent in a caring relationship ... without removing it from the realm of respectable research' (p. 232)" (Craig & Huber, 2012, p. 24). I will attempt to maximize care and trust, and mitigate power differences in the positionalities of myself and my participants through the following means.

First, I choose to interview upper-year undergraduate students that I met during my own undergraduate experience (I graduated in 2016, and know students from multiple institutions). In doing so, I hope to maximize honesty and trust in sharing stories. I hope that my positionality will facilitate comfort in my participants as they discuss their experiences. I plan to reach out via Facebook messenger or a phone call to explain that "I hope to interview a few upper-year undergraduate students about their experiences of identity development in their institution". As Craig and Huber (2012) suggest, "connections such as these offer richness and depth and allow insights that would not otherwise be possible" (p. 5). Also tied to this choice is the notion that, rather than making general empirical claims, I hope to determine resonances between my own self-study and the experiences of others within local public research institutions.

I plan to conduct one interview per participant (hopefully three or four participants total). Each interview should take no longer than approximately an hour, but the narrative inquirer places no limit on participants' telling of stories. I may reach out to participants during my phase of analysis to ensure that I am not misinterpreting a statement they made. Therefore, I estimate that each participant will dedicate no more than two hours to the study in total.

Location: I plan to conduct these interviews at a location which is most convenient and comfortable for the participant; I will travel to the participants' preferred location. This may include a coffee shop, library, or home, all within the Lower Mainland of BC and likely in the Metro Vancouver area.

Interview Procedures:

I will ensure that participants understand, read, and have signed the consent form. I will show them my audio recording device, place it on the table between us, and upon ensuring their consent, turn the audio recorder on for the duration of the interview.

I will preface my interviews with a brief description of narrative inquiry interview protocol: that the researcher may jot down notes, but does not interject, instead allowing the participant to speak until they are finished telling their story. I will not impose any temporal constraints, and will state that participants may begin and end at whatever part of their story they want to tell; that I am just interested in hearing their experiences. I will pose the following three questions:

- I'd like you to tell me about your key experiences of being an undergraduate student. Can you describe a salient experience in which you can remember discovering or learning about one of those aspects of your identity?
- Have you had an instructor that you feel has really reached you or impacted you in a meaningful way? (If so, what did they do/what were they like? How did they influence you?)
- Are there any instances in which your experiences in and out of class have coincided, intersected or informed each other?

Follow-up questions about participants' narratives may take the following form:

- Can you tell me more about _____?
- What were your goals or intentions? / Hopes, desires, or feelings?
- How/why did this change your understanding of [X topic/yourself]?
- Who were the people or factors involved?
- Can you describe the environment where this took place?

Data Analysis:

First, I will transcribe each audio recording myself, typing each narrative into a transcript. I plan to do so myself in order to familiarize myself with the narrative. Taking an inductive approach to my simultaneous data generation and analysis processes, I hope to identify salient experiences and themes throughout my and my participants' identity development through the process of generating and revisiting data. I will honor my identity as an English Literature graduate by conducting literary analysis upon my narrative data. Mirvine (2014), an English Literature teacher and educational researcher, "proposes that within narrative inquiry self-written narratives could be made richer by literary analysis or close reading of the narrative itself" (p. iv). Furthermore, with my personal history self-study narratives, I felt that literary analysis would facilitate a sense of personal distance from my narratives to allow me to gain further insights and to mitigate my inherent biases.

I will first analyze narratives through a literary analytic process: by determining overarching themes, symbols, and story arcs through examining the plot and setting; by

determining characterization and point of view; by analyzing the meaning of descriptive language, metaphor, and scrutinizing the choice of certain words; and by remaining attentive to the social and political context of each narrative.

I plan to draw upon McCormick's (2004) feminist analytic procedure, "storying stories" (p. 219). She examines data through the lenses of "active listening, narrative processes, language, context and moments" to "highlight both the individuality and the complexity of a life" (p. 219). I plan to adapt her process, examining my data to identify narrative processes/language, context, moments/instances/happenings, feelings, reactions, and overall understanding of identity/salience to identity development. Doing so enabled me to articulate the salience of each instance as it related to my participants' identities, and to write about their, and my own, experiences "with insight of the interpretation" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 16). This process will enable me to identify and confirm salient themes and to "develop a concept in general as it emerges from the personal"- to determine implications for my own practice and for higher education practice in general (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 587).

I will engage in literary analysis first by printing out each typed transcript and writing comments by hand. Second, I will shift these notes onto my computer and engage in coding to determine relevant themes in each narrative and between narratives, including my self-study. I plan to use the qualitative software program NVivo to determine relevant themes between narratives, which will then likely become a basis for organizing my findings.

3. Prospective Participant Information:

Description of the study population: Upper-year undergraduate students from public research institutions in the Lower Mainland of BC, in their fourth year of study or above.

Exclusion criteria: Students who are in their first year of studies, as I hope to speak to participants who can reflect upon the process of their development throughout their university career.

Number of participants: 3 or 4.

Time dedicated to participation: 2 hours.

Required organizational permissions and approvals: N. A.

4. Recruitment Methods

I plan to reach out to potential participants via Facebook messenger or phone call, foregrounding my study and asking whether they would be interested in participating by meeting for an interview. If they express interest, I will provide them with my study protocol and consent form, to sign should they choose to participate. I will already have participants' contact information, and will not share this information publically. No incentives will be offered for participation.

5. Obtaining Consent / Assent

I will obtain consent by providing participants with consent forms in person, upon their agreeing to meet. Participants and I will first meet so that I can describe the study and provide participants with a consent form, after which we will meet for an interview if they agree to proceed (either at the same time, or at a subsequent meeting, depending on the participants' availability and willingness). All participants are over the age of 19 and are of the capacity to

consent to the study. Consent will be documented via a signed form and will include consent to participate in the study, consent for our interviews to be audio-recorded, and consent to the dissemination of findings in my thesis and potentially in future publications (journals, conferences). Furthermore, at the beginning of each interview, I will again ensure verbally that participants consent to being recorded. I will make it clear to participants that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussion. In the case that a participant withdraws, I will delete all recorded audio and other data pertaining to that participant.

6. Potential Benefits

There are no direct benefits to the study; whether participants glean benefits from engaging in the interview process rests in their own individual experiences and preferences. I hope, however, that the information learned in this study will contribute to our understanding of university student identity development. I hope that this study might contribute to the literature about university student identity development, and that it may in turn provide insight for educators and policy makers' practice at the tertiary level.

7. Potential Risks

This is a minimal-risk study, with little to no foreseeable risks to participation. Participants will not be pressured nor prompted to share any sensitive information. Due to the nature of this study, my interview protocol, and my positionality as a researcher, I hope to ensure that participants will share only what they are comfortable with sharing. However, should they choose to discuss past experiences that may have had a negative psychological effect, there is potential that they could experience psychological harm such as anxiety or regret. In the chance that a participant expresses psychological distress during or after our interview, I will pause and ask whether they are comfortable with continuing. I can provide participants with references to different campus or community resources/organizations as necessary.

8. Risks to Researchers: No foreseeable risk.

9. Participant Confidentiality Measures

Audio recording: Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the recordings. Participants will provide consent to use of their first names; last names will never be used to ensure participants' privacy. Participants will be given the option of choosing their initial or an acronym instead of their real name. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon transcription, which will occur as soon as possible after the interview (within the following day).

Participants may consent to an interview without recording. However, this is not ideal in regards to data collection and analysis; having a complete transcript, unmediated by the PI's own initial interpretation, is instrumental to the data analysis processes. Therefore, the PI will make it clear that if a participant gives consent to an interview but not to audio recording, the extent of inclusion of this data in the final research project may be limited.

Data may be categorized as indirectly identifying information, depending on what participants choose to discuss. Confidentiality will be maintained in printed interview transcripts by not using full names: instead, first initials only will be used to indicate the speaker as well as the names of any other individuals they might mention.

10. Data Stewardship Plan

Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data. Audio recordings will be destroyed upon transcription. All data will be stored on the hard drive of the researcher's computer. In the chance that data needs to be shared between the supervisor and researcher online, a secure file sharing service will be used: SFU Vault.

Data will be retained indefinitely in an encrypted hard drive, including data from NVivo, which is on the researcher's computer. Printed transcripts will be locked in a cabinet at the researcher's home. Some data may be shared between the researcher and supervisor on SFU Vault. Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that the only researcher and supervisor have access to this Vault folder. These files will be stripped of participants' full names and any other identifying information to ensure confidentiality.

11. Future Use of Data

There is no known future use of the data beyond the conclusion of this research project.

12. Dissemination of Results

I will offer to provide research participants with feedback on the findings and will make my thesis available to each of them after it has been published. I intend to publish or present parts of my research, in which case I will inform all participants.

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Appendix B.

Participant Consent Form

Study Number: __

STUDY TEAM

Principal Investigator (PI): Emma MacFarlane
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

Faculty Supervisor: Allan Mackinnon
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

This research is part of a Master's thesis for the PI's graduate degree. The data collected will inform the findings of the thesis. The thesis will become publically available upon publication.

Why are we doing this study?

- We want to learn more about the processes of undergraduate university students' identity development in public research universities in the Lower Mainland of BC.
- This study will contribute to the literature base and will help to inform university educators and policy-makers about the processes of university students' development.

Why should you take part in this study?

- You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are an upper-year university student at a public research university in the Lower Mainland of BC.
- As an upper-year student, you have been a part of the university setting over a period of years and we are curious to hear about your experiences.

Your participation is voluntary.

- Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study.
- You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences to the education or other services to which you are entitled or are presently receiving. If you choose to participate in the study and then decide to withdraw at a later time, all data collected about you during your enrollment in the study will be destroyed.

What happens if you agree to be in the study?

- If you agree to participate in the study, you will meet with the PI for one interview in a location of your choosing (for example, a coffee shop or library). The interview should take approximately one hour. The PI may contact you by phone after the interview to ask for clarification about something you have said. The overall time commitment of your

- participation in this study should not exceed two hours.
- The interview will be audio-recorded if you consent. These recordings will be transcribed (typed), and deleted immediately after transcription. The transcriptions will identify you by your first initial, not your full name, to ensure confidentiality. Only the PI and supervisor will have access to the recordings.
- The records will be stored on an encrypted hard drive. In the chance that data needs to be shared between the supervisor and PI, a secure file sharing service will be used, which only the PI and supervisor will have access to. Printed transcripts will be locked in a cabinet at the researcher's home.

Potential Risks

- We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. Let the PI know if you have any concerns or if the questions we ask causes you discomfort in any way.

What are the benefits of participating?

- We do not think taking part in this study will help you; however, in the future, others may benefit from what we learn in this study.

Will you be paid for your time?

- We will not pay you for the time you take to be in this study.

Measures to Maintain Confidentiality

- Your confidentiality will be respected and maintained to fullest extent. Information that discloses your identity will never be released without your consent.
- We plan to identify you only by your first name. If you do not wish to have your identity disclosed in this way, let us know, and we will substitute your name with your choice of a first initial or an acronym.
- All printed documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants in printed documents will be identified only by the first initial of their first names. All electronic records will be kept on an encrypted hard drive.

Study Results

- The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles, books, and/or presented at conferences.
- If you would like to receive access to the thesis upon publication, please provide your email address: _____

Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?

- Please contact the PI with any questions about the study:
 -

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?

- If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your

experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward,
Director, Office of Research Ethics:

Future Use of Participant Data

- There are no known future uses of the personal information and/or research data collected in this study.

Future Contact

- We may wish to contact you to ask follow-up questions about your interview to ensure appropriate interpretation of your narratives. We may also wish to contact you to inform you about the publication of the thesis. Do you consent to future contact?
__ Y / __ N

Participant Consent and Signature

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your education or relationship with the PI.

- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.
- You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this study.

Participant Signature

Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

Printed Name of the Participant signing above

Appendix C.

Interview Protocol

1. Tell the informant about the context of the research:

In my thesis, I hope to explore experiences of university student identity development through narrative. I will use the data generated from my interviews, as well as self-study about my experience, in order to come to warranted assertions regarding the development of multiple identities in higher education. I hope to explore the utility of narrative inquiry and self-study methodology, through an intersectional and feminist framework, as a means for inquiring into students' holistic experiences of development.

[Personal Notes; not for participants] – Adapted from Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000

The development criteria of this topic should follow the following guidelines:

- Need to be an experiential part of the interviewee's life
- Have personal, social and communal significance
- Don't mention my own investment to avoid taking positions/roles
- Topic should be wide enough to allow informant to develop a long history from initial situations, to past events, to the current situation
- purpose statements- *explore, understand, discover*

Original/broad research questions (first 3 combine > chapter 4, last one > chapter 5):

- How can we define holistic identity development in a tertiary context?
- What aspects of the university experience influence identity development?
- What aspects of identity development in the tertiary context might currently be neglected, and which are prioritized?
- How can educators enable intersections in differing components of identity development through a process that is socially and contextually situated?

What do I want to learn from the interview?

- *How does my story resonate with yours?* I have come up with this intersecting/holistic framework/lens through which to examine students' identity development, but I want to see if:
 - 1) it corroborates with a story that isn't mine, and
 - 2) if this elucidates any opportunities for educators.

How does my choice to be collaborative resonate with my own positionality?

- the fact that I am close in age and experience to being a student- this allows me to contribute something valuable, in that the minimal separation between myself and my interviewees might help establish trust
- link to feminist interview theory- how trust and experiential closeness is crucial for eliciting honest and in-depth accounts

How is this relevant / contribute to the research?

- holistic examination of identity development
- opportunities for educators
- contributes to research in that narrative inquiry privileges an intersectional/all-encompassing/non-divisive approach to identity development research

2. Tell them the central topic, which has the function to lead narration.

E: The central topic of my thesis, and the purpose of our interview today, is to explore your experiences of identity development as an undergraduate student. I hope to make clear which parts of the university experience might influence students' development, and which aspects of identity development might currently be neglected or prioritized in our institutional setting.

In merging these findings with my self-study of my development, I hope to be able to give direction as to how educators might facilitate students' holistic (merging social, emotional and cognitive) identity development through socially and contextually situated processes.

3. Tell them about the procedures of the narrative interview:

[Personal Notes; not for participants]: Jot down notes, then come back to them in second phase after they tell initial story- ask questions about each topic in the order that they were narrated. The narrative has a 'gestalt'/shape that is part of participant's framework of experience. Let the gestalt emerge in its own way, without interrupting.

E: In answering the following questions, you can take your time- we've got as much time as you need. I won't interrupt, but I might take a few notes that I'll ask you questions about later. I will record this interview. [ensure verbal consent] You can choose a pseudonym or acronym for me to use in the findings, instead of your real name. [revisit at end of interview/subsequently to confirm their choice of name] You can begin wherever you want and include or leave out whatever you want. I'm just interested in hearing about your experience.

4. Questions.

1. How would you describe your sense of self or identity as it has developed since being at this university?
2. I'd like you to tell me about your key experiences of being an undergraduate student. Can you describe a salient experience in which you can remember discovering or learning about one of those aspects of your identity?
3. Have you had an instructor that you feel has really reached you or impacted you in a meaningful way? If so, what did they do/what were they like? How did they influence you?

Possible follow-up questions about stories:

- What were your goals or intentions? / Hopes, desires, or feelings? (internal)
- How did this change your understanding of [X topic/yourself]? (cognitive)
- Who were the people or factors involved? (social)
- Can you describe the environment where this took place? (contextual)