WE ARE (NOT) ALL BULLDOGS: MINORITIZED PEER SOCIALIZATION
AGENTS' CRITICAL SENSEMAKING ABOUT COLLEGIATE CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

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The undergraduate students who facilitate higher education socialization initiatives
educate prospective and new students about campus culture and thus work toward the enactment
of institutional goals for diversity and retention. Because campus climates are unwelcoming to
minoritized students, minoritized students who serve as peer socialization agents (e.g., campus
tour guides, orientation leaders) experience discrepancies between the messages institutions
expect them to convey about campus culture and their own lived experiences. The purpose of
this study was to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer
socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized
identities and socialization agent positions. Through qualitative research methods framed by
Critical Race Theory and the concept of a meaning-making filter mediated by self-authorship, I
explored the sensemaking of 13 minoritized peer socialization agents (MPSAs) at a single large,
Midwestern predominantly White institution. Most MPSAs in this study made sense of their
campus culture in the context of pervasive discrimination, engaging meaning-making filters
fostered by counterspaces, and enacting counterstorytelling as an empowering act of resistance.

This study illuminated the ways minoritized students experience racism, cisgenderism,
and heterosexism in their daily lives. MPSAs experienced microaggressions, tokenization, and
dehumanization in their classrooms, in out-of-class campus spaces, and off-campus.
Discrimination was also apparent within socialization initiatives through deceptive messages
about campus climate, an emphasis on resource awareness, unbalanced training about specific

populations, and diversity teambuilding that, according to the MPSAs I interviewed, benefited majoritized students. The underlying perspectivelessness of socialization programs and training contributed to MPSAs' battle fatigue in a climate that institutional leaders should not ignore as they pursue their goals for a diverse student body, retention, and graduation.

Most MPSAs in this study described social integration with other minoritized students in physical counterspaces (i.e., campus cultural centers), cultural organizations, and MPSA subcultures, but not necessarily in the broader campus. When students' experiences do not align with the campus master narrative, counterspaces with other minoritized students serve as the mechanism for MPSA integration and sense of belonging.

With simultaneous positive and negative feelings about their university, MPSAs engaged counterstories in an attempt to communicate nuanced messages to other minoritized students and challenge the campus master narrative. Counterstories also facilitated MPSAs' own sense of belonging and sense of self. This study unmasks the perspectivelessness of socialization programs and suggests implications for practice, for theory, and for research. This study identifies the racist, cisgenderist, and heterosexist climates minoritized students experience and challenges institutional leaders to adopt philosophies and practices that have the potential to change the master narrative from perspectivelessness to identity-awareness.

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vi

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The undergraduate students who facilitate higher education socialization initiatives educate prospective and new students about campus culture and thus work toward the enactment of institutional goals for diversity and retention. Because campus climates are unwelcoming to minoritized students, minoritized students who serve as peer socialization agents (e.g., campus tour guides, orientation leaders) may experience discrepancies between the messages institutions expect them to convey about campus culture and their own lived experiences. The purpose of this study is to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. In this chapter, I present the need for this study, state the research question that guides this inquiry, define major terms and concepts, present the conceptual framework that guided the study, and discuss the significance of this study for higher education practice and student development.

Background and Problem Statement

Leaders of higher education institutions espouse goals for diversity and inclusion (Ibarra, 2001) and retention-to-graduation (Renn & Reason, 2013). In fact, Renn and Reason (2013) argued, "retention-to-graduation will remain the primary goal for higher education institutions for some time to come" (p. 173). At higher education institutions, the starting point for these institutional goals is socialization. Scholars have connected socialization programs' goals and outcomes to enrollment, persistence, and retention (e.g., Capps & Miller, 2006; Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Rode, 2000). As such, colleges and universities attempt to foster prospective and new students' sense of belonging while educating students about the institution's culture, beginning with socialization processes such as campus tours, summer orientation, and fall

welcome – processes through which "normative influences can be transmitted to students" (Weidman, 1989, p. 121).

Sense of belonging as mediated by institutional and environmental factors and ethos (Strayhorn, 2012) greatly influences student success. Using a variety of terms, college impact research has established that a student's sense of belonging affects a variety of student outcomes (Astin, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Goodenow, 1993; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Strayhorn, 2012; Tinto, 1993; Weiss, 1973; Yi, 2008). According to Strayhorn (2012),

> In terms of college, sense of belonging refers to students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). (p. 17)

Researchers have found sense of belonging to have a positive influence on academic achievement, persistence, and retention (Hausmann et al., 2007; Yi, 2008). Conversely, negative outcomes are associated with a lack of sense of belonging, such as decreased motivation, engagement, and academic performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Goodenow, 1993; Weiss, 1973). For students with minoritized[1] identities, experiences of marginalization may prevent or diminish sense of belonging at their college or university (Hawkins & Larabee, 2009; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2008). These collective findings about sense of belonging drive its centrality as a goal for socialization initiatives.

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[1] The term "minoritized" refers to the process by which some students are rendered minority status based on others' perceptions of their identities or systems that favor privileged identities (Benitez, 2010; Stewart, 2013).

Institutional members of the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium measure their students' sense of belonging as an outcome of socialization programming. At one SERU member institution, Soria, Clark, and Koch (2012) found that students who attended Welcome Week had higher sense of belonging and higher academic outcomes than students who did not participate in Welcome Week. In another study of academic and social integration as outcomes of orientation programming, Mayhew, Stipeck, and Dorow (2011) found students of color were more likely than their White peers to credit orientation with helping them socially adjust to campus. In a study of Latino students' sense of belonging as an outcome of college transition, Hurtado and Carter (1997) found formal socialization initiatives in the first year had positive effects, while perceptions of an unwelcoming racial climate in the first two years had negative effects on sense of belonging in students' third year.

Undergraduate socialization programs and initiatives also serve as a strategy for institutions to educate their new students about the institution's espoused theories (Pascarella, Terenzini, & Wolfle, 1986). Socialization programs "encapsulate the essence of their institutions by introducing new students to the academic life, culture, traditions, history, people, and surrounding communities" (Mack, 2010, p. 5). According to Argyris and Schon (1978), formal organizational artifacts "often reflect a theory of action (the *espoused theory*) which conflicts with the organization's *theory-in-use* (the theory of action constructed from observation of actual behavior)" (p. 15). Institutional artifacts connected to socialization efforts (e.g., mission statements, admission viewbooks, and now digital media) serve as indicators of college and university efforts to communicate a certain narrative about the institution's culture (Kuh & Whitt, 1988), such as values of inclusion and diversity (e.g., Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Morphew & Hartley, 2006). While prospective and new students encounter these artifacts, they

also interact with and are influenced by people identified and trained to socialize them by communicating specific institutional messages. Given the superlative influence of peers on undergraduate students (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), a key group responsible for doing the work of socializing prospective and new students is undergraduate peers: giving tours, serving on panels, and connecting students with campus resources. In discussing the influence of peer relationships on students' sense of belonging, Strayhorn (2012) posited, "students establish meaningful relationships (e.g., friendships), which, in turn, can be seen as supportive resources that can be brought to bear on the college experience. Such feelings will enhance students' commitments, connections, and, consequently, retention" (p. 9). By the nature of their work, peer socialization agents (PSAs) are working toward the implementation of institutional goals for diversity and retention.

Students from minoritized groups (i.e., students of color, LGBTQ+ students, first generation students, low-income students, students with disabilities) who serve as PSAs may experience discrepancies between the institution's espoused culture they are trained to promote and their own lived experiences on campus. For example, dating back 25 years and continuing today, numerous studies have documented experiences of marginalization and an unwelcoming campus climate for students of color at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Allen, 1992; Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996; Harper, 2013; Harper & Hurtado, 2011; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Ortiz, 2004; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Smith, 2009; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Additional literature has found similar unwelcoming climates for LGBTQ students (Garvey & Rankin, 2015; Rankin, 2005; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, S., 2010; Woodford, Han, Craig, Lim, & Matney, 2014). This study seeks to understand

the ways minoritized students serving as PSAs make meaning about their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions.

Harper (2013) illuminated peer influence directly related to minoritized students' socialization in his analysis of the role of same-race peers in socializing Black students at PWIs. Harper's (2013) participants – 219 Black male undergraduates from 42 postsecondary institutions – reflected on the influence of their same-race peers in formal contexts, "through structured panels" and informal contexts "via small group conversations over meals" (p. 203). Black male undergraduates in Harper's (2013) study described learning from older students about "their prior encounters with onlyness and racial microaggressions as well as with racist experiences that were more overt" (p. 203). Harper's (2013) study told the story of socialization from the perspective of the students being socialized. My study seeks the perspective of peer socialization agents themselves. How do minoritized peer socialization agents make sense of "racial realities" (Harper, 2013, p. 208), for example, if those realities are in conflict with what students were trained to communicate as institutional ambassadors?

How students make meaning of their experiences and relationships depends on their cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal complexity (Baxter Magolda, 2001), and some studies have found that experiences of marginalization catalyze development of students' meaning-making capacity. For example, Torres (2003) and Torres and Baxter Magolda (2004) found that experiencing racism early in college prompted Latino/a students to be more open to multiple perspectives. Abes and Jones (2004) reported similar findings for lesbian students, reporting that experiences of sexuality-based discrimination created opportunities for students to self-author their beliefs and identities. Similarly, Pizzolato (2003, 2004, 2005) found "high-risk" college students began to define their goals and identities internally after experiencing dissonance.

Existing literature about discriminatory collegiate contexts (Harper, 2013; Harper & Hurtado, 2011; Rankin et al., 2010) suggest that experiences of minoritized PSAs may not align with the institution's espoused culture, yet other literature (Abes & Jones, 2004; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004) suggests minoritized PSAs may exhibit complex cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal meaning-making processes.

Minoritized PSAs (MPSAs) have a high level of responsibility for socializing prospective and new students. MPSAs' socialization efforts move their institution toward the implementation of institutional goals for diversity and retention. It would benefit higher education leaders to understand the ways that MPSAs make sense of their collegiate contexts; yet, no scholars have studied the experiences of the minoritized undergraduate peers responsible for socialization.

Purpose of the Study

Current higher education literature stresses the importance of institutional culture and calls for increased diversity, persistence, and retention. Student development literature emphasizes sense of belonging and developmental theories that describe student growth while in college. This study extended and bridged these bodies of literature by studying institutional culture and how minoritized students responsible for working toward institutional goals made meaning of their collegiate contexts.

The purpose of this study was to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. Through this study, I explored whether there are differences between institutional espoused theories (i.e., culture, values, norms) and MPSAs' lived experiences. I pursued an understanding of the meaning-making processes minoritized students who serve as peer socialization agents engage to make sense of

6

the dominant institutional culture in their roles as socialization agents. Being a peer socialization agent is in and of itself a developmental activity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Tankersley, 2013), and this study informs higher education and student affairs practice by providing a nuanced understanding of MPSA meaning-making and considerations for creating programs that foster cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development.

Research Question

The research question I sought to answer in this study was: How do minoritized peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their lived experiences as minoritized students and institutional ambassadors?

Major Terms and Concepts

In this section, I define and describe the terms and concepts that are central to this study.

Socialization

Foundational scholars of socialization studied the process at the level of individual membership in society. An early definition of socialization came from Brim (1966): "the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less effective members of their society" (p. 3). Numerous scholars of Brim's era stressed socialization as a process by which new organization members developed an understanding of and adopted group norms, resulting in solidarity, cohesion, and stability (Clausen, 1968; Getzels, 1963; Hawkes, 1975; Mortimer & Simmons, 1978; Parsons, Shils, & Olds, 1951). Weidman (1989), a leading scholar on socialization in postsecondary education, complicated the process and outcomes of socialization in his conceptual framework for undergraduate socialization by including complex factors such as student background characteristics, family pressures, and

formal and informal campus engagement. Weidman (1989) conceived of undergraduate socialization as

> a series of processes whereby the student: (1) enters college as a freshman with certain values, aspirations, and other personal goals; (2) is exposed to various socializing influences while attending college, including normative pressures exerted via (a) social relationships with college faculty and peers, (b) parental pressures, and (c) involvement with noncollege references groups; (3) assesses the salience of the various normative pressures encountered for attaining personal goals; and (4) changes or maintains those values, aspirations, and personal goals that were held at college entrance. (p. 122)

Postmodern perspectives on socialization in higher education conceived of a bidirectional process that resulted in individual and organizational change (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). "While novices are learning about the organization, their involvement and interactions should also lead to organizational change" (Austin & McDaniels, 2006, p. 401). Newcomers do not arrive as blank slates; individuals bring their own experiences, perspectives, and values to an organization.

Socialization scholars have identified four distinct stages of socialization: anticipatory, formal, informal, and personal. As its name indicates, anticipatory socialization happens before an individual joins an organization. At that time, the person gains awareness of the organizational characteristics and norms (Van Maanen, 1983). Anticipatory socialization for undergraduate students happens during the college search process. Students get to know the characteristics of the different institutions they are considering, including normative attitudes and behaviors on each campus, along with an awareness of college attendance in general (Shields, 2002). In this study, I am exploring the meaning-making process of minoritized peer

socialization agents who work in anticipatory socialization as admissions employees, serving as tour guides, phone outreach ambassadors, and recruitment volunteers.

As the second stage of socialization, formal socialization encompasses the period in which newcomers think and feel idealistically about their membership in the organization (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). Formal socialization activities involve formal instruction by socialization agents (Clark & Corcoran, 1986). From this perspective, the college orientation experience is viewed as a form of formal socialization to college. In this study, I am exploring the meaning-making process of minoritized peer socialization agents who work in formal socialization roles, including orientation leaders, welcome week leaders, and peer leaders for an extended orientation for students of color and first generation students.

The third and fourth stages of socialization are less central to this study. The third stage, informal socialization, involves learning about "the informal role expectations and the degrees of flexibility associated with the role," primarily through observations and interactions with peers and other organizational members (Austin & McDaniels, 2006, p. 403). The fourth stage, personal socialization, involves internalization and movement toward establishment in the organization, including increasing one's engagement (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). While all four stages of socialization are important to explore, this study focused on peer socialization agents selected and trained to facilitate anticipatory and formal socialization for prospective and new students. Certainly I learned about informal socialization and personal socialization in this study, but the research design focuses on the first two stages.

Peer Socialization Agents

In this study, I introduce the phrase *peer socialization agents* to describe college and university undergraduate students who are selected and trained to serve as institutional

9

ambassadors through anticipatory and formal socialization activities. I am putting these three words together to capture the distinct features that *peer socialization agents* are 1) undergraduate peers who are 2) facilitating anticipatory and/or formal socialization activities as 3) agents of their institution. Peer socialization agents (PSAs) function as "key customer service and front-line associates, serving as both educators and public relations agents" (Mann, Andrews, & Rodenburg, 2010, p. 55). Higher education administrators expect PSAs to communicate consistent cultural messages to new students, as indicated by selection processes, training, and supervision. An essential element is identifying students with well-developed sense of belonging. Students with high senses of belonging are motivated to benefit their institution and positively influence their peers' sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). The complex responsibilities assigned to peer socialization agents requires intensive training about role expectations, self-awareness, teamwork, leadership skills, communication skills, and campus specifics, such as policies, procedures and mission (Abraham, Nesbit, & Ward-Roof, 2003; Pretty, 2004). Some scholars (Abes et al., 2007; Tankersley, 2013) have advanced the notion that peer socialization agent positions are developmental contexts through which higher education and student affairs professionals can create conditions for developing meaning-making capacity. I am interested in the subset of PSAs who are from minoritized social identity groups.

Minoritized

As noted earlier in this chapter, I am using the term "minoritized" to signify the active process of being assigned minority status based on perceived identity and regardless of identity salience. This concept emphasizes that minority status has been and continues to be constructed through "structural and institutional actions that have over time limited access to, and led to a lack of presence among" certain populations of students (Benitez, 2010, p. 131). For this study,

students self-identified as members of specific groups that are minoritized at the study site. At the study site, minoritized populations include students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students from a low-income background; first-generation students; and students with disabilities.

Meaning-Making and Sensemaking

Exploring the meaning-making process of minoritized peer socialization agents is central to this inquiry. I use the terms "meaning-making" and "sensemaking" interchangeably throughout the study. This decision was an intentional blending of organizational and student development concepts.

Organizational scholars have established sensemaking as "the primary site where meanings materialize that inform and constrain identity and action" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). According to Bastedo (2012), "Sensemaking theory could inform our understanding of how students… interpret the multiple demands placed on them and how they differ in their behavior in the response to obstacles to success" (p. 14). When discrepancies exist between the current state of affairs and the expected state of affairs, sensemaking becomes explicit (Weick et al., 2005). Ancona (2011) extended organizational definitions of sensemaking to individual leadership capabilities. As a core tenet of leadership, sensemaking "is most often needed when our understanding of the world becomes unintelligible in some way" (Ancona, 2011, p. 4). This conception of "sensemaking" aligns with definitions of "meaning-making" from student development literature.

In my study, I am seeking to understand how minoritized peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. From student development literature, I am using the concept of a meaning-making filter as it was conceived by Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007). Put briefly, students'

11

cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development (self-authorship) mediates how they filter contextual influences and thus "make sense" of themselves and their environments. Experiencing dissonance as described by Ancona (2011) is an opportunity to engage internal foundations to make sense of contextual influences. This concept is described fully in the next section of this chapter and this process is at the heart of this study.

Perspectivelessness

In higher education and student affairs literature, the term "colorblind" is commonly used to describe policies and practices that are aversively racist by supposedly ignoring race, ethnicity, and culture in an effort to be fair and treat all students equally. This term is problematic. I argue that using a disability, in this case blindness, as a metaphor for something negative perpetuates ableism and is a microaggression against the blind and low-vision community (E. Broido, N. Evans, A. Mitchell, K. Obear, K. Renn, M. Tregoning, personal communication, September 1, 2015). For this study, I needed a term that captured the aversively racist, cisgenderist[2], and heterosexist philosophies of socialization programs. My search for an accurate and non-ableist term meant a departure from higher education literature.

I am adopting and extending "perspectivelessness" as it was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1988), a critical race legal scholar known for her scholarship on intersectionality. She introduced the term "perspectivelessness" to describe the dominant pedagogies of U.S. law schools. Crenshaw (1988) wrote:

> The dissatisfaction [of law students of color] goes much deeper – to the substantive
>
> dynamics of the classroom and their particular impact on minority students. In many

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[2] Cisgenderism "refers to the cultural and systemic ideology that denies, denigrates, or pathologizes self-identified gender identities that do not align with assigned gender at birth as well as resulting behavior, expression, and community" (Lennon & Mistler, 2014, p. 63).

instances, minority students' values, beliefs, and experiences clash not only with those of

their classmates but also with those of their professors. Yet because of the dominant view

in academe that legal analysis can be taught without directly addressing conflicts of

individual values, experiences, and world views, these conflicts seldom, if ever, reach the

surface of the classroom discussion. Dominant beliefs in the objectivity of legal discourse

serve to suppress the conflict by discounting the relevance of any particular perspective

in legal analysis and by positing an analytical stance that has no specific cultural,

political, or class characteristics. I call this dominant mode "perspectivelessness." (p. 2)

As Crenshaw's definition indicates, pedagogies that purport a neutral stance actually perpetuate

the dominant mode of practice. Perspectivelessness assumes that identities are irrelevant to

practice. For the socialization programs in this study, conducted at an institution whose mascot I

have given the pseudonym "Bulldogs," perspectivelessness was communicated as, "We are all

Bulldogs." Throughout this study, I use "perspectiveless" and "perspectivelessness" to name the

supposed identity-neutrality of socialization programs. These programs are not literally

perspectiveless; they perpetuate hegemonic racism, cisgenderism, and heterosexism.

Conceptual Framework

Two theories intersect to guide this study; I blend a theory of individual meaning-making

with a theory of systemic racism. Both are equally important as I seek to understand individual

students whose lives are influenced by the context in which they exist. Using multiple

interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives in higher education research is a practice that Abes

(2009) argued takes researchers out of "theoretical silos" as a way to "explore the power

structures underlying student development theory" (p. 142). On their own, neither theory suffices

to fully understand the ways MPSAs make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their identities and their socialization agent positions.

First, meaning-making theory (Abes et al., 2007; Baxter Magolda, 2001) is a central construct of the study. Specifically, I am using the concept of a meaning-making filter (Abes et al., 2007) mediated by self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001) to frame individual student sensemaking. Second, Critical Race Theory centers students' minoritized identities and focuses on systemic oppression. Together, these theories make up the conceptual framework of critical sensemaking that guides this study. In this section, I summarize each of the theories that undergird this study.

Individual Sensemaking Process: Applying a Meaning-Making Filter

Through this study, I am trying to understand how minoritized peer socialization agents make sense of their collegiate contexts in relation to their identities and their socialization agent positions. Central to this study is the theory of developing meaning-making capacity called "self-authorship," which is the process through which students shift from external to internal self-definition (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1982, 1994). On the journey to self-authorship, college students move from following external formulas (external self-definition) through a crossroads (a transition between external and internal self-definition) toward an internal foundation (one's own complex system for sensemaking) (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Individuals engage a specific meaning-making structure until they experience cognitive dissonance – differences between the meaning-making structure and current reality – and that phase no longer makes sense (Kegan, 1982, 1994).

The process of developing self-authorship across the phases summarized above involves three interconnected domains: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development (Baxter

Magolda, 2001, 2007, 2008). Self-authoring individuals who engage internal meaning-making

develop complexity in all three of these domains (Baxter Magolda, 2007).

> Self-authoring individuals have developed their own system for making sense of the
>
> many external influences that affect them and can draw on that internal system when
>
> faced with conflicting expectations or expectations that are not in line with their beliefs.
>
> (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 101)

Self-authorship development is depicted below (Figure 1). I note the cognitive, intrapersonal,

and interpersonal complexities associated with each phase of self-authorship development.

	External Meaning Making/Following Formulas	**Crossroads: Transition from External to Internal**	**Internal Meaning Making (Self-Authorship)**
Cognitive *How do I know?*	Believe what authority believes	Evolving awareness of multiple perspectives	Multiple truths & internal beliefs in one's own vision
Intrapersonal *Who am I?*	Define self through others	Evolving awareness of distinct identity	Internal system of values and perspectives
Interpersonal *How do I construct relationships with others?*	Approval-seeking relationships	Evolving awareness of need for authenticity	Authenticity & mutuality

Figure 1. Self-Authorship Development
(adapted from Baxter Magolda, 2001; Jones & Abes, 2013)

Abes and Jones (2004) applied self-authorship theory in conjunction with the model of

multiple dimensions of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000) in their study of lesbian identity

development and meaning-making. As a result, these authors developed the Reconceptualized

Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) and introduced the concept of a meaning-

making filter (Abes et al., 2007). In the RMMDI, the meaning-making filter serves as a screening

tool between context and identity (Abes et al., 2007). "How context moves through the filter

depends on the permeability of the filter, and the permeability depends on the complexity of the

person's meaning-making capacity" (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 104). When an individual has less

complex meaning-making capacity, consistent with external self-definition as described by Baxter Magolda (2001, 2007, 2008), external influences move easily through the highly permeable filter (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & Abes, 2013). When an individual has more complex meaning-making capacity, the filter is less permeable, consistent with self-authorship (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & Abes, 2013). I am extending the meaning-making filter to my conceptual framework for studying the sensemaking of minoritized peer socialization agents about their collegiate contexts in relation to their identities and their socialization agent positions. In an effort to specifically explore issues of power and privilege in MPSAs' collegiate contexts, I am applying a critical lens by using tenets of Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory

Scholars have called for greater attention to issues of power, privilege, and oppression in educational research (e.g., Brown, Hinton, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Harper, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Parker & Lynn, 2009; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2011). College student development theories, specifically, "are limited in their use of language about race and considerations of the roles of racism in students' development and learning" (L. D. Patton et al., 2007, p. 39). This limitation is true of self-authorship. Although some people of color participated in Baxter Magolda's (2001) original study, none were retained in the longitudinal study from which Baxter Magolda developed her theory of self-authorship. For this study of minoritized peer socialization agents, Critical Race Theory overlays self-authorship theory with the critical lens necessary to understand MPSAs' collegiate contexts and meaning-making about those contexts in relation to their identities and socialization agent positions.

Legal scholars developed Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the mid-1970s with Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman leading the theoretical movement to unveil the roles of race and racism in societal issues. Two decades later, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) extended CRT to teacher education, and it has slowly emerged as a theoretical framework for higher education research since then. CRT is comprised of five basic tenets, from which I draw upon in this study: 1) racism is endemic and fundamental to understanding how U.S. society functions (Bell, 1992) and is layered within intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1991); 2) CRT challenges meritocracy and supposed race neutrality (Solorzano, 1997); 3) CRT unveils "interest-convergence" gains (Bell, 1980) while working to eliminate racism, sexism, and poverty (Freire, 1970); 4) CRT advances counterstories as legitimate and authoritative (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1989; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002); and 5) CRT crosses disciplinary boundaries to center race and racism in past and contemporary contexts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In my study, I am extending these tenets of CRT to understand the ways minoritized peer socialization agents make meaning about their collegiate contexts in relation to their identities and their socialization agent positions.

Conceptual Framework: MPSA Critical Sensemaking

As depicted in my conceptual framework (Figure 2), I anticipate MPSAs' collegiate contexts to involve everyday discriminatory experiences, as suggested by Critical Race Theory. As MPSAs make meaning of their collegiate contexts, they employ their individual meaning-making filters, which are determined by their self-authoring abilities. The meaning-making filters of self-authoring minoritized peer socialization agents who engage cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal complexity will be less permeable (Jones & Abes, 2013). Self-authoring MPSAs might be able to manage competing messages and experiences internally (as suggested by Abes & Jones, 2004; Pizzolato, 2003; and Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004) and

through counterstorytelling (as suggested by Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; and Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). For example, a self-authoring tour guide of color who experiences daily microaggressions from her White peers on campus might engage a meaning-making filter that reconciles the complex conflict between her racist peer context and her own sense of place and purpose at the institution.

The filters of MPSAs who define themselves externally will be more permeable (Jones & Abes, 2013). MPSAs who engage less complexity in their cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development might rely on the training they received from authorities to determine how they make sense of their collegiate contexts in relation to their identities and socialization agent positions (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Jones & Abes, 2013). For example, a tour guide of color whose self-authoring capacity is emerging might embrace the perspectivelessness of admissions practices and promote herself as a symbol of "we are all Bulldogs."

Collegiate Contexts
Discrimination is an everyday experience for minoritized students

Minoritized Peer Socialization Agent (MPSA)

Meaning-Making Filter
Depending on complexity of self-authorship, contextual influences pass through to different degrees
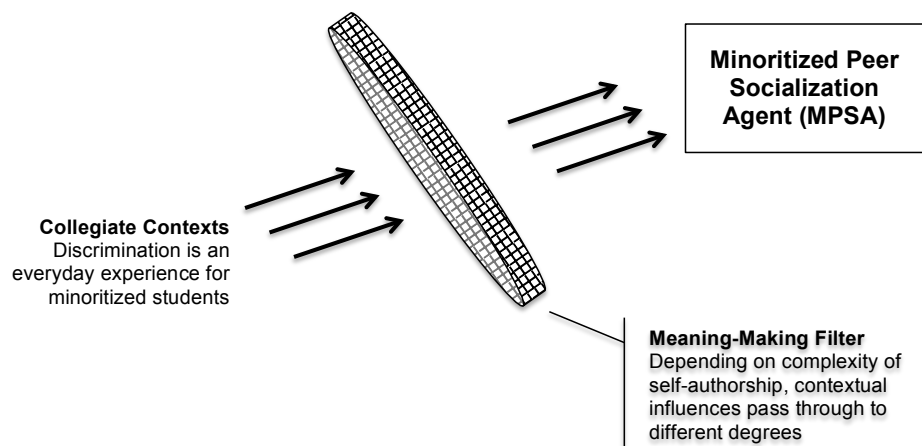
Figure 2. Minoritized Peer Socialization Agent Critical Sensemaking

With self-authorship mediating MPSAs' meaning-making filters and Critical Race Theory guiding the study, this framework provides a critical lens through which to explore the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal assumptions and complexities of participants'

reflections (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). Together, these theories provide a framework for exploring the critical sensemaking process of minoritized peer socialization agents about their collegiate contexts in relation to their identities and their socialization agent positions.

Significance of the Study

Exploring the meaning-making processes of peer socialization agents with minoritized identities is important for the students who hold these positions and for the postsecondary institutions they represent. These undergraduate students hold a high level of responsibility for communicating institutional messages to prospective and new students. Students in socialization agent positions who are from minoritized groups may experience tensions between the messages they are trained to convey and the students' own lived experiences, and this study informs higher education practice as it relates to maximizing the developmental impact of these student leadership positions for MPSAs. From an organizational perspective, understanding how peer socialization agents make sense of and communicate institutional culture is important because institutions desire a diverse and inclusive campus environment (Ibarra, 2001; Morphew & Hartley, 2006) where students persist to graduation (Renn & Reason, 2013) and peer socialization agents work toward the enactment of those institutional goals.

Summary

The undergraduate students who facilitate higher education socialization initiatives educate prospective and new students' about campus culture and thus, work toward the implementation of institutional goals for diversity and retention. Because unwelcoming campus climates have been documented for minoritized students, minoritized students who serve as peer socialization agents may experience discrepancies between the messages they are expected to convey about campus culture and their own lived experiences. The purpose of this study is to

understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. A critical meaning-making study illuminates issues of power and systemic oppression, in addition to students' own lived experiences.

Overview of the Dissertation

This chapter established the need for this study and a conceptual framework through which to conduct the study. In chapter two, I review extant literature that frames and explains concepts of this study. Chapter three is a description of my methodology and methods. In chapter four, I present the findings of this inquiry. Finally, in chapter five, I explore numerous implications for practice, theory, and research.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTS FOR STUDYING MINORITIZED PEER SOCIALIZATION AGENT SENSEMAKING

The purpose of this study is to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. In this chapter, I discuss the contexts for studying sensemaking of minoritized peer socialization agents. Although there is no literature about minoritized peer socialization agents, per se, literature about the following areas scaffolds this study: 1) goals and outcomes for undergraduate socialization; 2) undergraduate students as socialization agents; 3) campus climate; and 4) individual meaning-making processes. This review includes foundational and contemporary literature from peer-reviewed studies, theoretical writing, and practitioner-based articles.

Undergraduate Socialization Goals and Outcomes

Weidman's (1989) model of undergraduate socialization is the prevailing conceptual understanding of socialization in postsecondary education. Many researchers have adapted and built upon Weidman's (1989) model (e.g., Padgett et al., 2010; Shields, 2002; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Weidman's (1989) model "explores a set of socialization processes, concentrating largely on the impact of normative contexts and interpersonal relations among an organization's members" (p. 120). Simultaneous socialization processes influence students' academic and social outcomes, including career choices, values, aspirations, and lifestyle preferences (Weidman, 1989). Weidman was primarily interested in furthering the theoretical understanding of college impact, and as such, his model is about socialization of college students over their entire collegiate experience. Weidman's conceptual model provides a nuanced overview of the varying processes of socialization, which are in effect during all socialization stages.

This study will focus on the anticipatory and formal stages of socialization and the minoritized peer socialization agents within them. Anticipatory socialization is the pre-arrival stage of socialization, during which time pre-college students are forming expectations and making decisions (Feldman, 1976; Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975; Thornton & Nardi, 1975). Formal socialization takes place when an individual "begins to assume the specific demands" of being a student (Weidman, 1989, p. 119). In this section, I discuss four subthemes of undergraduate socialization that contextualize my study: 1) anticipatory socialization; 2) formal socialization; 3) students' identities and pre-college experiences in socialization; and 4) sense of belonging as a goal and outcome for socialization initiatives.

Anticipatory Socialization

Thornton and Nardi (1975) posited that the most influential sources of information during anticipatory socialization are generalized sources, such as media and individuals in the role one seeks (i.e., current college students). They described the information conveyed to the prospective role acquirer as "generalized and stereotyped," resulting in idealized, incomplete conceptions of reality (Thornton & Nardi, 1975, p. 874). "The specific features evident during this stage tend to be those the enactment of the role *should* involve, rather than those it actually involves" (Thornton & Nardi, 1975, p. 875). The anticipatory socialization of college students happens during recruitment and admissions, whereby admissions staff give prospective students and their families generalized information about their institution. Idealized notions about any given college or university abound in higher education recruitment materials (Hartley & Morphew, 2008) and are promoted by peer socialization agents. Peer socialization agents working on behalf of their institutions to recruit students through anticipatory socialization activities (e.g., tours, panels) are trained to emphasize the institution's espoused theories (i.e., values of inclusion)

which may overemphasize what the collegiate experience at that institution *should* involve, resulting in an idealized image of the student experience.

Formal Socialization

When one becomes an insider instead of an outsider, formal socialization begins. Written and verbal communications overtly convey formalized expectations (Thornton & Nardi, 1975). For many postsecondary institutions, formal socialization includes the orientation program. At orientation, the student handbook and institutional staff and peer socialization agents present formalized expectations. Pascarella, Terenzini, and Wolfle (1986) summarized the socialization goals of orientation programs as:

> to acquaint students with the administrative regulations and expected behaviors of the institution, introduce them to student organizations and activities, acquaint them with available student services, help them design an academic program, and provide opportunities to meet informally with the institution's faculty. (p. 156)

Others have identified determining person-institution fit (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Rentz & Saddlemire, 1988) and increasing students' sense of belonging (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Soria et al., 2012) as orientation goals.

Students' Identities and Pre-College Experiences

Students' identities and pre-college experiences (Tinto, 1993; Weidman, 1989) influence the ways they experience socialization. For example, first-generation college students may lack anticipatory sources of socialization such as parental influence. First-generation college students in one study reported lack of parental support in addition to "greater outside demands, primarily work and family obligations," which limited their access to socialization activities (Shields, 2002, p. 388). Another example is a recent study of the racial socialization of African American

collegiate men (Harper, 2013). Harper (2013) found that African American men at predominantly White institutions sought out their same-race peers for socialization related to navigating racist collegiate environments. These examples of socialization experiences point to the need to understand how students with minoritized identities who are engaged in socialization work make meaning of perspectiveless socialization programs and their own collegiate contexts.

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging enhances college student success (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005) by increasing students' motivation to persist (Hausmann et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2012; Yi, 2008). Socialization programs serve as an institution's first opportunity to develop students' sense of belonging (Capps & Miller, 2006; Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Rode, 2000). A few researchers have studied sense of belonging as an outcome of socialization programming. One study found that students who participated in Welcome Week had higher senses of belonging than students who did not participate in Welcome Week (Soria et al., 2012). Another study found that students of color were more likely than their White peers to credit orientation with helping them socially adjust to campus (Mayhew et al., 2011). Hurtado and Carter (1997) found formal socialization initiatives in the first year had positive effects on Latino students' sense of belonging. Additionally, Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, and Oseguera (2008) found that frequent and substantive interaction with a diverse range of peers contributed to students' sense of belonging. These studies center sense of belonging as a goal and an outcome of collegiate socialization initiatives.

Summary

Undergraduate socialization is comprised of a series of processes through which prospective and new students simultaneously develop sense of belonging, learn about the

institution's idealized or espoused theories (anticipatory socialization), and learn institutional

norms and expectations (formal socialization). Students' pre-college experiences and multiple

identities make a difference in how students access and experience socialization programs. With

this understanding of undergraduate socialization, I now turn to a key group of individuals who

implement socialization programs – undergraduate peers.

Undergraduate Peers as Socialization Agents

As discussed in chapter one, the influence of peers has long been established in college

impact research. According to Chickering (1969), "A student's most important teacher is another

student" (p. 253). Indeed, peers are "the single most important environmental influence on

student development" (Astin, 1993, p. xiv). One only needs to do a basic search for "college peer

influence" in a library database to see the many ways peers have been empirically found to

influence each other in college. In this section, I discuss three subthemes that contextualize my

study: 1) the influence of peers in higher education; 2) the personal benefits to serving as a peer

socialization agent; and 3) peer socialization agents from minoritized groups.

Peer Influence in College

Two foundational texts that have established an understanding of peer influence in

college are Astin's (1993) *What Matters in College?* and Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) *How

College Affects Students*, and both remain relevant today. Astin's (1993) book presents findings

from data collected by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Astin (1993) found peers

to have significant influence on 82 outcome measures of college students' personality, self-

concept, attitudes, values, beliefs, behavior, academic and cognitive development, career

development, and satisfaction with college. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) synthesized college

impact research in a meta-analysis and identified peers as influencing learning and cognitive

development, personal growth and change (i.e., identity, self-concepts, sociopolitical views, civic involvement, attitudes about diversity, values), educational and career attainment, and quality of life. As noted by Astin (1993), "By judicious and imaginative use of peer groups, any college or university can substantially strengthen its impact on student learning and personal development" (p. xiv). Knowing the profound influence of peers, it makes sense that higher education administrators and student affairs professionals utilize undergraduates as a mechanism to facilitate their anticipatory and formal socialization initiatives.

Personal Benefits of Being a Peer Socialization Agent

In addition to the importance of undergraduate peers in socializing prospective and new students, the individuals selected for socialization agent positions may experience personal benefits. Recruiting current undergraduates "with true leadership potential" has been identified as "a critical element in the selection process" of peer socialization agents (Abraham et al., 2003, p. 67). Peer socialization agent positions foster the potential for self-authorship development (Abes et al., 2007; Tankersley, 2013), making the positions sites for holistic student development and realization of students' leadership potential. Peer socialization agent training has the potential to foster cognitive dissonance, thus catalyzing students' crossroads in developing self-authorship (Abes et al., 2007). In his dissertation research, Tankersley (2013) found that serving as an orientation leader catalyzed self-authorship development. These studies, however, do not specifically explore the experiences or benefits of being a peer socialization agent for minoritized students.

Minoritized Peer Socialization Agents

For undergraduate peer socialization agents from minoritized social identity groups, leadership may extend beyond the minimum expectations of their employing unit. In one study

(Harper, 2013), African-American peer socialization agents viewed themselves as having a responsibility for the success of the entering Black students who participated in their socialization program. Black male students who participated in a college bridge program for students of color described their peer socialization agents – all current Black undergraduates at the institution – as educating them about the racial climate at the institution (Harper, 2013). According to these participants, their Black peer socialization agents

> advised program participants on how best to respond to racial issues that would inevitably emerge; shared lists of faculty and staff advocates they should seek out when confronted with racism; insisted that these incoming students use resources in campus counseling centers, as well as in Black/multicultural centers; touted the benefits of membership in ethnic student organizations; explained the necessity of solidarity among minoritized students; and volunteered to engage in longer-term success partnerships with program participants that included but extended beyond racial problem-solving. (Harper, 2013, p. 203)

The peer socialization agents described above saw themselves as partners in new Black students' success at their institution. These upper-level undergraduates seemed to conceive of themselves as having a level of responsibility for the success of new Black students joining their community. Is this the "leadership potential" stressed as an essential quality for peer socialization agents by Abraham et al. (2003)? Might it be related to their self-authorship about discriminatory collegiate contexts? With almost no literature about minoritized peer socialization agents, these questions remain unanswered.

Summary

Undergraduate peers are "the single most important environmental influence on student development" (Astin, 1993, p. xiv). As such, undergraduate peers are a key group charged with socialization prospective and new students to their institution. Students who serve as peer socialization agents benefit from the holistic personal development fostered by their socialization agent positions. Yet, Harper's (2013) study is the only one about minoritized peer socialization agents, and his study is from the perspective of students being socialized. This leads me to wonder: how do minoritized peer socialization agents view themselves in relation to prospective and new students from their minoritized identity groups? Do they see themselves as having a responsibility for new students' success, as did the Black peer socialization agents in Harper's study? Is sense of responsibility driven by sense of belonging? Do minoritized peer socialization agents experience sense of belonging at the institutions where they are minoritized? These questions serve as a bridge to the next body of literature that contextualizes my study - research about campus climate.

Campus Climate: Marginalization, Stress, and Counterspaces

As I stated in the first chapter, I anticipate minoritized peer socialization agents experience discrepancies and/or tensions between their institution's espoused theories and their own lived experiences. I have formed this assumption based on nearly three decades of campus climate literature and research about minoritized students' experiences of marginalization. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of research on "the sources and outcomes of campus racial climate" (p. 281) and constructed a framework for understanding campus climate that delineated external and internal forces. The resulting ASHE-ERIC report, *Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial-Ethnic*

Diversity in Higher Education (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999), continues today as a widely accepted framework for understanding campus climate for diversity. Before Hurtado et al.'s (1999) monograph, researchers focused on certain aspects of campus climate (i.e., structural diversity, psychological dimension); Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999) were the first scholars to develop a comprehensive framework that included external and internal forces on campus climate. Contemporary campus racial climate scholars use Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework to help define campus climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Yosso & Lopez, 2010) and extend Critical Race Theory as a research framework (Yosso & Lopez, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

In this section, I use the internal forces of the Framework for Understanding Campus Climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) to organize campus climate literature. External forces fall into two domains: governmental initiatives (e.g., financial aid, state affirmative action policy) and sociohistorical forces (e.g., suicide of Tyler Clementi, ITooAmHarvard tumblr) (Hurtado et al., 1998). Internal, or institutional, forces are organized into four interrelated but distinct dimensions of campus climate: 1) historical legacy of exclusion or inclusion; 2) structural diversity; 3) psychological dimension; and 4) behavioral dimension (Hurtado et al., 1998). To Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework, I am adding relevant literature about minority stress theory, a psychological dimension of campus climate, and literature about counterspaces as it relates to the behavioral dimension of campus climate.

Institutional Legacy

For the first two hundred years of U.S. higher education, the only people involved in teaching or attending college were White males (Geiger, 2005; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Rudolph, 1977; Thelin, 2011). Most PWIs have a history of exclusion (Thelin, 2011), and that legacy

influences "the prevailing climate" and practices at any given PWI (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 283). According to Hurtado et al. (1998), campus desegregation plans are a defining factor of campus racial climates at PWIs. Some leaders of postsecondary institutions, aware of the legacy of discrimination in higher education, advance espoused theories of diversity in an effort to change the landscape from exclusion to inclusion. For example, in a content analysis of 48 viewbooks from U.S. four-year institutions, Hartley and Morphew (2008) found "the prevailing message…was simply that students of all races, creeds and incomes are welcome. Diversity is frequently 'celebrated,' but ill defined" (p. 686). Yosso and Lopez (2010) noted, "Certainly recruitment brochures would not advertise the fact that many universities foster a campus climate wherein Whites enjoy a sense of entitlement while racial minorities face charges that they are unqualified and out of place" (p. 84). To be sure, adopting a new paradigm can be more challenging in practice than it is in theory, especially when an institution's espoused theory does not align with its theory-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

Structural Diversity

Structural diversity, the second dimension of campus climate, refers to the demographics of student enrollment. Many higher education leaders have put considerable effort in this domain as it relates to racial demographics, especially given research that has articulated cognitive, psychosocial, and interpersonal benefits of a racially diverse campus (e.g., Bowman, 2013; Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Pascarella, Edison, & Nora, 1996; Pike & Kuh, 2006). Yet, institutions that seek racial diversity to benefit White students are participating in what Critical Race Theorist Derrick Bell (1980) coined "interest-convergence." Pursuing interest-convergence goals without considering all of the dimensions of campus climate results in problems for students, such as

tokenism (D. A. Bell, 1980; Hurtado et al., 1998). Potential negative consequences of focusing only on structural diversity lead to the next dimension of campus climate, the psychological dimension.

Psychological Dimension

The third dimension of campus climate, the psychological dimension, has been well-documented in research about experiences of marginalization. For example, research has shown that students of color experience isolation, discrimination, and an unwelcoming environment at PWIs (Allen, 1992; Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Harper, 2013; Ortiz, 2004; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Turner, 1994; Yosso & Lopez, 2010; Yosso et al., 2009). African-American students at a PWI in one study "felt personally diminished by nonverbal microaggressions perpetrated by their White counterparts" (D. Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 67). In an analysis of CIRP data, Yi (2008) found the odds of stopping out or transferring to be greater for students of color than for White students. Yi's study adds to an existing body of research (e.g., Astin, 1993; Goodenow, 1993; Hausmann et al., 2007; Locks et al., 2008; Strayhorn, 2008, 2012) that quantitatively measures the influence of sense of belonging on student outcomes.

Other studies have documented similar perceptions of an unwelcoming climate among LGBTQ college students. For example, LGBTQ students reported experiencing more discrimination on campus than their cisgender and heterosexual peers (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Woodford, Han, Craig, Lim, & Matney, 2014). Recent studies have explored LGBTQ students' classroom contexts (Garvey & Rankin, 2015) and faculty interactions (Linley et al., In Press) and have found LGBTQ students find pockets of support in broadly discriminatory contexts.

Similar experiences of marginalization have been reported for students with disabilities (Beilke & Yssel, 1999; Taub, 1999) and first-generation students (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Jehangir, 2009, 2010). By and large, students with minoritized identities experience marginalization on college campuses. These studies collectively point to the importance of climate for minoritized students' psychological well-being.

Impact of psychological climate: Minority Stress Theory. Here I introduce minority stress theory to Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework. Minority stress theory explicates the impact of discrimination and marginalization on minoritized students. Several studies have explored identity-related stress for LGBTQ students (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011; Woodford et al., 2014) and students of color (Saldana, 1994; Smedley et al., 1993; Smith et al., 2011; Wei et al., 2010). Meyer (2003) advanced a model of "*minority stress* to distinguish the excess stress to which individuals from stigmatized social categories are exposed as a result of their social, often a minority, position" (p. 675). Minority stress theory connects one's minoritized identities to their health. The minority stress model depicts the impact of stress and coping on one's mental health outcomes (Meyer, 2003).

For individuals with minoritized identities, minority stress might include intergroup relations (e.g., difficulties with peers from whom one is different), intragroup conflict (e.g., feeling rejected among same or similar-identity peers), achievement stress (e.g., feeling less capable than others), and explicit experiences of discrimination (e.g., racism, cisgenderism, heterosexism) (Meyer, 2003; Smedley et al., 1993; Wei et al., 2010). Smith et al. (2011) extended this concept to what they coined as "racial battle fatigue" for racially minoritized individuals in predominantly White environments "replete with gendered racism, blocked opportunities, and mundane, extreme, environmental stress" (p. 64). The concept of racial battle

fatigue extends beyond mental health to include the physiological and behavioral strain people of color face in racist environments. "Fatigue" references the additional energy required to cope with racism, energy that one must redirect "from more positive life fulfilling desires" (Smith et al., 2011, p. 67). College students with minoritized identities experience the fatigue of minority stress as described in this section. This leads me to wonder how minoritized peer socialization agents cope with their potential marginalizing experiences while promoting their institution.

Behavioral Dimension

The fourth dimension of campus climate, the behavioral dimension, is about the ways students interact with each other. The overwhelming and enduring view of intergroup relations on PWI campuses is one of racial and ethnic clustering (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991; Villalpando, 2003), what some authors interpret as racial balkanization (e.g., Bloom, 1987; D'Souza, 1991). However, the myth of racial balkanization has been unveiled as racist ideology (hooks, 1995). Research about racial clustering at PWIs has established that for students of color, clustering is a form of cultural support within a larger environment that is perceived as unsupportive (Loo & Rolison, 1986; D. Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso & Lopez, 2010).

Collegiate counterspaces. Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework emphasized the benefits of racial clustering for minoritized students as providing supportive environments where minoritized students can survive hostile campuses. Here, I add the concept of "counterspaces" from Critical Race Theory to advance those benefits beyond surviving to potentially thriving. Solorzano et al. (2000) and Yosso and Lopez (2010) described creating and maintaining academic and social counterspaces as empowering for students of color. "Counter-spaces serve as sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (D. Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 70). Loo and

Rolison (1986) emphasized that students of color can feel a sense of belonging among their racial or ethnic subculture while simultaneously feeling alienated from the larger institutional environment. Campus culture centers are an example of institutionally-supported counterspaces (Yosso & Lopez, 2010).

In her review of Latina/o culture centers, Lozano (2010) wrote:

A culture center is often the only space on campus to offer a holistic learning experience allowing Latina/o students to explore racial/ethnic identity development and engage in social justice activism, political education, community outreach, academic mentoring and support, leadership development, social and professional networking, and alumni outreach. (p. 11)

Scholars at the forefront of contemporary research about campus culture centers (e.g., Lozano, 2010; Patton, 2010; Yosso & Lopez, 2010) view culture centers as spaces of resistance. Yosso and Lopez (2010) called modern culture centers at one institution "social, epistemological, and physical counterspaces" (p. 92). For minoritized students, counterspaces may provide reprieve and empowerment with peers who understand the fatigue of persistent discrimination.

Summary

Together, Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework for understanding campus climate and robust research about minoritized student experiences of marginalization illustrate the ways in which minoritized college students experience discrepancies between their institution's espoused theories of inclusion and students' own experiences of marginalization. This literature leads me to anticipate that minoritized peer socialization agents experience such discrepancies. Yet, I hold another assumption that minoritized peer socialization agents pursue socialization agent positions to benefit their institution, the same site of potential discrimination. How do minoritized peer

socialization agents make meaning of their potentially discriminatory experiences while promoting their institution to prospective and new students? In the next section, I describe literature about meaning-making processes.

Individual Student Sensemaking

Students' capacity to make sense of themselves and their environments develops throughout college. In this section, I summarize theories of developing capacity for meaning-making and discuss the centrality of the theory of self-authorship to this study about minoritized peer socialization agent sensemaking.

Perry (1970) extended psychological theory about meaning-making (Piaget, 1954) to college students, albeit limited to a sample of White men at Harvard. According to Perry's (1970) Scheme of Cognitive and Ethical Development, college students move through a series of nine positions, progressing from meaning-making structures that are dualistic to structures that are relativist. A strength of Perry's model is its emphasis on times of transition and the deflections and loss students can experience through growth (Perry, 1997). Minoritized peer socialization agents may face situations wrought with cognitive and emotional complexity, and Perry's scheme draws attention to the emotional aspect alongside the cognitive.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) further developed understandings of cognitive development by extending and adapting Perry's work to the meaning-making structures of women. Two concerns led these scholars to their research about women's epistemology: "(1) women appear to have difficulties in assuming authority and valuing their own minds, and (2) women's modes of thought and experience as knowers have been inadequately investigated" (Goldberger et al., 1997, p. 205). From their interviews with 135 women, Belenky et al. (1986) developed a scheme of five positions that explicate women's

intertwined sense of voice and sense of mind: silence, received knowledge (listening to others), subjective knowledge (the inner voice), procedural knowledge (the voice of reason), and constructed knowledge (integrating the voices). An important contribution of Belenky et al.'s (1986) study is the spotlight it shined on the common experience of women being "doubted, overlooked, and teased for their intellectual efforts" (Goldberger et al., 1997, p. 108). Individuals from other minoritized groups experience similar presumptions of incompetence (Gutierrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonzalez, & Harris, 2012). Minoritized peer socialization agents may experience similar presumptions, and how they make sense of them is important to this study.

Perry also influenced Kitchener and King (1981), who developed a model that integrated Perry's positions with Dewey's (1933) idea of reflective thinking as an educational goal. The seven-stage Reflective Judgment Model (Kitchener & King, 1981) "describes changes in assumptions about sources and certainty of knowledge and how decisions are justified in light of those assumptions" (Kitchener & King, 1997, p. 142). Stage three, where first-year college students typically score, can be characterized as a stage in which students expect authority to have answers in certain, but not all, areas, and maintain an assumption that all problems have solutions, even if certainty has not been revealed at the time of a given problem (Kitchener & King, 1997). Stage four, consistently identified with by college seniors, illuminates a shift to a default of uncertainly of knowledge and skepticism of authority (Kitchener & King, 1997). Movement from stage three to stage four marks the shift from pre-reflective thinking to quasi-reflective thinking, which is discernable by an acknowledgement of uncertainty of knowing (King & Kitchener, 1994). This theory is useful as I think about the varying ways minoritized peer socialization agents might consider certainty and uncertainty of knowledge.

The most constructivist of all meaning-making student development theories is self-authorship. Self-authorship refers to one's capacity to make meaning by "internally generating and coordinating one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties, rather than depending on external values, beliefs, and interpersonal loyalties" (Boes, Baxter Magolda, & Buckley, 2010, p. 4). True to the constructive-developmental tradition in which it was born, self-authorship entails connecting new concepts with existing understandings through constant reconsideration and subject-object transitions (Boes et al., 2010). Self-authoring individuals see themselves as constructing reality, and are able to reflect on and hold contradictory or conflicting feelings internally (Baxter Magolda, 2007, 2008; Boes et al., 2010). By trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments, individuals develop a meaning-making system in which they internally determine "beliefs, identity, and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 281).

Self-authorship theory is particularly useful in thinking about the ways that minoritized peer socialization agents may hold internally the tensions between their institution's espoused theories and the students' lived experiences. In Baxter Magolda's 300-plus interviews with young adults across their college experiences and their twenties, she found that most participants entered college in the first phase, "absorbed with finding out what the authorities thought," and left college "having made little progress toward self-authorship" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. xvii). However, as discussed in chapter one, other studies (Abes & Jones, 2004; Pizzolato, 2003, 2004, 2005; Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004) have found that students from minoritized groups may develop self-authorship earlier than Baxter Magolda's (2001) study sample. Existing literature about self-authorship among minoritized groups leads me to anticipate that minoritized peer socialization agents who have experienced dissonance or discrimination may self-author. By

coupling self-authorship as it influences students' meaning-making filters (Abes et al., 2007) with Critical Race Theory as the conceptual framework for this study, I will be able to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions.

Summary

This literature review situates my study of minoritized peer socialization agent sensemaking within the larger higher education and student affairs literature base. Anticipatory and formal socialization (Weidman, 1989) initiatives are the initial steps toward college student sense of belonging (Soria et al., 2012; Strayhorn, 2012) and persistence (Capps & Miller, 2006; Mullendore & Banahan, 2005). Because of the unparalleled influence of peers (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), socialization coordinators rely on undergraduate peers to conduct and facilitate socialization efforts and those students likely have a well-developed sense of belonging at the institution (Abraham et al., 2003; Pretty, 2004). As a personal benefit to the students in peer socialization agent positions, these positions may catalyze self-authorship development (Abes & Jones, 2004; Tankersley, 2013). With only one existing study (Harper, 2013) indirectly concerning minoritized peer socialization agents, I do not know whether or not to anticipate minoritized peer socialization agents have the same self-authorship outcomes as have been advanced generally about undergraduate student leaders.

Other literature about campus climate has established that minoritized students face discrimination (i.e., racism, cisgenderism, heterosexism) with regularity and on institutional and personal levels (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1999). Minoritized students likely experience fatigue from the stress of marginalization (Meyer, 2003; Saldana, 1994; Smedley et

al., 1993; Smith et al., 2011; Wei et al., 2010) and may seek relationships with peers who can identify with their fatigue through counterspaces (Lozano, 2010; L. D. Patton, 2010; Yosso & Lopez, 2010). At the same time, self-authorship studies of minoritized students point to complex meaning-making capabilities among minoritized students who have experienced discrimination (Abes & Jones, 2004; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004).

These bodies of literature lead me to believe that minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents likely experience discrepancies between their institution's espoused theories of inclusion and students' own lived experiences on campus. Yet, the fact that minoritized students serve as socialization agents points to a sense of belonging at the institution where they experience discrimination. How do minoritized peer socialization agents hold potentially competing realities internally? Are minoritized peer socialization agents making meaning about their collegiate contexts by self-authoring? The literature discussed in this chapter and these questions established the purpose of this study: to understand the ways minoritized peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. Specifically, a critical model of self-authorship theory will help me identify minoritized peer socialization agents' capacities for cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal complexity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In this chapter, I explain the methodology and methods I used to carry out this study. In this study, I explored the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. A critical constructivist methodology – that is, an iterative research process that emphasizes interpretation and joint construction of knowledge while critiquing and challenging power structures (Kincheloe, 2008; Merriam, 2009) – provides the scaffolding for the study design.

Research Paradigm

In their foundational text, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argued that questions of paradigm are paramount to questions of method, and as such, I first briefly describe my ontological and epistemological beliefs that guide this research. My ontological assumption is that reality is socially constructed in politicized contexts (Kincheloe, 2008); rather than an observable single reality, multiple realities and interpretations can be experienced of a single event (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Following directly from this ontology is my epistemological assumption that my relationship as researcher with my study and participants is transactional; researcher and participants influence each other and the inquiry itself as they co-construct realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Social, political, and historical understandings of race, gender, sexuality, ability, and economics influence the ways individuals interpret reality (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Generally, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). As a critical qualitative researcher, I drew on constructivist

and critical paradigms to develop strategies of inquiry to pursue my research questions. About

constructivism, Crotty (1998) wrote:

> There is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth, or meaning, comes into
> existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no
> meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. (pp. 8-9)

This study is constructivist in that I pursued an emic perspective; I was interested in how

minoritized peer socialization agents interpreted their experiences, how they constructed their

senses of belonging, and what meaning they made of their experiences (Merriam, 2009;

Rossman & Rallis, 2011).

A critical paradigm helped me focus on the institutional context within which my

participants were making sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical theory produces "the kind of information and insight that upsets institutions and

threatens to overturn sovereign regimes of truth" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 286). In my

study, a critical lens disrupted the perspectiveless status quo. Ladson-Billings (2009)

characterized Critical Race Theory as a "tool" for "deconstruction of oppressive structures and

discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just

relations of power" (p. 19). By illuminating the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of

minoritized peer socialization agents, my study raised questions about power structures and

whose interests are being served (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical theory also framed the

implications for this study, providing scaffolding for socially just practices in undergraduate

socialization initiatives and promoting social justice broadly on campus.

Methods

With the above paradigms and the framework introduced in chapter one undergirding this study, I borrowed methods from the tradition of narrative inquiry to invite minoritized peer socialization agents' storytelling. Narrative has been dubbed "the oldest and most natural form of sense making" (Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano, 2002, p. 66). Narrative is more than telling of experiences; it is making sense of experiences in context. Indeed, "context is necessary for making sense of any person, event, or thing" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 32). A qualitative approach infused with narrative inquiry practices guided me in critically exploring how minoritized higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions (Merriam, 2009; Parker & Lynn, 2009).

Site Selection: Midwest University

I conducted this study at a single institution. Given the importance of context for this type of research, selecting a single institution allowed me to interpret data within the local environment and campus culture. Indeed, exploring students' understandings of the local context was integral to my research (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). It is my hope that the thick, rich description garnered from participants' stories and the rigor of my analysis allows professionals at other institutions to identify potential transferability. The study site is a large, predominantly White, Midwestern, research university in a college town. For the purposes of this study, I refer to the institution as "Midwest University (MU)" and the mascot as the "Bulldogs." MU's enrollment is slightly more than 30,000 students, with approximately 22,000 undergraduates in over 200 academic majors. People of color comprise 19% of the student body (8% Hispanic/Latino(a), 4% African American, 4% Asian American, 0.1% Native American, 0.2%

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 3.0% two or more races). In-state residents make up 47% of student enrollment, and 12% of students are international students representing 24 countries. Twenty-five percent (25%) of MU students are first-generation college students.

The Office of Admissions coordinates the university's anticipatory socialization initiatives. Prospective students learn about the university through a variety of on-campus and off-campus visit programs. On campus, students can sign up for one of the large visit programs arranged by Admissions – Bulldog Visit Days – or schedule an individual visit to campus. The Admissions staff also co-host Multicultural Visit Day, a one-time one-day annual event, with the university's multicultural affairs office. Off campus, students can attend a regional college fair or participate in one of the university's own recruitment events (limited to targeted regions). Undergraduate students selected and trained as peer socialization agents for anticipatory socialization initiatives include tour guides, phone outreach members, and volunteers for a recruitment organization. Tour guides give visiting students and families tours of campus. Phone outreach members call targeted prospective students to discuss the university and its admission process. Members of Student Organization to Assist Recruitment (SOAR) assist the admissions office (e.g., as greeters, panelists, set-up) with their large recruitment events or specialized visits as arranged by Admissions. Tour guides, phone outreach team members, and SOAR volunteers are among the groups from which I sampled.

I also sampled from the student leaders who facilitate the university's formal socialization initiatives, including summer orientation; *Midwest 101,* a multi-day welcome and extended orientation for new first-year and transfer students; and *Midwest Jump*, a 4-day institute for entering students of color and first-generation students that happens immediately prior to *Midwest 101*. Orientation and *Midwest 101* are required for all new first-year students, and

43

Midwest Jump is an optional program with limited spots. Orientation Bulldog Guides and *Midwest Jump* Peer Leaders are paid peer socialization agent positions, while *Midwest 101* Leaders are volunteers.

Sampling

Michigan State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study as exempt in June 2014 (see Appendix A). I then conducted criterion (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) and snowball (Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2011) sampling in search of rich, thick descriptions of MPSAs' sensemaking processes. "Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 273). The idea of criterion and snowball sampling as purposeful sampling is to select a sample "from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

I began with criterion sampling. I established three criteria for participants and selected all students who met all three of these criteria. Participation criteria included:

1) Be current undergraduates in at least their 3rd year or recent graduates, to ensure that each participant has had adequate time to understand the campus culture;

2) Have served as peer socialization agents for at least 1 of their institution's anticipatory or formal socialization initiatives (Admissions Tour Guides, Phone Outreach Team, and SOAR; Orientation Bulldog Guides; *Midwest 101* Leaders; and *Midwest Jump* Peer Leaders) for a minimum of 1 year (or season, depending on the initiative), to ensure that each participant has completed a socialization agent training program and engaged in socialization work;

3) Self-select as a member of 1 or more minoritized groups. These groups are minoritized in that postsecondary institutions reflect their positions as subordinate to others from

privileged identity groups (Osei-Kofi, Shahjahan, & Patton, 2010). At the study site, minoritized groups include:

    a. Students of color (African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino(a), Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, multiracial);

    b. LGBTQ students;

    c. Students with disabilities;

    d. Students from families living below the poverty line; and

    e. First-generation students.

To initiate criterion sampling, I sent an electronic cover letter (Appendix B) to the student affairs professionals who coordinate anticipatory and formal socialization initiatives at MU (specifically, Admissions Tour Guides, Phone Outreach Team, and SOAR; Orientation Bulldog Guides; *Midwest 101* Leaders; and *Midwest Jump* Peer Leaders) asking coordinators to take two steps to assist me in identifying participants. First, I asked coordinators to individually contact minoritized peer socialization agents with whom they worked by forwarding my invitation to participate and encouraging students to contact me. Second, since minoritized identities are not always knowable or visible, I asked coordinators to forward the invitation to their entire team of peer socialization agents, encouraging students to contact me if they met the selection criteria. All of the socialization initiative coordinators I reached out to forwarded my message and research invitation to their respective PSA teams.

Participants completed an electronic research interest form (Appendix C) on which I gathered demographic information, students' PSA role information, and students' self-selected pseudonyms. I then sent electronic mail (Appendix D) to each interested MPSA with more information about the study, a copy of the informed consent form (Appendix E), and an

invitation to schedule an initial interview. Five MPSAs completed the online interest form within the first week of advertising the study, and the remaining participants resulted from snowball sampling.

I followed Merriam's (2009) strategy for employing snowball sampling. At the end of the initial interview, I asked each MPSA to think of their colleagues and identify other MPSAs I might reach out to directly to recruit for the study. All students who came up with names of other MPSAs agreed that I could use their names as referrals. As the name of the sampling method implies, the snowball grew with each referral. Ultimately, 16 MPSAs submitted an online interest form and 14 scheduled interviews. Thirteen MPSAs met the selection criteria and are included in the study. One student did not meet the criteria, but I interviewed him because another participant recommended him for the study and his story was unique. The student is an international student whose experiences piqued my interest about international student leadership in socialization initiatives. Yet, the student's experiences of minoritization as an international student were qualitatively different from the other participants. I included his transcripts in the initial analysis and decided to exclude his participation from the study.

Summary of study participants. The 13 MPSAs who participated in this study selected pseudonyms and here I report participants' self-descriptions. In the study sample, 9 participants identify as cisgender women, 3 identify as cisgender men, and 1 participant identifies as genderqueer. Six MPSAs identify as Black or African American, 3 identify as Latina(o), 2 identify as biracial or multiracial, and 2 identify as White. Four participants (3 cisgender men and 1 genderqueer student) identify as gay. Three participants are first-generation college students, and all 3 also identify as low-income. One participant identifies as a student with a disability. A summary of participants is below in Table 1.

As a strategy to maintain participants' confidentiality, I decided not to report the socialization initiatives that individual students serve. Together, MPSAs in this study included 7 Orientation Bulldog Guides, 4 *Midwest 101* Leaders, 3 Tour Guides, and 1 *Midwest Jump* Peer Leader. Two participants served as peer socialization agents for 2 socialization programs.

Table 1. Research Participant Summary

Self-selected Pseudonym	University Status	Self-identified Gender	Gender Pronouns	Self-identified Minoritized Identity(ies)
Danielle	3rd Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	African American
Dean	3rd Year	Man	He/Him/His	LGBTQ (gay)
Emma	3rd Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Biracial (Mexican & Japanese)
Jennifer	3rd Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Multiracial (White & Filipino)
Kelly	3rd Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	African American, first-generation student
Logan	4th Year	Genderqueer	They/Them/Theirs	Latino/a, LGBTQ (gay & genderqueer), student with a disability
Maria	3rd Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Latina, low-income background, first-generation student
Miss Green	4th Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Black
Mitochondria	3rd Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	Black
Sharon	Grad 2014	Woman	She/Her/Hers	African American, first-generation student, low-income background
Victor	3rd Year	Man	He/Him/His	LGBTQ (gay)
Zac	5th Year	Man	He/Him/His	Latino, LGBTQ (gay), low-income background, first-generation student
Zora	3rd Year	Woman	She/Her/Hers	African American

Participant biosketches. In this section, I briefly describe each participant in the study, using each student's pseudonym and terms to describe identities.

Danielle. Danielle is a 3rd year student at Midwest University (MU), majoring in speech and hearing science. She identifies as an African American woman. She grew up in a suburb of Kansas City, Kansas, where "it wasn't very diverse." Danielle's family was "the only Black family in our neighborhood" and Danielle and her brother were the only African American children in their elementary school. Danielle said the experience of growing up racially underrepresented meant, "Coming here wasn't a hard transition," referring to MU as a

predominantly White environment. In addition to serving as a MPSA, Danielle is involved in several cultural organizations related to her race and gender.

Dean. Dean is a 3rd year student, also majoring in speech and hearing science. Dean identifies as a White, gay man. He grew up in Champaign, Illinois, an environment he described as "very similar" to that of Midwest University's locale. Dean came out as gay to friends and family during his sophomore year of high school, and entered MU with sexuality as his most salient identity. Dean joined the campus LGBTQ student organization when he first arrived at MU, but "did not see eye to eye" with the students in leadership with the organization and stopped participating during his first year. His closest friends are other MPSAs.

Emma. Emma is a 3rd year student who transferred to MU from a small, private college her second year. Emma spent her early childhood in San Diego, California, and middle and high school years in a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. Emma's parents are both U.S. immigrants, her mother from Mexico and her father from Japan. She identifies as biracial and described herself as "equally Asian and Latina." Yet, Emma feels unwelcome in cultural student organizations that are primarily Asian or Latina. Her primary group of friends are other PSAs.

Jennifer. Jennifer is a 3rd year biomedical engineering student. She grew up in Dubuque, Iowa, and attended Catholic school until she came to Midwest University. Two of her 3 older siblings attended MU, and her parents are fans of MU athletic teams, so she "grew up conditioned to be a [Bulldog] in the first place." Jennifer now identifies as multiracial (White and Filipino) but spent most of her youth identifying as "just Asian" because of the ways others perceived her identity. Jennifer describes her racial identity as "not very salient," and her most salient identity is as a woman in STEM.

Kelly. Kelly is a 3rd year student at MU, majoring in psychology and minoring in social work. Kelly is one of the youngest of 14 siblings, and the only person in her family to go to college. Kelly felt "marginalized" as an African American girl in the rural community where she grew up, an environment with very few people of color and segregation by socioeconomic status. At MU, Kelly participates in the campus chapter of NAACP.

Logan. Logan is a 4th year MU student. Logan's identity as genderqueer was emerging at the time of my study and Logan was excited to use the gender pronouns "they/them/their" for the study. They grew up in a suburb of Chicago, Illinois, and first came out as gay to their close friends and a few family members during high school. Logan also identifies as Latino/a, which is the identity that they spoke most about during our interviews. They also have a neurological disability that Logan calls a "hidden" part of their identity.

Maria. Maria is a 3rd year student at MU. She grew up in Rockford, Illinois, and attended private Catholic school for her K-12 education. She described her youth as "sheltered" in an environment where Maria "definitely wouldn't have identified as Latina" because she "didn't really think of [herself] any different" from the predominantly White students in her school. Her Latina identity is now her most salient identity in college, and she also identifies as having a low-income background and being a first-generation college student. In addition to her MPSA role, Maria holds a leadership position in a Latina sorority on campus.

Miss Green. Miss Green is a 4th year student majoring in math at MU. Miss Green is "a proud Chicagoan, who's from the city, the Southside." Growing up where "everybody there was pretty much Black, African American" meant that Miss Green experienced "shellshock" when she came to Midwest University. Her membership with an African American sorority is important to Miss Green.

Mitochondria. Mitochondria is a 3rd year biomedical engineering and pre-medicine student. She was born in New York, where her parents emigrated from Nigeria, and moved when she was a toddler to a rural community in the Midwest where her father was the town's only physician. Although her family was the only Black family in town, Mitochondria described the town as "a pretty tight-knit community, so it's a good place to grow up. I liked it." She graduated from high school a year early to matriculate to MU. Mitochondria is also a student-athlete.

Sharon. Sharon graduated from MU in 2014 and is a master's student in a student affairs preparation program at another Midwestern public university. Sharon identifies as an African American woman who is a first-generation college student. She grew up in a "violent, impoverished" neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois, and sought a college education "to make a better life for [herself]." During her undergraduate years at MU, the Black Student Union was a pivotal group for Sharon's persistence.

Victor. Victor is a 3rd year theatre major at MU who grew up in a suburb of Chicago. Victor attended a predominantly White, Jewish college preparatory high school and had a smooth academic and social transition to MU. He came out to his family and friends as gay during his first year of college and described disclosing his identity to his parents as "uneventful." Victor said his most salient identity is that of "a leader."

Zac. Zac is a 5th year student who transferred to MU to pursue his music major after 2 years at a public university in his home state. Zac identifies as Latino with a low-income background and as a first-generation college student. He grew up in a suburban community in Colorado and attended a high school he described as "pretty diverse." Zac also identifies as gay, and first came out to friends in 7th grade. His closest friends at MU are his fraternity brothers in the socially progressive, GBTQ-focused fraternity.

Zora. Zora is a 3rd year student at MU, majoring in English. Zora identifies as African

American. She grew up in a suburb of Chicago and attended a high school where she felt

continuously marginalized based on her race. When she transitioned to MU, she "wasn't

homesick at all." Zora is engaged in several organizations and initiatives focused on Black

student success and retention.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each participant completed 2 interviews and each interview lasted approximately 90

minutes, resulting in 42 hours of interview data. The initial interview was important to develop

rapport and invite students' stories about their own experiences on campus and in the

community. The second interview was exclusively about students' PSA positions and

experiences. Getting to know my participants and working to establish trust in the initial

interviews allowed me to focus on MPSAs' meaning-making in the second interview. Interviews

were semi-structured in order to allow participants to share their unique experiences and

perspectives (Glesne, 2011). See Appendix F for the initial and second interview protocols. After

the second interview, I sent each participant a $15 Amazon.com gift card as an

acknowledgement of their time and reflections. All participants agreed to be audio recorded. I

hired a transcription service to transcribe all interviews verbatim. I uploaded all 28 transcripts to

Dedoose, a qualitative research application.

Data analysis: Constant comparative method. Once my interview transcripts were

uploaded to Dedoose, I began the constant comparative method of data analysis. The constant

comparative method involves three steps: 1) disaggregating the data into units; 2) reaggregating

the data into categories; and 3) interpreting meaning from the reaggregated data (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967). In Dedoose, I used the 'excerpt' function to conduct open coding and

disaggregate data into units (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A unit can be a word, a phrase, a sentence, or a collection of sentences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After I completed open coding, I moved on to the second step, axial coding. For this step, I used the 'code' function in Dedoose to develop categories of units (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To develop categories, I compared two excerpts and asked myself if and how they were similar or different. I analyzed a third excerpt by determining whether it was like either of the first two or different altogether. This constant comparison of excerpts, or units, led me to identify patterns in the data. "These patterns are arranged in relationships to each other" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 30–31). Axial coding initially resulted in 46 codes. A second round of unit comparison and axial coding resulted in 23 codes. I continued comparing units, and then categories, until I developed an understanding of the ways minoritized peer socialization agents made sense of their institutional culture. The final phase of coding was selective coding, during which I developed the core propositions, or themes, about the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Researcher journal. I used a hand-written researcher journal to collect field notes and write memos. Analytic field notes about my reflections, feelings, and impressions of what I saw and heard helped me consider the data and my relationship with the data and participants (Glesne, 2011; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Memos helped me keep track of complex and cumulative thinking about the study and led to a shift in the theoretical framework during analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Corbin and Strauss (2008) noted that researchers develop their own style for writing memos, memos vary in content and length, and memos serve purposes beyond storing information. One major function of memos is that they force the researcher to "work with concepts rather than raw data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 120). Journal entries detailing field notes and memos served as my creative and

conceptual space to make sense of what I was learning throughout the study. I also used my researcher journal to reflect on my identities as they relate to this study and the participants.

Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

Critical reflection on 'self' as the research instrument is an ongoing process necessary in qualitative research (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2009; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). In this section, I describe the experiences and identities that influence my biases and assumptions.

During my own undergraduate career, I worked as an admission guide and as an orientation leader. In both contexts, my perception was that students of color who served as peer socialization agents were over-assigned duties and expectations when prospective or new students of color were on campus. There was a running joke in my friend circle about how our supervisors might respond if we told people how it "really was" on campus. Those experiences bias me to expect minoritized students to describe discrepancies between the institution's espoused theories and their lived experiences.

My full-time work experiences include selecting, training, and supervising PSAs for an orientation program and for an underrepresented student retention initiative. My observations and perceptions of minoritized peer socialization agents in these two contexts contributed to my assumption that minoritized peer socialization agents engaged a complex process of sensemaking about their collegiate experiences and any discrepancies between campus culture and their lived experiences on campus.

The identities I was most reflective about throughout this study included my race and sexual orientation. My White identity may have limited my access to and understanding of the value systems, worldviews, or experiences of peer socialization agents who are students of color

53

(Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). MPSAs of color experienced tokenization and other forms of discrimination by White professionals on campus, and as such, they may have perceived me as someone not to be trusted. The Peer Leader team for the *Midwest Jump* program consists of 12 MPSAs, and only 1 *Midwest Jump* Leader participated in my study. I suspect that some MPSAs on campus may not have participated in this study based on my White identity.

Four of my study participants identified as gay. My sexual orientation and status as an 'out' member of the queer community may have facilitated a sense of safety for these participants. In contrast to the hesitation I described above that potentially existed for some students of color, LGBQ students who knew I was queer likely assumed I was someone with whom they could be honest and open about their experiences.

Finally, my experiences across roles (student, socialization coordinator, faculty) at two large, Midwestern, research PWIs, coupled with the critical social justice lens through which I view higher education and student affairs, influenced my own understanding of campus culture at Midwest University and my assumptions entering this study. I entered this study aware of three assumptions. First, I assumed participants would describe sense of belonging at the institution. Since MPSAs are working for front line socialization initiatives, I thought it was likely they feel valued at the institution they were promoting in their PSA work. A second assumption I held at the outset of this study was that minoritized students would describe a second sense of belonging among the community of their minoritized identity(ies). My observation over my career is that how students find their place on campus is closely connected to identity for students who are minoritized. Finally, I assumed minoritized students would be able to clearly describe discrepancies between MU's espoused values about diversity and inclusion and students' own lived experiences. During the semester in which I collected data,

minoritized students were publicly voicing a variety of concerns in response to sociocultural and political happenings. For example, my invitation to participate in the study was sent to students five weeks after Michael Brown's murder in Ferguson, Missouri. I expected that minoritized students would not only be aware of what happened in Ferguson, but also potentially be engaged in the burgeoning local movement to support the Black Lives Matter national movement. In local newspaper articles and campus write-ups about student activism, many of the students quoted or photographed were students who are leaders on campus, including peer socialization agents.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

In addition to the process of reflexivity described above, I took steps to elevate and ensure trustworthiness of this study. Credibility as a measure of rigor is about the sufficiency and systematic analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2006). Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba (2007) conceived of credibility as a reflection of accuracy. I established credibility by engaging study participants in debriefing and member-checking, and engaging peers in debriefing (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Throughout each interview, I paraphrased major concepts raised by participants to confirm my interpretations of students' stories. I also invited participants to give feedback at two points: in response to their initial interviews and in response to my initial write-up of the findings. Glesne (1999) described member-checking as a way to involve participants and at the same time confirm that I have understood them. This was especially important given the centrality of minoritized identities to this study and my own positionality not aligning with all participants' identities (Rhoads, 1997). Member-checking was a way for me to maintain conversation with my participants, inviting them into the interpretation of the findings by soliciting feedback.

Another way I achieved rigor was through triangulation. Although I did not set out to conduct data triangulation, I heard about a few situations from multiple MPSAs. For example, 4

MPSAs talked about participating in the local #HandsUpDon'tShoot demonstration. Another example was hearing from 2 of the gay MPSAs about the way a transgender student was treated during orientation. While qualitative inquiry does not seek generalizability, transferability is a criterion for trustworthiness (Schwandt et al., 2007). If minoritized peer socialization agents at other PWIs can relate to the experiences of my participants, I will have established resonance.

Another way I worked on trustworthiness was by engaging two peer debriefers who are both directors of socialization initiatives at other Midwestern PWIs. One is Director of Admissions and the other is Director of First-Year Experience. I spoke with one, the Admissions Director, biweekly during data analysis and while writing my findings and implications. Our meetings involved conversation about what themes were emerging and my own meaning making about those themes. He read and provided feedback on my first drafts of both findings and implications. The Director of First-Year Experience reached out to me and volunteered to be a peer debriefer because she was interested in my study and its potential implications for her minoritized PSAs. She also used Critical Race Theory as the theoretical framework for her dissertation in higher education. She read my second drafts of both findings and implications and provided feedback. Her critical scholar-practitioner lens pushed me to more clearly explain my findings. Also, given her expertise with Critical Race Theory, she pushed me methodologically.

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, I view myself as a guest in the world of my participants, and I adhere to a strict code of ethics in order to maintain my welcome and integrity (Stake, 2010). Throughout this study, I attended to four main ethical issues: confidentiality, honesty, responsibility, and fair return (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2011).

Maintaining participant confidentiality is different from anonymity (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). One step I took to maintain confidentiality was to invite participants to select pseudonyms. I also was up front about using participants' words and direct quotes in my write-up, thus avoiding potential harm (Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Another step I took to maintain confidentiality was to mask the institution by selecting generic names for the university, its mascot, and its socialization initiatives. I also intentionally avoided connecting students to socialization initiatives in this write-up to further maintain confidentiality.

Honesty included being direct with my participants about the purpose of the study, how I would use the data, and who would have access to the data and results. Participants' fully informed consent was essential to the integrity of the study (Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). At the time of consent, I stressed students' voluntary participation and freedom to choose not to participate. Trust is complex, but I took the responsibility to establish it early and reestablish it throughout the process (Magolda, 2000).

Responsibility refers to the ways in which the research might affect the people and the setting of the study (E. Whitt, personal communication, May 25, 2007). For the participants in this study, I considered the implications of creating dissonance and did my best to support students during the interviews. Another important question for me was about the study site and the professionals who coordinate socialization initiatives. These colleagues, with whom I have professional relationships, cooperated in helping identify participants for this study. How might they respond to a critical analysis of their programs? To mitigate potential negative consequences in my relationships with these colleagues, I will plan private debriefings with each of them to discuss findings and implications.

Fair return is about reciprocity for those individuals engaged in the study. Glesne (1999) encourages researchers to "consider ways in which you can give back both during and after data collection" (p. 86). Ways I gave back to participants included sending gift cards and thank you notes to participants, highlighting something that stood out from their interviews, and inviting participants to read and provide feedback about my write-up of the findings. Additional fair return will be in the form of continued communication about the study and its implications. If I present the study or a manuscript about the study is accepted for publication, I will notify the participants about the broad audiences their stories are reaching.

Limitations

There are at least three limitations of this study: my positionality, the convenience sample, and lack of observations. My privileged identities (i.e., White, temporarily able-bodied, college graduate, doctoral student, parent, and faculty member) are potential barriers with minoritized students. For minoritized peer socialization agents who experience discrepancies between their institutional culture and lived experiences, my privileged identities may represent the structures that oppress them, creating an obstacle to participate or to be fully honest with me about their experiences. Some of my roles represent differences in power and could be a barrier. For example, as a doctoral student and faculty member, I have power over undergraduate students and MPSAs may perceive that power as negating their agency to participate or be honest. Throughout this study, I reflected on my privileged identities constantly and worked to minimize their effects on the study and on the participants.

The second limitation was the sampling for this study. I interviewed all 14 MPSAs who scheduled interviews, rendering the sample a convenience sample. The limitation of a convenience sample for this study was that the sample ultimately lacked representation across

minoritized identities. For example, no African American men participated and no Native American students participated.

The third limitation is that I did not use observations to triangulate data. During the time in which I collected data through interviews, I made the decision to not observe MPSAs in their roles. Participants who were Bulldog Guides, *Midwest Jump* Peer Leaders, and *Midwest 101* Leaders were already done with their PSA programs. I could have observed Tour Guides engaged in PSA work by attending participants' tours; however, observing only some participants would have created unbalanced understandings of MPSAs' experiences and meaning-making. In a future study that focuses on peer pedagogies of MPSAs, observations will be essential.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

I never knew what people expected me to say when parents of color would come up to

me and ask me, "What's it like being a young, Black female on campus? Do you feel

safe? Do you feel supported?" It was really important for me to be honest with people,

because I don't want to say one thing, and then they come here and they're students, and

that's obviously not the reality. I would try to be as honest as possible, but also knowing I

have to paint the university in a good light. (Danielle, 3rd year African American woman)

Danielle's quote illustrates what most minoritized peer socialization agents (MPSAs) in this

study shared: that expectations for communicating about identities were unspoken or unclear ("I

never knew what people expected me to say"); that parents and students with perceived shared

identities looked to MPSAs for cultural insight ("when parents of color would come up to me");

that MPSAs sought strategies for communicating honest messages about campus culture ("it was

really important for me to be honest"); and that MPSAs recognized a discrepancy between what

they should say as students with minoritized identities and as peer socialization agents ("but also

knowing I have to paint the university in a good light"). Without clearly defined formulas for

how to respond, Danielle and other MPSAs relied on their internally defined goals and sense of

self to guide their actions (Baxter Magolda, 2007; Pizzolato, 2003). In short, most MPSAs

demonstrated self-authorship.

Given the high level of responsibility MPSAs have for socializing prospective and new

students, and thus helping to work toward institutional goals for diversity, persistence, and

retention, the purpose of this study was to understand the ways MPSAs make meaning about

their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent

positions. In this study, I engaged critical perspectives to explore MPSA sensemaking. A critical

sensemaking process acknowledges that a student's minoritized identities are always present, even if the student does not describe them as most salient (Jones, Abes, & Kasch, 2013; Jones, Abes, & Quaye, 2013). Furthermore, critical theory "shifts attention away from solely the individual to an examination of how structures and systems influence the individual" (Jones et al., 2013, p. 179). An application of critical tenets to MPSA meaning-making was important because MPSAs' contexts for self-authorship were steeped in discrimination (i.e., racism, cisgenderism, heterosexism).

Overview of Findings: Range of Complexity and Centrality of Race

MPSAs demonstrated a range of self-authorship by engaging meaning-making filters that varied from permeable to less permeable. For example, Victor perpetuated the campus "master narrative" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) by embodying the perspectiveless "we are all Bulldogs" storyline. Victor saw his selection for a PSA position as representative of MU's inclusivity, rather than counter to it as some other MPSAs described. His story stands out among the MPSAs in this study as an example of a student who follows external formulas as defined by authorities (Baxter Magolda, 2001). In contrast, the 6 Black women MPSAs demonstrated less permeable filters. I reason that Zora, Kelly, Sharon, Mitochondria, Danielle, and Miss Green's lifelong experiences with racism and sexism facilitated their deeper levels of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal complexity. Also, none of these women pursued their PSA positions to be "leaders;" each expressed a desire to make positive change to the campus climate and the leadership benefits of their positions were an added benefit.

Although I cast a wide net across multiple minoritized identities in recruiting participants for this study, race was the central construct of my findings. This was unsurprising for several reasons. First, students of color who grew up in the U.S. have experienced personal and systemic

61

racism their entire lives and that awareness and experience facilitates self-authorship (Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004). Second, I collected data at the time the Black Lives Matter movement was gaining national momentum, which catalyzed heightened scrutiny of MU's racial climate. African American student organizations at MU coordinated several campus events to raise awareness and propose changes related to systemic oppression and racism on campus. Since several of the MPSAs in this study are also engaged in multicultural student organizations, MPSAs were entrenched in campus dialogue and activism related to racism at the time of data collection. Third, perceived race is a visible identity, as is perceived gender, unlike some other minoritized identities such as sexual orientation, income status, first generation status, and psychological or learning disabilities. In the context of socialization programs, prospective and new students and their families drew on perceived shared identities with MPSAs, including race or gender, resulting in these identities being elevated among MPSAs reflections.

Zac's experiences demonstrated the centrality of race. Zac is a member of the GBTQ fraternity at MU and his gay, bisexual, and trans* fraternity brothers are his closest friends. Yet in his reflections about his MPSA role and experiences, he talked almost exclusively about his Latino identity. Zac's gay and Latino identities were both salient for him, but in the context of his socialization work, his Latino identity came to the forefront.

The purpose of this study was to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. In this chapter, I extend relevant principles of critical theory to frame the themes of this qualitative inquiry. In this analysis, I found: 1) MPSAs experienced a collegiate context imbued with discrimination; 2) MPSAs

demonstrated meaning-making filters facilitated by counterspaces; and 3) MPSAs engaged counterstorytelling as an act of resistance. The concept of interest-convergence from Critical Race Theory permeated all of these themes. MPSAs in this study discussed two distinct ways that discrimination pervaded their collegiate contexts: in their daily lives as students and in their socialization initiatives. MPSAs' participation in three types of counterspaces at the institution contributed to the complexity of their meaning-making filters: physical counterspaces, student organizations, and MPSA subcultures. MPSA counterstorytelling served as a means to resist oppression by dismantling stereotypes and facilitating MPSAs' desired possible selves.

Context for Self-Authorship: Endemic Discrimination

Critical theory centers racism, cisgenderism, and heterosexism as ever-present in the lives of students who are minoritized because of race, gender, and sexuality. In the context of college socialization initiatives, discrimination undergirds the development and implementation of initiatives that embrace a perspectiveless philosophy, striving to give all students the same experience and not focus on differences (Crenshaw, 1988; Jones et al., 2013). As Jones et al. (2013) pointed out, this "practice, seemingly positive and neutral, actually works to maintain" oppressive systems (p. 174). Perspectivelessness reifies an individual achievement ideology rather than centering discriminatory practices and norms. MPSAs in this study discussed discrimination as a regular, ordinary experience that happens everywhere. In this section, I discuss two distinct ways discrimination permeated their collegiate contexts: 1) in their daily lives as students and 2) in their PSA training and expectations.

Discrimination as Ordinary in MPSAs' Daily Lives

MPSAs experienced discrimination regularly, ranging from microaggressions to dehumanization. When Danielle first moved to campus, "People were like, 'You're the first

Black person I've ever talked to in real life.'" Dean has "had people come up to me like, 'Oh, man. I didn't know you were gay. You're so normal and nice.'" Discrimination was an ordinary part of MPSAs' collegiate contexts and here I discuss three key spaces: classrooms; out-of-class campus spaces; and in the surrounding off-campus community.

Classroom spaces. For many MPSAs, microaggressions were a regular experience in their primary academic spaces: classrooms. Microaggressions are aversive slights directed at minoritized people in verbal, nonverbal, or visual form (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007). Several African American MPSAs described a common experience of White students avoiding them in the classroom. Kelly said, "If I'm sitting here, and there's two seats in between, then there's a White student sitting there, a student will always sit next to the White student. Every single time." Similarly, Zora described, "You walk into a [class]room and, I don't know, I could just be reading too much into it, but just nonverbals from people. They don't want, really, anything to do with you. Like, 'Who are you?'" Sharon described White students talking over her in class. She said, "In a sense, I wasn't even there, so those moments where I felt like I—I don't know, like other people didn't see me." These are examples of nonverbal microaggressions.

MPSAs also experienced verbal microaggressions, especially by tokenization. Sharon, an African American recent graduate of MU who worked for two socialization initiatives, described being tokenized by instructors and classmates:

From "Oh, how do you all get your hair to go like this?" or things about the Civil Rights Movement or just anything where it was a minority, I was the spokesperson. Everyone in class looked to me to answer the questions, so it came to a point where I felt like I was no

longer educating people, but that I was—I don't know. It felt like I was doing the work

for them.

Similarly, Emma, a third year biracial MPSA, said about her classroom experiences, "When we would talk about culture, I felt like I had to be the spokeswoman, because I have the most—I'm most familiar with it." Regularly experiencing tokenization in the classroom created an unwanted burden for MPSAs of color. Danielle, a third year African American MPSA, described,

It was the burden of—which I guess is—now that I think about it, it's weird. Being my best self so that Black people as a whole could be thought of well, I guess. Knowing that other people—whether you wanted to or not, other people did see you as representative of all Black people.

Whether slighted by White peers overlooking them or by instructors tokenizing them, MPSAs described microaggressions as a regular experience in their college classes. Classroom experiences of discrimination placed an unwanted burden on MPSAs of color to unfairly represent their race. These experiences of minoritization contributed to MPSAs' identity-related stress (Saldana, 1994; Smedley et al., 1993; Wei et al., 2010) and continued in other campus spaces outside the classroom.

Out-of-class campus spaces. Discrimination was prevalent in MPSAs' out-of-class campus spaces, including general campus, residence halls, and socialization programs. In these out-of-class settings, microaggressions came from strangers, friends, and coworkers. Out-of-class microaggressions contributed to an accrued toll on MPSAs.

MPSAs of color shared stories of frequent racial microaggressions from White strangers. Mitochondria, a third year Black student-athlete, talked about White students regularly touching

her hair. Whether in her residence hall or the library, among teammates or strangers,

Mitochondria frequently experienced this phenomenon. She said,

> People like touching your hair and like, "Oh, my gosh. I love your hair." I'm like, "If
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> you had a prom updo and I like, 'Oh, my gosh. I love your bun,' that's the exact same
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> thing you're doing to me. You're messing up my hair. You don't know what products I
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> put in it. I don't know what's on your hands." In their mind, just like, "Oh, I'm
>
> complimenting her," and like, "Let me touch it."

As a first year student, Mitochondria said those experiences "didn't bother" her, but they

continued with regularity and now she stops people when they attempt to touch her hair. She

shared this story to explain her desire for the university to require diversity education for all

students. She wishes Midwest University required "cultural competency because that's definitely

something needed on campus. Some people, honestly, they are not aware that they are being

implicitly racist." If the university educated majoritized students, Mitochondria might not feel

like it is her job to educate them.

Jennifer, a third year multiracial engineering student, was surprised by the frequency with

which White students on her residence hall floor asked her "what" she was. After a few times

being caught off guard, she prepared a response for which she became "known as a bitch" on her

floor. She is certain it is because she did not respond to White students' questions about her

racial identity in the way they wanted. This experience has taken a toll on Jennifer. Persistent

microaggressions from White students also "gets to" Logan, a fourth year genderqueer, Latino,

gay MPSA. In reflecting on their various leadership positions on campus, Logan said,

What gets to me is when people say, "Well, have you thought that the only reason you got this [position] was because of that?" That's when you realize this is a very non-diverse student body, when you are seen as "the diverse person."

Danielle frequently experienced discrimination during her PSA work - not necessarily from her students, but from their families. She shared this experience of a mother looking for her son and mistaking another African American woman leader for Danielle:

[The other student leader] was like, "Oh, ma'am, I led Group [A]. I don't know where Group [B] is. You can go check the sheet." She was like, "No, he was with you. He was in your group." [The mother] was arguing with her, telling her that her son was in her group, and that she wanted to know where he was. She was like, "Ma'am, I did not lead his group. I lead math majors. Is your son a math major?" "No, he's biology." He's in my group. Then I guess I walked in with the sign, ten minutes later after this woman is still arguing with her, telling her that her son was in her group. I walked in with my sign, and like she saw her son. She was just like, "Oh." Didn't apologize.

The examples above demonstrate discrimination enacted by White people who are primarily strangers. Likewise, friends and colleagues were sometimes the perpetrators of discrimination. For example, Sharon reflected,

One time I was not on a panel. Three of my peers, they were all White - two males, one female. A parent asked a question about the cultural centers. None of them on the panel knew about the cultural centers besides the fact that there were four, and they were on the [campus region]. They didn't really know different activities that went on inside the cultural centers. After the panel was over one of the guys, who is really a close friend of

mine, he came up to me, he said, "[Sharon], you shoulda been on that panel to answer

that question." He didn't know that that was offensive to me.

In that situation, Sharon felt tokenized by her White, male PSA co-worker. Kelly, also an

African American woman, had a similar experience. Though in her situation, her PSA co-worker

brought a Black student to Kelly to talk about the African American Cultural Center on campus.

In sharing this story with me, Kelly said, "Apparently it's irrelevant to you unless it happens to

you. It was kinda like, 'I don't know what to do, let me find someone who can relate.'" The

space where MPSAs engaged in important socialization work on behalf of their university was

riddled with microaggressions, furthering MPSAs minoritization at the institution.

Some MPSAs questioned whether they were hired for their PSA positions solely because

of their minoritized identities. For example, Sharon reflected on feeling "used" by her

supervisors:

Many times we received e-mails asking if we were free for special visits. Which means a

certain culture who would be comin' to campus and we would be the ones on the panel or

leadin' 'em around campus or having lunch with them. I remember vividly all of us, we

received a e-mail about it was some high school coming. While we wanted to be there for

those students, at the same time we wanted to teach the admission staff a lesson of why—

don't try to fool these students. Why do we hafta be the ones to lead the group or have

lunch with them or sit on a panel? It was eight or nine of us in the e-mail. None of us

responded. We know that in a sense we're being used—it's come to a point where you

reach enough of your identity being used to make the university seem so diverse.

Sharon's example demonstrated interest-convergence at MU. Socialization program coordinators

want PSA staffs that reflect their student bodies. MPSAs are aware that their identities are valued

as contributing to the diversity of a PSA team as visual demonstration of the university's racial composition. At a predominantly White institution such as MU, reflecting the student body means very few domestic students of color or international students on staff. With the regularity of microaggressions MPSAs experienced, the result was tension between feeling valued and feeling used.

Whether MPSAs were in classrooms or other campus spaces, discrimination pervaded most of campus. MPSAs experienced regular microaggressions and macroaggressions across campus, including their socialization initiatives. Moreover, participants also experienced discrimination in the surrounding off-campus community.

Off-campus spaces. Discrimination was an ordinary part of MPSAs daily lives on campus, and MPSAs did not find reprieve in the local community. When MPSAs left campus to engage in their local community, they faced a variety of discriminatory acts, ranging from aversive racism, cisgenderism, or heterosexism to aggressive dehumanization. For example, Dean described being the target of hate speech his second week on campus: "We were walking downtown. There were some very intoxicated people. The guy yelled out and called me a 'faggot' and all that stuff." On a different occasion, Dean "was walking by [a local bar] at night one time, and I overheard a bouncer say, 'Free for you, but $10.00 if you're a fag.'" Early in her first semester, Miss Green was with a small group of African American women waiting for the city bus when a White man drove by and yelled "niggers" at them. She reflected, "He didn't know who we were, we didn't know who he was. It was just, that experience was - how could you be so offensive? We're just a bunch of 18-year-olds coming back from Wal-Mart." These examples illustrate how frightening it could be for MPSAs to leave campus. Dean and Miss Green were both shaken by their experiences as targets of hate speech.

Some MPSAs felt physically unsafe. Danielle shared,

There are few things more scary as an African American woman than being around or near a group of straight White males who have been drinking. Because things get said or are done. People feel like they can touch you. People feel like they can—I don't know. It's almost like they're ignoring your humanity, that you're a person.

Kelly has had similar experiences:

I was out and I was at the bars just walking around. There's a lot of White men. When they're intoxicated, they just say a lot of racist or sexual slang that is not appropriate. That just makes you feel really uncomfortable with who you are because it's like, you would not—I'm like any other woman. You would not treat other women like this, so you shouldn't be saying it to me. You may think it's flattering or whatever you think it is, it's not okay.

These examples demonstrate that MPSAs faced explicit and aggressive discrimination based on their minoritized identities.

Some MPSAs' off-campus experiences of discrimination were less explicit. For example, Mitochondria shared a story about a server at a local diner. "I was like, 'This is like implicit racism happening right now.' She didn't say anything; she didn't call me the N-word or anything, but she refused to touch me or talk to me." Together, these examples illustrate that MPSAs regularly faced discrimination off-campus just as they did on-campus.

MPSAs' experiences in classrooms, in campus spaces outside the classroom, and in the local off-campus community elucidate the pervasiveness of discrimination in MPSAs' daily lives. MPSAs' sensemaking contexts are imbued with explicit and implicit racism, cisgenderism, and heterosexism. Constant microaggressions, while subtle as individual acts, added up to take a

significant toll on MPSAs. Kelly reflected on the cumulative impact of discriminatory experiences: "That takes a personal toll on people because it's like, how am I just sitting here and I'm hurting you or I'm offending you by just being myself?" MPSAs in this study experienced a cumulative tax that numerous scholars have documented in studies of minority stress theory (Saldana, 1994; Smedley et al., 1993; Wei et al., 2010) and "racial battle fatigue" (Smith et al., 2011). Consistent with other studies, MPSAs in this study found their existence at Midwest University came at a price. In addition to the personal ways that students experienced discrimination, MPSAs discussed discrimination as ordinary within the socialization organizations for which they served as PSAs.

Discrimination as Ordinary in PSA Training and Expectations

Critical perspectives shine a light on systems that embrace discrimination as 'business as usual.' In PSA training and job expectations, the ordinariness of discrimination was apparent across four subthemes: deceptive messages about campus climate; emphasizing resource awareness; unbalanced training about specific populations; and PSA diversity teambuilding. Together with MPSAs' everyday experiences of discrimination described above, discrimination within PSA training and expectations established the complex context in which MPSAs engaged in sensemaking.

Deceptive messages about campus climate. As Yosso and Lopez (2010) stated: "Acknowledging that [minoritized] students also endure gendered racism and marginalization becomes difficult when universities are busy boasting about race-neutral policies and a color-blind[3] yet diverse institution of higher education" (p. 88). According to MPSAs in this study,

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[3] I retained the word "color-blind" as it appears in this direct quotation, but refer the reader to chapter 1 for a critique of this word as a microaggression toward individuals who are blind and low-vision.

perspectivelessness reigned as the underlying philosophy of the primary socialization initiatives on campus (i.e., orientation, admission tours, welcome week). MPSAs said the coordinators of their respective socialization initiatives touted their university as "inclusive" of all students and implicitly instructed MPSAs to communicate that message to prospective and new students, a message that was not consistent with how MPSAs experienced the campus culture. Kelly said she was expected to communicate to her students that the university is "an open place, and everyone is welcome. That's what they clearly wanted us to say, but not directly like 'diverse' or 'culturally accepted,' we're just open to all people." Mitochondria described it as the university wanting the PSAs to communicate to "the first years and their parents, 'This is a really welcoming environment.'" Miss Green said the culture her socialization supervisors wanted her to promote is one of, "no matter where you're from or what race you are, you're a [Bulldog] when you get here. We're all kinda like one band, one sound." Logan said, "Sometimes I felt like they wanted to promote that we were a diverse campus, which I always just cringe at 'cause I'm like, 'We're not a diverse campus. It's just not what we are.'"

MPSAs felt these institutional messages about diversity were dishonest. In particular, the MPSAs in this study explained a difference between the "master narratives" on campus (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and the realities of campus life for minoritized students. Awareness of this difference motivated MPSAs to make sense of their roles as institutional ambassadors. MPSAs were uniquely positioned to communicate first-hand understandings of campus culture to minoritized students and their families. Yet, campus realities differed from the implicit instructions MPSAs received to communicate the master narratives.

Reflecting on her MPSA role, Kelly explained,

72

I mean, I feel like I take on this position, it's good. I don't know if I can truly relay a

message [they want me to relay], and then if I am, am I lying? Am I being like those

people that get the people to come here and then they have—they're so angry because

they came here and it's not what they seen. I don't wanna be that person that, "Hey, let's

bring them over," and they get here and I'm just like, "Hey, see you later," and just leave

them out. It's kinda hard because I don't wanna be that person that does that to people.

You wanna be telling the truth, and it's like, I feel sad because what if those people don't

get a good experience while they're here? You're kinda that person that's like advocating

for something that doesn't really happen.

Awareness of the difference between campus realities and the master narratives motivated Kelly

to tell new students a different message about campus culture. She went on,

Not everyone's experience is gonna be great. You have a less chance of your experience

being great if you are a person of color. You don't want them to just go in being too—

you wanna kinda be safe, but you wanna be open too. I would say it is an open place to

an extent. There is some truth in that, but I don't think it's completely the truth.

Creating and embracing opportunities to communicate campus realities was difficult for some

MPSAs. As Logan reflected, "How do I tell someone that 'you have to get ready to be

oppressed'?" Yet MPSAs created opportunities for private, honest conversations.

Miss Green described,

When no one's around it's, "Okay, let me take a deep breath and tell you how it is, cuz

it's just us right now." It wasn't like there's a camera on me or an audience or a coworker

or a supervisor watching. It was just two people having a normal conversation.

MPSAs recognized the culture their socialization supervisors promoted was the perspectiveless master narrative ("we are all Bulldogs"). Knowing that narrative to be a fallacy for minoritized students, MPSAs sought ways to educate prospective and new minoritized students through counterstories.

Socialization initiatives were implicit in their directions for PSAs to promote institutional culture, but were explicit about how they expected PSAs to answer diversity-related questions. In an effort to prepare PSAs to address cultural questions as they arose in socialization programs, socialization professional staff trained PSAs to refer minoritized students to diversity-related resources on campus.

Emphasizing resource awareness. All MPSAs in this study pointed to resource awareness as the primary way PSAs were trained to answer questions about diversity. Preparing PSAs to focus on campus resources skirted authentic knowledge about and interactions with minoritized students. As Miss Green said,

> I feel like we were kind of trained to delegate—to make people know they have these resources here on campus. Girls have simple questions like, "Where can I get my hair done?" I think that we're kinda trained to say, "Oh, if you go to the [multicultural affairs office] they have a list of great resources."

Logan said about their training, supervisors "just tried to make sure that we knew all of the resources so that when we come across diverse students within our groups, that we have the right resources for them." Maria, a third year, first generation, low income, Latina MPSA for two socialization initiatives reflected, "I mean, I would always answer it the way [socialization supervisors] would want us to answer - tell them about all the great resources." Basic resource awareness varied from PSA to PSA, however; and many MPSAs described their peers with

privileged identities as not retaining that knowledge or instead tokenizing their MPSA peers to field questions about diversity and interact with minoritized students. In Sharon's experience,

> I would say that was the worst part - people expecting me to be the voice and to speak about the various centers or resources that were tailored towards, but not exclusive to, minority students or students who identify with specific identities. Others not bein' expected to know information about it even though we all went through [training].

Despite what MPSAs described as "intensive training" about resources to support minoritized students, MPSAs felt tokenized by their majoritized PSA peers to field diversity-related questions and connect with minoritized students in socialization programs. Perhaps majoritized PSAs would have felt better prepared if their training were about minoritized students and not just resource awareness.

Unbalanced training about specific populations. Another way the regularity of discrimination was apparent in PSA training was in the time and content devoted to specific populations. MPSAs reflected on extensive training about student-athletes and international students, but little or no training about U.S. students of color, LGBTQ students, first-generation students, low-income students, or students with disabilities. For example, Miss Green recalled visiting the student-athlete center during training and reflected,

> Thinking about it now, it was kinda like this extra attention given to how to talk to and deal with athletes, but we didn't tour the different culture [centers]—I mean, of course I've been in them all myself cuz I go over there. Just for like the students who may not even know what they look like, they didn't go in and tour that.

Thinking about what she learned about minoritized students in comparison to other specific populations sparked a realization about this discrepancy in training time and content.

Several MPSAs from one specific socialization program shared examples of practicing answering difficult questions about international students. Logan said, "The main example that we talked about was, 'I don't want my student living with an international student in their residence hall.'" Maria recalled practicing how to respond, "If someone were to come up to you and say, 'Oh, I got an Asian roommate. What am I gonna do?' Or, 'Oh, they probably don't speak English. How am I supposed to talk to them?'" Danielle remembered, "There were questions about international TAs and professors, and language barriers. There were questions about international students. As far as otherwise diversity, we weren't really prepared for that."

Lack of awareness and lack of training about minoritized student populations sometimes resulted in negative consequences. For example, Dean, a third year White gay MPSA for two socialization initiatives, remembered,

> I had to give a tour once maybe a year after I was hired—like I said, it's been a little while—and I had to give my first tour with someone who was using a wheelchair. That really threw me for a loop because I didn't know what to do. These hills are really big. It was bad. It was a bad tour. It really was. I was really embarrassed by it. I was ashamed and I felt bad.

Logan recalled learning that a transgender student would be coming to campus for their socialization initiative. The day before the student arrived, the socialization program staff brainstormed ways to best serve the student. Logan said, "People didn't understand the difference between gender and sex. It's just this continued level of misunderstanding that isn't their fault. It's just perpetuated by everything that we've done in life." Dean also talked about that experience and remembered having to educate his peers and his supervisors about asking for the transgender student's pronouns.

The examples above demonstrate the ways MPSAs experienced a lack of training about minoritized students. According to Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004), in order "to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant, and productive ways," one must possess "awareness, knowledge, and skills" (p. 13). According to MPSAs in this study, awareness, knowledge, and skills related to the minoritized students they would work with in their socialization programs was not part of their PSA training. One initiative did, however, attempt to raise PSAs' awareness and knowledge about their PSA team members.

Orientation PSA teambuilding. Orientation PSAs and their supervisors went off campus for a weekend retreat devoted to diversity teambuilding activities. According to MPSAs, the activities were aimed at increasing the team members' self-awareness and awareness of each other's multiple identities. MPSAs made it clear that they believed the purpose of the retreat was not to prepare PSAs to work with minoritized students, but rather to increase the bond among the team members. One MPSA said, "We more learned, I guess, about each other and our different leadership skills and how to relate to people who are a little more diverse. I feel like that was more geared towards—within the team."

Several MPSAs described the diversity teambuilding as most important for their peers with privileged identities – another example of interest-convergence in action. One MPSA recalled,

> I could really see a lot of light bulbs go off in people's minds, more so to the people who didn't identify as a minority status. Because these diversity trainings, in a lot of ways, I can learn, and I did learn a lot from—especially from people of color on our team. I learned a lot through that. In a lot of ways, this diversity training, what's new? This is our life. It's more so intended for people who don't have diversity in their lives.

Or as another MPSA put it,

>The most important thing—so for me, I'm—I was already, at that point, conscious of
>
>various privileges, but what was important for me was that my peers were, at that point,
>
>aware of the privilege, so that was most important to me because I see color everywhere.

The activities, while described as "enlightening" and "good" by MPSAs, raised individual

awareness of privilege, but did not disrupt privilege or systems of entitlement within institutional

culture. For example, at the end of an activity called "Privilege Walk[4]," in which participants

took a step forward or a step back for a series of statements, one MPSA found herself at the back

of the room. She said,

>So, in that moment, it made everything real because here I am. We're all college students.
>
>We all attend the same university, but I have people that are working the same job as me.
>
>They are all the way at the front, based on the color of their skin and gender, and me—
>
>I'm getting good grades. It's like, what else could I be doing? There's nothing else that I
>
>could be doing that can make me get to the front of the line and be even to them.

The activity may have raised majoritized PSAs' awareness, but the discussion that followed

focused on individuals' feelings of guilt and pity, and how oppression harmed the MPSA as an

individual. According to this MPSA, processing the activity was devoid of conversation about

how students with privileged identities benefitted from systemic oppression. As such, PSAs were

not able to extend their new awareness to their understandings of minoritized students and their

PSA work.

Several MPSAs were frustrated by the teambuilding activities. At the end of retreat his

first year with orientation, one MPSA remembered, "I was really, really angry because they were

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[4] Visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ to view a 4-minute overview and
example of "Privilege Walk."

all saying, 'I get it. I understand how you feel now.' I raised my hand and I said, 'I think that's bullshit. You don't know how I feel.'" He continued,

> I hated that we were all "kumbaya" and "I get you" and "I understand diversity." I was like, the point of this was, sure, that we need to be aware and sensitive about our people, but I don't think the takeaway was that we should now, "I know how you feel."

Another MPSA remembered intentionally shutting down during retreat after a subgroup of White, heterosexual, Christian PSAs commandeered a diversity exercise to focus on the ways they felt oppressed. The MPSA said,

> Hearing people talk about how they feel like they've been oppressed because of their religion, as Christians, and I want to cry because I don't think they understand oppression. That's the kind of thing, like in retreat, when I sat there, and I'm just not gonna say anything.

While increasing student leaders' self-awareness is an important task and seemed to have potentially benefitted majoritized PSAs, socialization initiatives did not challenge systemic oppression or educate PSAs about minoritized students. Further, diversity teambuilding did not seem to benefit MPSAs in the self-authorship catalyzing ways that MPSAs felt it benefitted their majoritized PSA peers. As a result, the orientation staff maintained discrimination as 'business as usual' among their team.

Summary

According to CRT scholars Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2007), "racism is ordinary, not exceptional," and thus "represents the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (p. 136). Extending that concept to MPSAs, discrimination (i.e., racism, cisgenderism, heterosexism) is certainly part of their everyday lives as students at the

university and within their respective socialization initiatives. In their everyday lives, MPSAs experienced pervasive discrimination in three key spaces: classrooms; out-of-class campus spaces; and in the off-campus local community. Within their socialization initiatives, MPSAs experienced discrimination in four ways: the perspectiveless "master narrative" of campus; an emphasis on resource awareness; lack of training about minoritized students; and diversity teambuilding of questionable effectiveness. Discrimination as ordinary inundated the context in which MPSAs engaged in sensemaking. The academic and social well-being, and thus persistence, of minoritized students experiencing daily discrimination may suffer (Smith, 2009; Yosso & Lopez, 2010). Nevertheless, MPSAs are thriving students who described a sense of belonging at the institution. In the next section, I explore the second theme from this study - MPSAs' sense of belonging in counterspaces and its influence on MPSA sensemaking filters.

Filtering Context in Counterspaces

In their reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity, Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) introduced a meaning-making filter through which students analyze knowledge, relationships with others, and their understanding of themselves. The depth and complexity of a person's meaning-making filter depends on their self-authoring abilities. For minoritized students who are continuously making meaning of their discriminatory contexts (i.e., racism, cisgenderism, heterosexism), the process of developing self-authorship is different from the process for students whose contexts are not steeped in oppression (Abes & Jones, 2004; Jones et al., 2013; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004). Departing from the external-to-internal process originally detailed by Baxter Magolda (2001), a critical process of self-authorship situates "contextual influences and filtering together" because they are "integrally related" (Jones et al., 2013, p. 185). In proposing a Critical Race Theory (CRT) Model of

Multiple Dimensions of Identity, Jones et al. (2013) redrew the model to show the symbiotic relationship between context and filter. These scholars explained: "The omnipresence of racism requires the individual to make meaning of this significant contextual influence at the same time that racism mediates the ways in which the person makes meaning" (Jones et al., 2013, p. 186). Consistent with the CRT Model, meaning-making for MPSAs in this study departed from Baxter Magolda's (2001) original conception of self-authorship.

The interpersonal dimension of self-authorship was central to MPSAs' meaning-making about their discriminatory campus contexts and about their understandings of self. More specifically, most MPSAs actively participated in and sometimes created counterspaces to make meaning of campus culture. Counterspaces are physical or metaphorical spaces where minoritized students embrace campus margins "as site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility" (hooks, 1990, p. 153). For MPSAs, counterspaces served as sites where students could let down their guard and authentically discuss and analyze their experiences of campus culture. Often, active participation in counterspaces facilitated MPSAs' recruitment for their PSA positions. Socialization coordinators seek student leaders from diverse student organizations and intentionally recruit from among multicultural student organizations. Those organizations remained important for many MPSAs as counterspaces to process the campus master narrative.

Although PSA experiences have been found to catalyze self-authorship (e.g., Tankersley, 2013), MPSAs described their socialization programs as reflections of the campus master narrative. Majoritized PSAs may experience 'provocative moments' in their socialization program training and relationships with their PSA peers; however, most MPSAs made meaning about campus culture in counterspaces where they could connect with other minoritized students.

This perspective is important because of the presumed agency of MPSAs' positions to influence prospective and new students, and thus help advance toward institutional goals. Despite 'battle fatigue' from daily experiences of discrimination, MPSAs' critical sensemaking process enabled their sense of belonging at the institution where they experienced endemic discrimination.

Many, but not all, MPSAs participated in counterspaces related to the minoritized identities that brought them to this study. For example, Zac's membership in the GBTQ fraternity facilitated his sense of belonging on campus. In contrast, Jennifer's most important counterspace was not related to her multiracial identity. Her sense of belonging was closely tied to her identity as a woman engineer and more specifically within the female faculty member's lab where she worked alongside female graduate students.

For MPSAs whose minoritized identities were salient, counterspaces were "transformative sites of resistance" (Yosso & Lopez, 2010, p. 83) where minoritized students could find belonging at the institution where their identities and experiences were not represented in the master narrative. In Critical Race Theory, a focus on counterspaces centers the experiences of minoritized people. In this section, I describe three types of counterspaces that contributed to MPSAs' self-authorship and sense of belonging at Midwest University: physical counterspaces; student organization counterspaces; and MPSA subculture counterspaces.

Physical Counterspaces

For several MPSAs of color, sharing physical space with other minoritized peers provided an opportunity to counter the "master narrative" of the predominantly White campus. In counterspaces, MPSAs could let down their guard and experience solidarity. For MPSAs of color, these physical spaces shared with other minoritized students had an impact on their sense of self and perceptions of campus culture. MPSAs discussed three specific physical spaces that

acted as sites of meaning-making: campus cultural centers, acts of social activism on campus, and select classrooms.

Several MPSAs made sense of their persistent minoritization on campus by contrasting it with their feelings of comfort at campus cultural centers. Miss Green captured that sense of comfort. She said,

The only times I really ever feel comfortable are when I'm amongst other minorities. When I'm in the [African American Cultural Center], when I'm just sitting on the couch talking to people, I feel more, like, comfortable I would say.

Sharon described the first time she entered the African American Cultural Center as, "it felt like home." The sense of comfort MPSAs felt in the physical space of the cultural centers came from knowing, as Sharon put it, that when they walked through the door, they could talk with "someone who may be dealing with the same issues as me." Numerous scholars have found cultural centers to be a "home away from home" for students of color (e.g., Benitez, 2010; Lozano, 2010; Yosso & Lopez, 2010). For MPSAs engaged in socializing prospective and new students, cultural centers were a mechanism for meaning-making and a reprieve from the rest of campus where they could reflect on campus culture, their sense of self, and their sense of place on campus in dialogue with peers who understood the discriminatory context of the campus and local community.

MPSAs described other physical counterspaces that were important to their self-authorship, including spaces of social activism and select classrooms. For example, many African American MPSAs described a Black Lives Matter demonstration on campus. Zora, a third year African American English major, reflected on how participating in the demonstration influenced her intrapersonal and interpersonal domains of self-authorship:

Earlier this semester, we took a picture for the "hands up, don't shoot" thing. Even though it happened really fast, it was nice. I felt good. We were standing there on the steps. I felt really empowered. Just us being there, together, the people who could show up. Actually being there for a reason, and just the power in numbers. As the pictures were snapping, just how silent it was. It really just—it was like, I may not be best friends with all these people… but in some ways, I care about our overall wellbeing.

Zora experienced engaging in activism with hundreds of other African Americans at Midwest University as a counterspace that fostered her sense of belonging on a campus where the dominant narrative minoritized her. Classroom spaces where most or all students were minoritized students also gave MPSAs a counterspace to engage in critical self-authorship. For example, Danielle reflected on taking a class in which most students were African American:

I think it was important because I could just be myself. I think when I was in my other classes, I felt like I had to overcompensate. Whereas, in that class, I was able to just—I didn't have to think so hard about how I was going to say this, and how I was going to do that. Because they knew I was competent from the start. I could just be a person.

These counterspaces provided safe physical spaces where MPSAs could critically make meaning about the three focal areas of self-authorship: their campus culture (context), their relationships with others (interpersonal domain), and their understandings of self (intrapersonal domain). Many MPSAs also identified student organizations as counterspaces that provided safe mental and emotional space.

Student Organization Counterspaces

Regardless of where organizations met on campus, MPSAs in this study described membership in select organizations as important counterspaces for making meaning about

campus culture. Membership in these counterspaces also contributed to minoritized students being recruited for PSA positions. The organizations that MPSAs identified as providing a safe mental and emotional space to critically self-author included: a discussion group for Black women on campus; the campus chapter of NAACP; Black Student Union; and select Greek-letter organizations. Openly and authentically discussing campus culture through the lenses of these organizations strengthened MPSAs' meaning-making filters.

The campus discussion group for Black women was central to Danielle's understanding of campus culture, her relationships with others, and her sense of self. She reflected,

A lot of them are older. I think it was important to see that they lasted the entire time. Yeah, maybe sometimes it was rough, and maybe there were times it was, like, maybe it wasn't so positive experience. They stuck it through, and they made it. It just was motivation and inspiration that I could do it, too.

Danielle also discussed membership in the campus chapter of NAACP as specifically important to her perceptions of campus culture. She shared a vivid memory from a chapter meeting:

People were verbalizing things that I was feeling that I didn't know how to verbalize. One student said that he—I think Black males have a completely different experience than I do on campus. He was saying how he can walk into a room and by simply existing, other people are threatened. There's nothing he can do about it. You can't overcome that with communication. He has said nothing at that point. All he's done is exist. That was really beneficial, because people were able to say things. I was like, "Yeah, that's exactly what it's like."

For Kelly, membership with the NAACP chapter influenced her sense of self. She said,

It's really empowering cuz it makes me realize who I am and not try to blend so much in the background. It's like, no. I want to be myself. I want to be myself. It's okay to be myself. Realizing that and going to [NAACP] has been really good.

Sharon had a similar experience with a different organization. Her first year, she felt "lost" until "finally, I found the Black Student Union." Sharon described finding "her voice" through Black Student Union and internalized a sense of agency to work toward institutional goals by providing support for other African American students. She shared a story of an African American peer from the Black Student Union telling her she is a role model:

She applied for [the same PSA position I was in] her junior year. She told me she applied because she seen my face on a poster and it's not often that you see a African-American woman on a poster for something that's that well-known on the campus, and that's why she applied, and I was like—like, something so simple. I didn't know like, me smiling on a poster would help anyone, so just those moments help me really feel like I belonged regardless of what I may have been going through on the side.

Through Black Student Union, Sharon found her voice and also developed an understanding of herself in relation to others.

Three MPSAs talked about their membership in multicultural Greek letter chapters as influential to their self-authorship. In addition to Zac's reflections on belonging to the GBTQ fraternity, Miss Green, who is a member of a historically African American sorority, and Maria, who is a member of a historically Latina sorority, described their membership as enhancing their sense of self and sense of purpose and place. For example, Maria said talking about culture with the women in her sorority helped her reflect on her own identity. She shared,

It made me wanna take Mexican American history and learn more about my—I guess

my—not really my—I guess my past, I guess, in a way and more about my family and

the culture itself. One of our principles is cultural awareness. I just found it hard for me to

be culturally aware of other cultures if I'm not aware of my own. I really wanted to dig

into who I really am.

These examples illustrate how MPSAs engaged in critical sensemaking in organizations where

they were not tokenized. Furthermore, authentic dialogue about campus culture was encouraged

and valued in these organizations, which provided a safe mental and emotional space for MPSAs

to talk openly with other students about their understandings of campus culture. These student

organizations facilitated MPSAs' sense of self through metaphorical spaces that existed to

'counter' the spaces MPSAs otherwise occupied on campus. MPSAs also created their own

counterspaces where they did not already exist – within their socialization initiatives.

MPSA Subculture Counterspaces

In the first section of this chapter, I described the perspectiveless philosophy that

undergirded socialization initiatives. Socialization initiative coordinators did not provide

structured opportunities for PSAs to analyze and discuss campus culture; however, MPSAs still

engaged in critical sensemaking within their socialization initiatives. Because their socialization

initiatives reflected the master narrative of the institution, MPSAs created a subculture within

their socialization initiatives in which to make meaning about campus culture, their relationships

with others, and their own identities.

I asked each MPSA to talk about the people who were important to their understandings

of campus culture and their experiences related to their identities. Maria talked at length about

her sorority, and then realized her MPSA peers were also important as a counterspace. She said,

[Dean] is one of them, I got pretty close to him over the summer. I hung out a lot with

[Amit], who's Indian. [Chuckles] Then [Danielle], who's African American. Yeah. I

guess, it was—I didn't really realize it, but yeah, a lot with the minorities of the [team].

Maria said that other MPSAs "get it" when it comes to understanding campus culture. She "just

clicked with them a lot easier than [she] did with everybody else" on the staff.

Dean also named other MPSAs as important to his critical sensemaking. He identified

Danielle as someone with whom he talked about the context of discrimination and campus

culture. In reflecting on the depth of their relationship, he shared: "She's African American, and

I think we bonded over just, in some aspect of our life, being a minority and navigating the

university and transitioning and all of these things." With a shared understanding of

minoritization on campus, MPSAs could make sense of campus culture with each other and

extend their understandings of campus culture to the prospective and new students they served.

Their MPSA subculture was an important counterspace to the perspectiveless master narrative

adopted by their socialization initiatives.

Summary

Counterspaces were important to sensemaking because they provided the mechanism for

most MPSAs to critically examine campus culture, MPSAs' relationships with others, and their

understandings of their own identities. Without counterspaces in which to understand the

normalcy of their experiences, MPSAs' sensemaking might stop at battle fatigue. Yet, in

community and solidarity with minoritized peers, most MPSAs were able to critically examine

their experiences and simultaneously feel a sense of belonging. In this section, MPSAs' stories

illustrated their interconnectedness with other minoritized people and the ways these

relationships influenced MPSA meaning-making filters in physical counterspaces, student

organization counterspaces, and MPSA subculture counterspaces. In the next section, I describe how MPSAs with complex meaning-making filters rejected the "master narrative" and engaged in counterstorytelling as an opportunity to challenge oppression and shift institutional culture.

Resistance through Counterstorytelling

Prospective and new students and their families sought cultural insight from MPSAs with whom they perceived a shared identity. MPSAs relied upon their internal perspectives to determine how to interact with and thus influence students and campus culture.

> It's like an unsaid thing, because parents of color, families of color will seek you out to
> speak to you and ask you questions… That was something I didn't really take lightly. It
> was important, and I had to do it. I'm happy I got to do it. (Danielle)

MPSAs' meaning-making filters shifted in the pervasive context of discrimination (Jones et al., 2013), resulting in counterstories about minoritized students at Midwest University.

In Critical Race Theory, a "counterstory is a challenge to the dominant narrative about racism and people of color" (Jones et al., 2013, p. 178). For example, despite ubiquitous discrimination in her collegiate context, Sharon felt a strong sense of agency at the university through her PSA position. She described the opportunity to guide students with similar backgrounds as the best part of the position:

> The best thing for me was honestly that I was able to be a resource. I mean, to all
> students, but more so to those from similar backgrounds. Not even just from Chicago, but
> minority students in general, students from the inner city, first-generation students.
> Those special populations, really bein' able to talk with them. I found that I connected
> more with those parents and those students, more on a personal level. Just makin' it feel

like if someone who identifies with these different things that are similar to me can do it

and is doing it, then I can do it as well.

Likewise, Zora described having agency through her MPSA role. She said, "I really wanted to

focus on bringing in minorities here and helping with retention rates and making sure that they

feel comfortable here." Serving as peer socialization agents, Sharon and Zora engaged

counterstories in resistance to the oppressive systems on campus in which discrimination was

ordinary. Their counterstories illustrated that they defied hegemony and were successful at the

university, encouraging new students with minoritized identities to pursue success. In this

section, I explore two specific ways MPSA counterstorytelling shifted campus culture: by

dismantling stereotypes and by establishing MPSAs as successful students.

Counterstorytelling: Resisting Stereotypes

MPSA counterstorytelling influenced campus culture through MPSAs' interactions with

the students they served in their socialization initiatives. MPSAs sought ways to challenge

stereotypes, particularly when they observed oppression or discrimination in action. Logan

described a sense of obligation to educate students with privileged identities when they did or

said something oppressive. They said, "I am defending what I need to defend in a second. If I

don't, it looks like I support it. Or if I don't, I don't know who is, or what else these people are

being subjected to." Some MPSAs described contemplating how their socialization students

would perceive them in times of potential conflict. From Sharon's perspective,

> If someone approached me in the wrong way, or I felt like I had to defend myself, if I'm
>
> aggressive in my response then I'm an angry Black woman, which is a stereotype. I'm
>
> tryin' to challenge that stereotype with being calm in my approach or my responses even
>
> if I know the situation is wrong.

Kelly and Danielle talked about being assertive as a tenuous space between the stereotypes of an angry Black woman and a submissive Black woman. Danielle described it as,

> Then if you react, then you're giving them what—then you're playing to the stereotype that you're angry, and that you're mad, and that you're over the top. If you don't react and you just don't do anything, then it gives them the assumption that it's okay.

In her MPSA position, Kelly said,

> I can speak up for myself better now and know that, no, I'm not being the stereotypical Black lady. I'm not being angry. I'm sticking up for what's right and what I believe and what I want for myself… If something's wrong and I see that, I can say something about it and address how I feel.

MPSAs' counterstories challenged stereotypes about minoritized students. Through counterstories, MPSAs influenced the ways that minoritized students perceived campus culture and their expectations for life on campus. They also challenged students, including majoritized students, to think about minoritized students in ways that do not reify stereotypes. At the same time, counterstorytelling played a role in MPSAs' pursuit of their best possible selves.

Counterstorytelling: MPSA Success

MPSAs envisioned their desired possible selves as successful MU students who were campus leaders. MPSAs voiced progress toward becoming their desired possible selves as a result of their work as PSAs. They clarified that by engaging counterstories as MPSAs, they believed they mattered. This was evident in the ways MPSAs expressed high satisfaction with their roles as peer socialization agents and in MPSAs' extension of their roles beyond their socialization initiatives.

PSA role influencing sense of self and belonging. Half of the MPSAs in this study identified their PSA position as their "best experience in college." Some pointed to their own personal and professional development as defining the role as their best experience; some discussed the position giving them a sense of purpose; and all celebrated meaningful relationships with their socialization teams. For example, Zac valued the agency he held in telling a counterstory at MU. He reflected,

> I felt I had more of an identity, and more visibility. When I first got the job, I thought it was really neat how I would be the face of [Midwest University]. Someone who was brown. Someone who's from out of state. I thought that was really special because people like me would be able to see students succeeding here.

Sharon summarized a variety of ways she grew through her MPSA position:

> It helped me grow in so many different ways. So, skill set—like, presentation, public speaking, just being reflective about my own life because we wrote a lot of reflection papers. But then it caused me to be open, so just because people were not like me or didn't have the same experience, didn't mean that we couldn't find something in common for us to bond on or to talk about or that it couldn't be a learning experience for the both of us, and I really didn't expect to get that from working for [a socialization program], but I did. So, I would say that was the first time I was forced to get out of my shell and not just see these people and say, "Hi" and "Bye," but to really get to know who they were and for me to allow people—for me to trust people.

The opportunities for personal reflection and growth, professional development, and meaningful friendships contributed to MPSAs identifying their PSA positions as their best college experiences. These opportunities to tell counterstories contributed to MPSAs' sense of

92

belonging on campus and sense of agency to influence campus culture. As Zac said, "'Cuz it's such a high profile position that you really can't go unnoticed." Another way counterstories influenced MPSAs' sense of self was through the ways they lived out their leadership positions beyond the requirements of their positions.

MPSA as an internalized identity. MPSAs extended their roles as socialization agents beyond the parameters of their socialization initiatives. Whether an initiative was two days or four days, MPSAs knew the official requirements of their positions did not extend past the end date of their respective programs; however, most MPSAs purposefully continued relationships with their minoritized students in an effort to be an ongoing peer mentor. For example, Zora said,

> I reached out to them this week actually to wish them a happy midterms and if they need anything let me know… One of them is an English major. She sends me some of her stories. She likes to see what I think before she submits it. That is cool.

> Some MPSAs also talked about extending their roles beyond their socialization students, serving as peer mentors to other university students who were not in their programs or initiatives. For example, Maria volunteered to help the women who were pledging her sorority. She said,

> A lot of the new girls are going through the process, the journey, right now. I tell them, "If you ever need some help, or—let me know. I know a lot about campus. If I don't know, I know where to direct you."

Kelly offered her guidance to students who were participating in *The Midwest Jump*, even though she was a leader for a different socialization initiative. Kelly lived in a residence hall on the fringe of campus and contacted the coordinator of *The Midwest Jump* to offer to take *Midwest Jump* students in the same residence hall "to breakfast or lunch." Kelly also did outreach to students of color during the academic year through her clerk position at the

convenience store in her residence hall, specifically connecting with two first-year African American women. She shared:

> They would come in and I would just ask 'em, "How are your classes going?" One girl would be like, "Oh, I'm having a really hard time. I'm really not prepared for this class." I was like, "You just have to study, work hard, go to office hours. They have TRIO, you can go there, they support you. They give you really good resources. They have free tutoring for students if you're in the TRIO program, so definitely go to the [multicultural affairs office]."

Counterstorytelling influenced MPSAs' sense of self in such a way that they internalized their MPSA work as part of their overall identity. In turn, serving as MPSAs contributed to these students' pursuits of their desired possible selves as successful student leaders at MU.

Summary

Counterstorytelling was an important mechanism for MPSAs in this study to resist stereotypes and facilitate MPSAs' pursuit of their desired possible selves through enhanced sense of belonging and internalized identities as leaders and change agents. MPSAs experienced change in themselves and also acted as agents of cultural change at their university. Kelly described counterstories as "planting seeds" of change. She said, "You can get it in their minds, which is what I want to do, ingrain it in people's minds" that minoritized students are successful at MU. MPSAs' counterstories did just that – for the students they served in their socialization initiatives and in themselves.

<p align="center">Summary of Findings</p>

Through this study, I sought to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation

to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. A critical analysis was important because MPSAs' processes of developing self-authorship were immersed in discriminatory contexts (i.e., racism, cisgenderism, heterosexism). Most MPSAs in this study demonstrated complex meaning-making filters, while some MPSAs' filters seemed more permeable.

In this chapter, I described three themes from this qualitative inquiry that explicated an understanding of how most MPSAs made sense of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. First, I clarified the ways MPSAs experienced discrimination as ordinary in their collegiate contexts. Second, I explored how MPSAs' counterspaces catalyzed their meaning-making filters. Third, I discussed MPSAs' counterstories as resistance to oppression and progress toward MPSAs' desired possible selves. MPSAs in this study ultimately experienced agency to effect cultural change and pursue their desired possible selves through their MPSA positions on campus.

In the next chapter, I describe numerous implications of this study. Informed by the findings discussed in this chapter, I explore opportunities for practice and research. I also reflect on the theoretical implications of these findings and discuss implications for leaders of higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, THEORY, AND RESEARCH

The undergraduate students who facilitate higher education socialization initiatives educate prospective and new students about campus and thus, have the potential to work toward institutional goals for persistence and retention. As has been documented in higher education literature, campus climates are unwelcoming for minoritized students; minoritized students who serve as peer socialization agents may experience discrepancies between the messages they are expected to convey about campus culture and their own lived experiences. The purpose of this study was to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. Through qualitative research methods framed by Critical Race Theory, I explored the sensemaking of 14 minoritized peer socialization agents at a single large, Midwestern predominantly White institution.

The findings of this study demonstrate that most minoritized peer socialization agents (MPSAs) make sense of their collegiate contexts in the face of pervasive discrimination, engaging meaning-making filters fostered by counterspaces, and enacting counterstorytelling as an empowering act of resistance. MPSAs described simultaneous positive and negative feelings about their university, and sought ways to communicate nuanced messages about the realities of campus to prospective and new students. This study bears implications for student affairs practice, for MPSAs, for theory, and for research.

This study illuminates the ways minoritized students experience racism, cisgenderism, and heterosexism. Scholars have documented the experiences of U.S. minoritized college students (e.g., Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Harper & Hurtado, 2011; Hawkins & Larabee, 2009; Ortiz, 2004; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Strayhorn, 2008). These studies

demonstrate that minoritized students experience unwelcoming environments. Despite arguments that the U.S. has achieved a 'post-racial' (McWhorter, 2008) and 'post-LGBTQ' (Ghaziani, 2011) society, the students in this study detailed experiences of discrimination in their daily lives as students and in their PSA training and expectations.

MPSAs experience microaggressions and tokenization in their classrooms, in out-of-class campus spaces, and off-campus. For example, Sharon described White students talking over her in class. She said, "In a sense, I wasn't even there, so those moments where I felt like I—I don't know, like other people didn't see me." Often MPSAs' experiences of discrimination were less subtle. Dean, for example, recalled two occasions off campus in the local community when strangers targeted him with hate speech. Discriminatory experiences take a toll on MPSAs. Kelly reflected on the cumulative impact of discrimination: "That takes a personal toll on people because it's like, how am I just sitting here and I'm hurting you or I'm offending you by just being myself?" The initiatives MPSAs facilitated were not a reprieve from discrimination.

Along with tokenization from peers and supervisors, discrimination in socialization initiatives was apparent in deceptive messages about campus climate, an emphasis on resource awareness, unbalanced training about specific populations, and PSA diversity teambuilding that, according to the MPSAs I interviewed, benefited majoritized students. Professional staff trained PSAs to convey the message, "we are all Bulldogs," to prospective and new students. Instead of teaching PSAs about minoritized student populations on campus, professional staff trained PSAs to refer minoritized students to on-campus resources when questions about diversity arose during socialization programs. PSAs did not visit any of the cultural centers on campus, but they took a tour of the student-athlete learning center, leaving MPSAs wondering about the imbalance between learning about some student populations and not others. Further, MPSAs who served as

Orientation Bulldog Guides described diversity teambuilding exercises that they believe raised

their majoritized peers' self-awareness, but offered little opportunity for MPSAs to have

dialogue about diversity and difference. The underlying perspectivelessness of socialization

programs and training contributed to MPSAs' battle fatigue in a climate that institutional leaders

should not ignore as they pursue their goals for a diverse student body, retention, and graduation.

This study focuses on minoritized students who are leaders on campus. Peer socialization

agents (PSAs) are responsible for implementing socialization initiatives and thus potentially

influencing new students' sense of belonging and persistence (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005). A

common notion about the students who apply for PSA positions is that they have achieved

academic and social integration at their institution (Pretty, 2004); however, minoritized PSAs

also experience discrimination as part of their campus lives. Most MPSAs in this study described

social integration with other minoritized students in physical counterspaces, cultural

organizations, and MPSA subcultures, but not necessarily in the broader campus. For example,

MPSAs described feelings of "comfort" and "home" at the cultural centers on campus. The

organization counterspaces that MPSAs identified as providing a safe mental and emotional

space to critically self-author included: a discussion group for Black women on campus; the

campus chapter of NAACP; Black Student Union; and select Greek-letter chapters. Within their

socialization initiatives, MPSAs turned to each other to form subcultures where they could make

meaning about campus culture. Just three MPSAs in this study, those with more permeable

meaning-making filters, felt socially integrated with the broader Bulldog campus. The findings

of this study demonstrate that it is not accurate to assume MPSAs experience academic and

social integration in the ways assumed about majoritized PSAs. When students' experiences do

not align with the campus master narrative, counterspaces with other minoritized students serve as the locations for MPSA integration.

MPSAs' perspectives are beneficial to socialization initiatives. MPSAs engage counterstories in an attempt to communicate nuanced messages to other minoritized students and challenge the campus master narrative. Counterstories also facilitated MPSAs' own sense of belonging and sense of self. For example, Zac valued the agency he held in telling a counterstory at MU. He reflected,

> I felt I had more of an identity, and more visibility. When I first got the job, I thought it was really neat how I would be the face of [Midwest University]. Someone who was brown. Someone who's from out of state. I thought that was really special because people like me would be able to see students succeeding here.

The potential for MPSAs to positively work toward institutional goal attainment and influence campus climate, as well as pursue their desired possible selves, is far too great to leave to chance with perspectiveless practices.

Implications for Student Affairs Practice

This study suggests at least four implications for the practice of undergraduate anticipatory and formal socialization. First, I discuss the opportunities for self-authorship development embedded within PSA positions. Second, I challenge coordinators of socialization initiatives to examine the underlying perspectivelessness of their programs. Third, I discuss implications for PSA recruitment and staffing. Finally, I discuss opportunities to center identity-awareness in PSA training and supervision.

The Peer Socialization Agent Experience as Self-Authorship Development

Undergraduate leadership experiences such as orientation leader are avenues for self-authorship development (Abes & Jones, 2004; Tankersley, 2013). This study advances that idea. As Baxter Magolda (2007) noted, "introducing college students to complexity and enabling them to deal with it meaningfully promotes self-authorship" (p. 73). In this study, MPSAs who served as Orientation Bulldog Guides detailed ongoing training focused on answering difficult questions. The orientation professional staff promoted self-authorship development by introducing complex concepts and encouraging internal meaning-making about those concepts. Generally, socialization initiatives may foster self-authorship in their PSAs by validating students' ability to know, situating learning in their PSA experience, and defining learning as "mutually constructing meaning" (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007, p. 19).

The results of my study suggest that centering context in PSA learning may catalyze "provocative moments," which stimulate self-authorship development (Pizzolato, 2005). PSAs who are encouraged to examine and discuss campus culture with a critical lens may develop self-authoring abilities. Socialization coordinators should create opportunities for PSAs to develop critical self-authorship throughout their leadership positions. By engaging PSAs in dialogue about diversity and multiculturalism, professional staff could create provocative moments that enhance PSA self-authorship. Critically examining complex campus issues would require a paradigm shift in the underlying philosophies of socialization initiatives. I will discuss this paradigm shift as the next practical implication.

Underlying Philosophies of Socialization: Promoting Identity-Awareness

The critical lens through which I examined MPSA sensemaking illuminates the perspectiveless philosophies of the major socialization initiatives at Midwest University. Critical

race scholars argue for pedagogical practices that examine systems of privilege, unmask perspectivelessness, and combat stereotypes (e.g., Armstrong & Wildman, 2012; Crenshaw, 1988). As critical scholars contend, perspectiveless programs and policies that adopt supposed "neutrality" actually perpetuate power, privilege, and oppression. By shifting the paradigm that guides socialization initiatives from perspectivelessness to identity-awareness, socialization coordinators may improve the campus climate for minoritized students, thus influencing minoritized students' sense of belonging and potential to persist at the university. Identity-awareness is a process that actively engages people in reflecting on their understandings of identity (Armstrong & Wildman, 2012). In this section, I explore identity-awareness at the program level for socialization initiatives.

Many MU socialization initiatives adopt a perspectiveless "we are all Bulldogs" approach for the students they serve. An identity-aware socialization initiative embeds diversity and multiculturalism throughout the program. To be sure, minoritized students benefit from many of the topics (e.g., academic requirements, time management, study habits) explored throughout perspectiveless socialization programs. Yet, as the MPSAs in this study detailed, minoritized students seek cultural awareness through informal conversations with MPSAs. Coordinators of socialization initiatives should adopt identity-aware practices that provide cultural awareness instead of avoiding it. For example, an identity-aware campus tour protocol would call for every tour guide to include the institution's cultural centers in every tour. Further, identity-aware orientation guides could engage their students in a dialogue about sociocultural issues related to diversity, such as the campus Black Lives Matter social movement. MPSAs in this study illustrated that prospective and new minoritized students seek cultural insight from current minoritized students. Identity-aware socialization initiatives should facilitate those conversations

rather than avoid or ignore them, and could reach out to campus partners to alleviate the load carried by MPSAs. In some cases, that might mean collaborating with campus partners, such as cultural student organizations or professional staff in the multicultural affairs unit, who can communicate about the realities of campus life for minoritized students. In other cases, it might mean selecting and preparing a socialization staff that is identity-aware.

PSA Selection: Aligning Personal and Institutional Values

The responsibility of communicating campus realities should not fall exclusively on the shoulders of MPSAs. Yet, as I discussed in the previous section, prospective and new MU students and their families experience perspectiveless socialization initiatives and are then left to their own devices to seek out the additional cultural information that is important to their understanding of campus. As MPSAs in this study described, parents and students sought out MPSAs to ask questions about the realities of campus culture and climate. Those conversations usually happened privately, when the MPSA was not giving a formal presentation or panel. As successful students who frequently navigate discriminatory contexts while at the same time possess a sense of belonging, MPSAs engage "peer pedagogies" to educate prospective and new students about campus realities and strategies for success (Harper, 2013).

Knowing these conversations are important and occurring, socialization initiative coordinators should consider what that means for their recruitment and hiring practices for PSA positions. At many institutions, socialization initiative leaders look to the composition of their student body to guide their PSA selection, seeking a PSA staff that reflects the structural diversity of the institution's enrollment. This model for staff selection that seeks representation of the student body is certainly better than historical models that only represented majoritized perspectives. Yet, at a predominantly White institution such as Midwest University where

102

students of color comprise approximately 19% of the undergraduate student body, that formula for PSA selection results in very few PSAs of color.

A different formula that socialization leaders might consider for PSA recruitment and selection is to identify PSAs that reflect the diverse perspectives the institution espouses to value. In addition to recruiting minoritized students active in cultural organizations on campus, socialization coordinators might recruit from among students who are engaged in diversity educational initiatives on campus. Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, and Oseguera (2008) suggested that "students who are predisposed to participate in diversity activities are likely to have a unique set of multicultural competencies that not only spur an interest in participating in diverse activities but that also decrease their anxiety with diverse peers" (p. 264). Recruiting majoritized students who might already possess multicultural competency could relieve MPSAs of some of the burden to communicate campus realities.

In the application and interview process for PSAs, socialization leaders could ask applicants to describe the ways their experiences and values align with the espoused values of the institution. For example, in the individual interview for *Midwest 101* leaders, socialization leaders might ask candidates to talk about a time when they observed identity-based discrimination on campus and how they made sense of that. This shift to an identity-aware process could result in both a more diverse staff and also a staff that enters their PSA positions open to multicultural competency training and engaging with minoritized students. Identifying a staff whose values align with institutional values could facilitate a smooth transition to identity-aware PSA training.

PSA Training and Supervision: Creating MPSA Counterspaces

As MPSAs in this study discussed, PSA training was almost devoid of identity-awareness. The exception was Orientation, but according to the Bulldog Guides I interviewed, the diversity workshops facilitated by Orientation seemed to primarily benefit majoritized PSAs. In this section, I explore opportunities to foster counterspaces for MPSAs to make meaning about campus culture and their PSA experiences.

MPSAs experience daily microaggressions on campus and potentially among the PSA team. As the findings of this study indicate, counterspaces are powerful physical and metaphorical mechanisms for minoritized students to engage with each other in solidarity to make sense of the climate, their relationships with others, and their own identities. Facilitating MPSA counterspaces respects the reality that MPSAs likely experience PSA training and the PSA team environment in ways that are different from their majoritized peers. For example, one MPSA's experience of the privilege walk exercise in diversity teambuilding clarified that her multicultural awareness was developmentally different from some of her PSA peers for whom the activity catalyzed their awareness of race, gender, and socioeconomic privilege. One way socialization leaders could support their MPSAs is to facilitate identity group caucuses.

Identity group caucuses provide a counterspace for MPSAs to engage in deeper reflection and meaning-making about their campus and PSA experiences. In their overview of identity group caucuses as a pedagogical practice in student affairs, Obear and martinez (2013) characterized the utility of caucus groups as providing "a more intimate, supportive, and comfortable space to stimulate honest self-reflection and explore various ways that [identity], [discrimination], internalized dominance, and internalized oppression impact their lives" (p. 80). During difficult dialogue that may arise during training, identity group caucuses provide PSAs a

space to safely and openly discuss their reactions before large group dialogue (Zúñiga, Naagda, & Sevig, 2002). This practice creates a space for MPSAs to remain engaged and continues to foster their identity development and critical self-authorship. Rather than shutting down as one MPSA did during Orientation retreat, processing multicultural issues and training content with a shared identity group creates an opportunity for authentic dialogue free from potential defensiveness or resistance from majoritized PSAs. When establishing caucuses, facilitators should take intersectionality into consideration and take care not to make students choose among their multiple, intersecting identities.

Summary

In this section, I explored four practical implications that centered on establishing socialization programs as identity-aware initiatives. First, socialization coordinators should foster PSA positions as opportunities for critical self-authorship development. Second, I critiqued the underlying perspectivelessness of socialization initiatives. Third, I discussed opportunities for PSA staffing. Fourth, I described opportunities to create MPSA counterspaces in PSA training and supervision. Such efforts have the potential to better align socialization initiatives with the institution's goals for diversity. Doing so can also shift the ways minoritized students experience their PSA roles.

Implications for Minoritized Peer Socialization Agents

The MPSAs in this study are successful students who thrive at the university. MPSAs exhibited tenacity and resilience in the face of microaggressions, finding a sense of belonging and persisting toward their goals. Ten of the 13 U.S. MPSA participants demonstrated critical self-authorship, and the remaining 3 described dissonance-provoking experiences that catalyzed early steps toward self-authorship. Most MPSAs embraced existing agency to socialize students

and enacted new agency to change the campus narrative about and for minoritized students. Minoritized college students who are in pursuit of their desired possible selves should consider applying for PSA positions as a viable option toward that end.

Minoritized students will face discrimination during college, and the agency that comes with serving as a MPSA might counter the "battle fatigue" (Smith et al., 2011) many minoritized people experience. The power of PSA positions provides a vehicle through which minoritized students can tell counterstories and enact cultural change. PSAs hold prestigious positions on which institutional leaders – often the central administration – rely to guide the student culture (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005). That level of student leadership gives those who hold the positions a voice; PSAs are literally the voice of the campus for prospective and new students. With that voice comes the opportunity to effect change.

In addition to the opportunity to shift institutional culture, there are distinctive personal benefits to serving as a MPSA. MPSAs in this study felt they mattered to the university. Mattering facilitates sense of belonging, and sense of belonging enhances student success (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Strayhorn, 2012). As Strayhorn (2012) has argued, belonging is a "fundamental motivation" that "drives student behaviors, and facilitates educational success" (p. 87). Other student success scholars (e.g., Kuh et al., 2005) have connected sense of belonging to persistence and satisfaction. Serving as a MPSA certainly has the potential to influence minoritized students' sense of belonging and sense of agency. A PSA position should be considered as one avenue toward student success.

Implications for Theory

This study makes three theoretical contributions: 1) to self-authorship theory, 2) to Critical Race Theory, and 3) to persistence theory. First, this study advances a critical

perspective of holistic self-authorship development. Higher education researchers have added nuance to Baxter Magolda's (2001) original conception of self-authorship by examining self-authorship development of specific student populations (Abes & Jones, 2004; Pizzolato, 2003, 2004; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004) and by examining catalysts of self-authorship for students of color (e.g., Pizzolato, Nguyen, Johnston, & Wang, 2012). Pizzolato et al. (2012) and Abes et al. (2007) emphasized context as an important factor for consideration of one's self-authoring capacity. Pizzolato et al. (2012) identified the "salience of the interpersonal domain on both the cognitive and intrapersonal development" of college students of color (p. 671). The interpersonal dimension had a significant role for MPSAs in this study as well. Interpersonal relationships, primarily with minoritized peers in counterspaces, influenced MPSAs' understandings of how they made sense of campus culture (cognitive domain) and who they were (intrapersonal domain). Adding a critical lens centered minoritized identities and the interdependent relationship between context (in this case, racist, cisgenderist, and heterosexist context) and students' meaning-making filters. This study clarifies how the process of meaning-making was catalyzed by the contradiction between MPSAs' lived experiences and the messages they were expected to communicate about their institution. MPSAs' critical meaning-making filters allowed them to hold the contradiction internally and challenge it through counterstories.

Second, this study builds on an emerging literature that extends Critical Race Theory (CRT) to higher education research and student affairs practice. CRT was born out of legal studies and has recently been embraced as a theoretical framework for higher education research. In the last fifteen years, higher education scholars have used CRT to conduct a historical policy analysis of African American higher education access and equity (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009), to examine the experiences of Black female full professors in academe (Croom & Patton

Davis, 2012), and to explore campus racial climate for African American college students (D. Solorzano et al., 2000). These examples illustrate that CRT is useful across a variety of units of analysis in higher education. According to Parker and Lynn (2009), critical qualitative research is "a way to link theory and understanding about race from critical perspectives to actual practice and actions going on in education for activist social justice and change" (p. 157). For this study, CRT provided a framework for analysis and for considering implications. With CRT as a guide, I unmasked the perspectivelessness of the major socialization initiatives at the university and developed identity-aware recommendations for student affairs practice.

Finally, this study challenges the theory of college student attrition that dominates higher education literature about persistence and retention. Tinto (1993) proposed a model of student integration that suggested students who achieve social and academic integration are most likely to persist. Integration with the master narrative is an assumed and central construct of Tinto's (1993) theory. Higher education and student affairs scholars conceive of peer socialization agents as the most integrated academically and socially (Abraham et al., 2003; Pretty, 2004). Yet, minoritized students serving as PSAs do not have access to the same experiences as majoritized students. For this group of exceptionally successful students, academic and social integration may happen because of counterspaces, in ways that differ from majoritized students' integration. My finding about counterspaces as a mechanism for social integration is consistent with that of Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano (2009) who found that the university was also not at the center of Latina/o students' lives who were academically and socially integrated.

Suggestions for Future Research

My study raises several additional research questions. Further lines of inquiry include: 1) a critical discourse analysis of PSA training, 2) a study of the ways majoritized PSAs make sense of campus culture, 3) a study of African American undergraduate women leaders' intersectional identity development, 4) a study of international students serving as PSAs and the ways they make meaning about campus culture, 5) a study of MPSA meaning-making among MPSAs whose minoritized identities are not salient, and 6) a study of the professional staff who coordinate and facilitate socialization initiatives.

A critical discourse analysis of socialization initiative PSA training is an opportunity to critically examine the "structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250) that play a role in reproducing the hegemonic campus master narrative. Through critical discourse analysis, I could examine the content and delivery of PSA training. Critical research questions include: How does PSA training reflect and align with institutional goals for diversity and student success? How does PSA training reflect identity-awareness? Who facilitates training and how are they prepared to do so? What power structures are at play in PSA training and how are those enacted?

MPSAs in this study shared numerous examples of how their majoritized peers (mis)handled cultural issues and interactions. This perception has sparked my interest in a critical study of majoritized PSA experiences with diversity and perceptions of campus culture. I would like to explore with PSAs who hold privileged identities the ways that they think of themselves as socialization agents and communicators of culture, whether they consider themselves socialization agents for minoritized students, and how they make sense of campus culture.

Another potential study is about African American undergraduate women leaders and their intersectional identities. African American women MPSAs in this study seemed to have shared experiences on and around campus, sometimes even using the same phrases or words to describe their experiences. I am interested in exploring the potential contribution of leadership positions (e.g., MPSAs, resident assistants) to African American college women's identity development and success.

Another college population I am interested in researching is international students who serve as PSAs. According to most MPSAs in this study, international students are constant targets of overt racism. Sam, the international student I interviewed, did not view his contextual experiences as discriminatory. I am interested in examining how international students experience and make meaning about campus culture and U.S. culture, and how they then communicate that to new students.

The MPSAs in this study whose minoritized identities were not salient have also piqued my interest. These students identified with the perspectivelessness of the campus master narrative. I would like to explore their senses of self and belonging in an effort to better understand their identity development. I am specifically interested in intersectionality and privileged identities. For example, did the salience of Victor's White identity cancel out his minoritized experiences as a gay man?

Finally, I hope to explore the ways student affairs professionals who coordinate and facilitate socialization initiatives manage the transformation of their programs from perspectiveless to identity-aware. This study would explore how student affairs professionals view the purposes of socialization as they relate to institutional culture and goals, how they view their role in this process, if they agree a shift to identity-awareness is important, and what

tensions they might experience in their roles. I would also explore how their own salient identities mediate their professional experiences and approaches to socialization.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed important implications for student affairs practice, for minoritized PSAs, for theory, and for research. Taken together, these implications advance socialization initiatives as sites of social justice advocacy and institutional change. In both theory and practice, the implications discussed here provide guidance for undergraduate admissions programs and orientation programs that seek to align with the professional standards for diversity, equity, and access established by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2015) and with their institution's espoused theories and goals for diversity, retention, and graduation.

Most minoritized peer socialization agents (MPSAs) in this study made sense of their campus culture in the context of pervasive discrimination, engaging meaning-making filters fostered by counterspaces, and enacting counterstorytelling as an empowering act of resistance. With simultaneous positive and negative feelings about their university, MPSAs sought ways to communicate nuanced messages about the realities of campus to prospective and new students. This study unmasks the perspectivelessness of socialization programs and suggests implications for practice, for MPSA success, for theory, and for research. This study identifies the racist, cisgenderist, and heterosexist climates minoritized students experience and challenges institutional leaders to adopt philosophies and practices that have the potential to change the master narrative from perspectivelessness to identity-awareness.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Michigan State University IRB Research Determination Letter

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

**Initial IRB
Application
Determination
*Exempt***

June 27, 2014

To: Kristen A. Renn
        428 Erickson

Re: **IRB# x14-702e** Category: Exempt 2
        Approval Date: June 27, 2014

Title: Exploring Minoritized Peer Socialization Agents' Sensemaking About Institutional Culture

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been deemed as exempt** in accordance with federal regulations.

The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. **Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects** in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do <u>not</u> need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an *Application for Permanent Closure*.

Revisions: Exempt protocols do <u>not</u> require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.
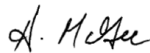
Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after <u>three years</u>, the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A. McGee

Harry McGee, MPH
SIRB Chair

c: Jodi Linley

**Office of Regulatory Affairs
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**Biomedical & Health
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MSU is an affirmative-action,
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Appendix B: Outreach to Socialization Initiative Coordinators

On September 10, 2014, I sent the following electronic mail to the coordinators for: Orientation, Admissions Phone Outreach and Tour Guides, Midwest 101, and Midwest Jump.

Dear [Coordinator's First Name],
I am emailing today in the hopes that you can assist me in identifying participants for my dissertation research. I am studying the sensemaking processes of minoritized peer socialization agents about institutional culture. Through this study, I will explore whether there are differences between institutional espoused theories (i.e., culture, values, norms) and the experiences of minoritized students on campus. I will pursue an understanding of the meaning-making processes minoritized students who serve as peer socialization agents (e.g., peer leaders, Bulldog guides, campus tour guides) engage to make sense of institutional culture in their roles as socialization agents.

Please note that students and the offices and programs they represent will be de-identified and remain confidential to the maximum of my abilities throughout the study. I will use pseudonyms for students, offices, programs, and the university in transcribing interviews, data analysis, and reporting.

Can you please forward my invitation to participate (below) to [PSA role title] from 2014 and previous years if students are still undergraduates or graduated in 2014? I am hoping you will encourage students who you know meet the participation criteria to contact me. Since minoritized identities are not necessarily visible or knowable, I am hoping you will both send this to your entire student staff so that students may self-identify, and encourage individuals to participate who you know meet the criteria below.

I really appreciate your help in recruiting students for this study! By participating, our student leaders in these important roles will contribute to knowledge of ways that these leadership experiences can foster student development of meaning-making capacity.

Best wishes,
Jodi
_____

Dear [PSA Role Title],
You are invited to participate in a research study about the ways students from minoritized* groups in your leadership positions on campus make sense of campus culture. In this study, I am exploring whether there are differences between institutional culture and the experiences of minoritized students on campus. I will pursue an understanding of the meaning-making processes minoritized students who serve as *Midwest Jump* peer leaders, Bulldog guides, campus tour guides, admissions phone team, and *Midwest 101* leaders engage to make sense of institutional culture in their leadership roles.

* The term "minoritized" refers to the process of minoritization that reflects 'minority' status as socially constructed. Groups that are minoritized at the university include: U.S. students of color (African American, Asian, Latino(a), Native American, Native Hawaiian, multiracial); lesbian,

gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer students; students with disabilities; students from a low-income background; and first-generation college students.

Participants should:
1) Be current undergraduates in at least their 3rd year or recent graduates;
2) Have served in their leadership role for at least 1 of their institution's socialization initiatives for a minimum of 1 year (or season, depending on the program); and
3) Self-select as a member of 1 or more minoritized groups (U.S. student of color; LGBTQ; student with a disability; low-income background; and/or first-generation).

If you meet all 3 of the above participation criteria, please complete the Research Participant Contact Form [hyperlink to online form]. I will contact you to set up a convenient time for an initial interview, which will last 60-90 minutes. If you have any questions, I can be reached by email (jodi-linley@uiowa.edu) or phone (319-335-5307).

Thanks for considering being a part of this study! Your participation will contribute to an understanding of minoritized students' experiences on campus and to our knowledge of ways that select leadership experiences can foster student development.

Warm regards,
Jodi

[Professional E-mail Signature]

Appendix C: Research Participant Interest Form

Thank you for your interest in this study about the ways students from minoritized groups in certain student leadership positions on campus make sense of campus culture. Please complete the form below and I will contact you to set up our initial interview.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at:
jodi-linley@uiowa.edu
319-335-5307 (voice)

Thank you,
Jodi Linley

* Required

My legal name *
☐

My preferred name (if different from legal name)
☐

My status at the university *
Participants should be current undergraduates in at least their 3rd year or recent graduates.
- o ☐ 3rd Year
- o ☐ 4th Year
- o ☐ 5th Year
- o ☐ 6th Year
- o ☐ Graduated Spring or Summer 2014

University program(s) with which I served as a student leader for at least 1 season/year (check all that apply): *
Participants should have served in their leadership role for at least 1 of their institution's socialization initiatives for a minimum of 1 year (or season, depending on the program).
- o ☐ Midwest Jump
- o ☐ Admissions: Tour Guide
- o ☐ Admissions: Phone Team
- o ☐ Admissions: Student Outreach to Assist Recruitment (SOAR)
- o ☐ First Year Experience: Orientation
- o ☐ First Year Experience: Midwest 101

The minoritized identity(ies) with which I identify (check all that apply): *
Groups that are minoritized at the university include: U.S. students of color (African American, Asian, Latino(a), Native American, Native Hawaiian, multiracial); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer students; students with disabilities; students from a low-income background; and first-generation college students.

- o ☐ African American or Black
- o ☐ Asian
- o ☐ Latino(a) or Hispanic
- o ☐ Native American
- o ☐ Native Hawaiian
- o ☐ Multiracial
- o ☐ LGBTQ (please answer next question also)
- o ☐ Student with a disability(ies)
- o ☐ From a low-income background (my family lived below the poverty line)
- o ☐ First-generation college student

I am LGBTQ, and the sexual identity that best describes me is:

☐

My gender identity is: *

☐

My preferred email address is: *

☐

My preferred phone number is: *

☐

My Pseudonym
Your confidentiality is important. Please select a name for me to call you in this study. I will use your pseudonym in all materials for this study (e.g., interview transcripts, research articles).

☐

Appendix D: Initial Communication with Participants

After I received a new Participant Interest Form, I sent each student the following electronic mail with a copy of the informed consent document and an invitation to schedule the first interview.

Dear [Student's Preferred Name],

Thanks for completing the Participant Information Form for my study. I look forward to meeting you soon and learning about your experiences at [Midwest University], specifically as [PSA role title]. Attached to this email is a copy of the Consent Form for this study.

What is the best way to propose an interview time? Full participation in the study consists of two (2) interviews, approximately 60-90 minutes each interview. As a small token of appreciation for your time and participation, I will send you a $15 Amazon gift card after your second interview.

Please let me know the best way to schedule your interview, and again, thank you!

Best wishes,
Jodi

[Professional Signature]

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

This is a consent form to participate in interviews that are part of a study about the process through which undergraduate peer socialization agents (e.g., tour guides, orientation leaders, peer leaders) with minoritized identities (e.g., students of color; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students; low-income students) experience and make sense of institutional culture and potential discrepancies between the narratives of their institution and students' own lived experiences. Your participation will contribute to knowledge of ways that student leadership experiences can foster student development of meaning-making capacity. This study is conducted by Jodi Linley under the direct supervision of Dr. Kristen Renn, a professor at Michigan State University.

Your participation is completely voluntary. However, if you are under the age of 18, you cannot be interviewed. You may choose not to participate at all, or to answer some questions and not others.

Your personal identity will be kept confidential. We have asked you for a pseudonym to use for the study. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain confidential through the use of pseudonyms.

Your responses or decision whether or not to participate in this study will have no penalty of any kind and will not have an effect on your status as a student. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Full participation in the study will require 2 interviews total, with each lasting 60-90 minutes. At the conclusion of the second interview, you will receive a $15 Amazon gift card as a token of appreciation for your time. The interviews will be recorded on a digital audio recorder.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Jodi Linley, Visiting Instructor in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies, N475 Lindquist Center, University of Iowa, by phone: (319)335-5307, or email: jodi-linley@uiowa.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, you would like to obtain more information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Programs at (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, or email: irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing MI 48824.

You indicate your consent and voluntarily agreement to be in this research study by participating in the interviews.

Thank you for participating!

Appendix F: Interview Protocols

Semi-Structured Protocol for 60-90 Minute
Initial Interview with Minoritized Peer Socialization Agents

<u>Gain Informed Consent</u>: Read consent letter, discuss no anticipated harm and how I will use data, get verbal agreement to audio record interview, ask student for preferred pseudonym, student signs consent form, start recorder.

1. Tell me a little bit about where you're from.

    a. What was that like for you?

    b. What was the most important thing about that?

    c. What was hardest for you?

2. Tell me about your experiences as an MU student.

    a. What kinds of things did you consider when deciding to come to MU? Who was influential in your decision?

    b. How did you come to know MU? What was your sense of the MU culture before you came here? What was important about that?

    c. Walk me through your transition to MU. What was that like? What was hardest about that for you?

    d. Tell me about your best experience at MU. What was that like for you? What was most at risk?

    e. Tell me about your worst experience at MU. What was that like for you? What was most at risk?

    f. Tell me about your closest friends at MU.

3. Now that you've been at MU for a while, how would you describe the overall culture?

a. Tell me about a time when you felt like you really belonged at MU. What was that like for you? What was the most important thing about that?

b. Tell me about a time when you felt like you didn't belong at MU. What was that like for you? What was most at risk?

c. Tell me about a time when you felt comfortable as (African American, Latino/a, Native American, Asian, LGBTQ, first-generation, low-income, a student with a disability) at MU. What was the most important thing about that?

d. Tell me about a time when you did not feel comfortable as (African American, Latino/a, Native American, Asian, LGBTQ, first-generation, low-income, a student with a disability) at MU. What was the most important thing about that?

Semi-Structured Protocol for 60-90 Minute
Second Interview with Minoritized Peer Socialization Agents

Thank participant for their time and commitment. Review informed consent and remind participant about $15 gift card after this interview (confirm email address for gift card). Start recorder.

1. Ask participant if anything came up for them after the initial interview that they want to discuss.

2. Today I would like to talk about your role as a/an (orientation leader, peer leader, Bulldog guide, SOAR volunteer).

   a. Walk me through your decision to apply for the position. What was most important to you?

   b. What do you think about the expectations for you in this role?

   c. Tell me about a time when your role called for you to do or say something that did not mesh with your experience on campus. What was that like for you? What

was most important about that? What was the hardest thing about that? What was at risk?

d. Tell me about a time when your role called for you to do or say something that did not mesh with your values. What was that like for you? What was most important about that? What was the hardest thing about that? What was at risk?

e. What is the best thing about your position? What is most important about that?

f. What is the worst thing about your position? What is the hardest thing about that?

g. [If student described minoritized identity sense of belonging in interview 1]: What do your friends in the (African American, Latino/a, Native American, Asian, LGBTQ, first-generation, low-income, a student with a disability) community think or say about you being a/an (orientation leader, peer leader, Bulldog guide)? What is most important about that? What is hardest about that?

h. Tell me about a time when a prospective or new student (or their family members) asked you to talk about being (African American, Latino/a, Native American, Asian, LGBTQ, first-generation, low-income, a student with a disability) at MU. What was that like for you? What was most challenging about that?

i. What would you do if you felt a conflict between the expectations of your position and your own experiences on campus as (African American, Latino/a, Native American, Asian, LGBTQ, first-generation, low-income, a student with a disability)? What's most at risk? What's the hardest part of that?

3. What else would be important for me to know that I haven't asked about?

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