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Larry D. Roper

This qualitative study informed by a phenomenological approach explored the experiences of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents. Through an individual interview and follow-up focus group, eight participants shared their experience with bias-related incidents, decision to disclose or not to disclose, and perception of university resources. Five themes emerged from the data: prevalence of bias-related incidents, previous relationships and shared identities, validation and logistics, disclosure roadblocks, and current disclosures influence on future disclosures. Based on the findings and resulting discussion of the experiences and perceptions of students, whom have experience a bias-related incident, recommendations are offered to staff and faculty members regarding future practices and principles to support students, create a more positive campus climate, and promote environments where historically marginalized populations feel comfortable disclosing.
Students’ Decision to Disclose a Bias-Related Incident

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Pamela M. Altmaier, Author
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter One: Introduction</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Background and Subject Interest</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Definitions and Terminology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Literature Review</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Higher Education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of Historically Marginalized Populations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Policies</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosure</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Methodology</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Sampling and Recruitment</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Disclosure and Bracketing</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Findings</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Profiles</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme One: Prevalence of Bias-related Incidents</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Two: Previous Relationships and Shared Identities</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Three: Validation and Logistics</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Four: Current Disclosures Influence on Future Disclosures</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme Five: Disclosure Roadblocks</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Discussion</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions and Themes</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of Study</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Thoughts</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix One: Interview Questions</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Two: Consent Form</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Three: Focus Group Questions</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Four: Final Bracketing Report</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The missions of most colleges and universities incorporate access to education for students from various backgrounds, support for diversity, and retention/completion of all students. Unfortunately, these aspects of institutional missions are not always put into practice for students from historically marginalized populations. Students from historically marginalized populations are defined as “a social group that is devalued in society. This devaluing encompasses how the group is represented, what degree of access to resources it is granted, and how the unequal access is rationalized” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Students from these historically marginalized populations experience bias-related incidents regularly (Harper et al., 2011; Harwood et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 1998; Rankin, 2003), some research shows these incidents occur daily (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003).

Even with the high prevalence rates of these experiences; there is a lack of disclosure by targeted students (Community Relations Services, 2003; Sue, 2010). Bias-related incidents cause physical and psychological harm (Beemyn, 2003), create negative campus climate (Hughes et al., 1998; Milem, 2003; Rowley, Hurtado, & Panjuan, 2002), and ultimately lower retention rates for historically marginalized students (Sue, 2010). To combat these harms, reporting protocols have become a national focus to encourage further disclosures, support targets of bias-related incidents, improve campus climate by becoming more proactive in diversity education, and be more effective in responding to bias-related incidents (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Community Relations Services, 2003; Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). Even with these reporting protocols, many students are not disclosing their experiences (Sue, 2010).

The focus of this study is to analyze the experience of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents. Studies have shown that historically marginalized students experience
these incidents regularly (Harper et al., 2011; Harwood et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 1998; Rankin, 2003), but little research has looked at the disclosure process for these students (Community Relations Services, 2003). This study will help inform practitioners of the deficiencies and successes in bias-related incident response protocols and campus climates. Ideally, these findings will inform future practices and principles to support students, create a more positive campus climate, and promote environments where historically marginalized populations feel comfortable disclosing.

**Researcher Background and Subject Interest**

I started my professional career a short time ago in January 2015. I loved the continuous interactions with students starting their journey of independence, self-exploration, and growing as an adult. It was exciting and inspiring work: watching students take steps to grow and thrive in their journey. I quickly found that higher education is not always a right and expectation, like I had previously believed. Some students needed to constantly convince their families of the value of a college education, balance the needs of two worlds (collegiate world and familial world), and endure obstacles in accessibility and persistence. The experiences of students were vastly different, based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other actual or perceived identities.

Differential experiences became clear to me when I met a young woman. Her experience was not all about growth and self-exploration, but perseverance and fortitude. She was unhappy with her residential experience because an unknown individual vandalized her door with a derogatory term based on her racial identity. When I listened to her experience, my view on the campus, as well as campus climates around the country, transformed. She talked about how this act made her feel unwelcome, unworthy, and placed her in a box based on her racial identity. We
talked about what she needed for support and to feel whole again; where this young woman asked for an educational dialogue with the community. She believed that this act derived from a lack of community responsibility. Her openness to engaging in this dialogue and care for the community wellbeing was courageous and inspirational. This experience opened my eyes to the issues of bias-related incidents on college campuses and the lack of educational dialogues about their effects on communities. I continuously reflect about this young woman. What would have happened if she didn’t disclose her experience with me?

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to analyze experiences of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents. The primary research question that will serve as a framework to this study is: What is the experience of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents? In addition to the main research question, three sub-questions exist to help further explore the topic: (1) What factors affected the student's decision to disclose the experience? (2) What factors affected to whom a student discloses? (3) What factors lead to future disclosures?

**Operational Definitions and Terminology**

**Bias.** This study uses the term bias as a “a preformed negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based on their race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity/national origin.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

**Bias-related incident.** In this study, bias-related incident is defined as “behaviors/actions directed toward an individual or group based upon actual or perceived identity characteristics or background (e.g., skin color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity and expression, age, or physical, mental, or emotional
disability)” (The University*, 2015). This definition is consistent with the current Bias-Related Incident Response Protocol’s definition at The University.

**Disclosure.** In this study, disclosure is the act of sharing personal information and experiences with others (Collins & Miller, 1994; Forgas, 2011; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998), specifically this study looks at a student's disclosure of their experience with bias-related incidents.

**Historically marginalized populations.** Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) defines minoritized group as “a social group that is devalued in society. This devaluing encompasses how the group is represented, what degree of access to resources it is granted, and how the unequal access is rationalized. Traditionally, a group in this position has been referred to as the minority group. However, this language has been replaced with the term minoritized in order to capture the active dynamics that create the lower status in society and also to signal that a group’s status is not necessarily related to how many or few of them there are in the population at large.” The document will use this definition for historically marginalized populations instead of minoritized group.

**Receiving Party.** In this study, the receiving party is the individual(s) that is disclosed to.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will outline the current literature on the topic of bias-related incidents and disclosure, starting with the history of access to higher education and the benefits of diverse populations in the educational environment. The literature will show the lived experiences of students from historically marginalized populations. Historically marginalized populations are defined as “a social group that is devalued in society. This devaluing encompasses how the group is represented, what degree of access to resources it is granted, and how the unequal access is rationalized” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). This review of literature will cover the role of university employees and bias-related incident response protocols. The literature will describe the current knowledge regarding disclosure and the factors that lead to environments with greater numbers of disclosures. Lastly, this section will draw parallels from current research around disclosures of sexual violence to bias-related incidents. With the small amount of research published around disclosure of bias-related incidents, the parallels with sexual violence can provide a relevant framework for disclosure. It is important to note that these results will not be identical and students will experiences these assaults differently.

Access to Higher Education.

To begin, it is important to look back at the establishment of higher education in the United States. In 1636, the first institution of higher education was established in the United States, Harvard University (Musil, Garcia, Hudgins, Nettles, Sedlacek, & Smith, 1999). This institution was followed by the College of William and Mary in 1693 and Yale University in 1701 (Musil, Garcia, Hudgins, Nettles, Sedlacek, & Smith, 1999). These institutions were created to educate future clergymen and political leaders in the new world (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Rudolph, 1990). The student population was composed of rich, White, Christian men.
These men were the primary population being educated until 1836, when Wesleyan College and Mount Holyoke College were established for women (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). Soon after in 1837, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania was opened in order to provide access to education for Black men (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). These institutions began the movement to further education for historically marginalized populations (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). In 1862 and 1890, the Morrill Federal Land Grant Act created more educational institutions to provide education to a greater population and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) were established (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). This resulted in separate and unequal education for students. Brown v. Board of Education (1954) later fought for equal access and higher levels of education.

The current makeup of college student populations is a result of a history of movements and activism (Musil et al., 1999; Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). The Civil Rights Movement and Women’s Movements in the 1960s and 1970s demanded greater access to higher education and equity for these historically marginalized populations (Musil et al., 1999). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Immigration Act of 1965 were results of these demonstrations and demands (Musil et al., 1999). Both acts allowed greater access for students of color, mainly Black, Latino, and Asian students (Musil et al., 1999). By the 1980s, access for women and students of color grew significantly, ultimately concluding in more degree completion by these populations over White men (Musil et al., 1999).

**Affirmative action.** Affirmative action is important when looking at the historical underpinnings of bias-related incidents. At the time of affirmative action, students of color, and later women, were provided further access and assistance to pursue higher education degrees. This effort was successful in many cases, but additionally created further distance between
historically marginalized populations and individuals from majority identities. This literature is important, because the narrative that students from historically marginalized populations don’t belong or deserve to be in higher education are still existing today based on opinions of affirmative action efforts. Additionally, these narratives, or ideologies, feed into personal justification to treat historically marginalized populations differently or perpetrate bias-related incidents.

In the efforts to increase the number of historically marginalized populations, affirmative action was created to give these populations targeted financial aid and greater access through admissions processes (Bolden, Goldberg, & Parker, 1999; Lawrence & Matsuda, 1997; Milem, 2003; Orlans, 1992). Brown v. Board of Education (1954) was the birth of affirmative action for people of color, and in 1968, women were included in affirmative action efforts (Orlans, 1992). The goal of affirmative action was to create a similar makeup of the college and university population as the local high school’s graduating class (Orlans, 1992). These actions included financial assistance opportunities/scholarships, restructuring of admissions surveys, and varied testing standards (Bolden, Goldberg, & Parker, 1999; Lawrence & Matsuda, 1997; Milem, 2003; Orlans, 1992).

Since affirmative action was created, debates regarding the ethical implications and effectiveness have ensued (Bolden, Goldberg, & Parker, 1999; Lawrence & Matsuda, 1997; Milem, 2003). Opponents of the action argue that these policies are unfair to more qualified individuals and students admitted based on affirmative action are lowering educational standards (Orlans, 1992). It is thought that affirmative action students are in need of more educational resources, including tutors and supplemental/foundational education, and take longer to graduate, forcing colleges and universities to accept “cheaply met” requirements (Orlans, 1992).
According to Milem (2003), the general population is in support of fairness, equity, and equal opportunity, but oppose affirmative action policies.

In the current research around affirmative action in higher education, Orlans (1992) looked at admission applications for students both admitted and denied from various schools. During his study, Orlans (1992) noted two students from the University of California, Berkeley. Student A was a White-identified individual, ranked in the top third of their class, had a test score of 1290, and held a record of good-standing. Student B was Black-identified, ranked in the lower third of their class, had a test score of 890, and was expelled for breaking numerous school rules. The University of California, Berkeley admitted Student B and denied Student A in their admissions process. Orlans (1992) argues that this is an example of a negative outcome from affirmative action and requires colleges and universities to admit unsuitable students.

Advocates of affirmative action believe that these policies are necessary based on the gap in historical access (Orlans, 1992), since students from historically marginalized populations are more likely to be first generation students (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). These students do not have the same knowledge to navigate the admissions processes to colleges and universities and are likely from lower socioeconomic status (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), warranting special support (Orlans, 1992). This support is thought to eventually make up for the past inequities and close the gap between populations (Bolden, Goldberg, & Parker, 1999).

Advocates also argue that specialized standards have been offered historically, including children of alumni and donors (Orlans, 1992). These opportunities are not offered to most students from historically marginalized populations, since they’re more likely to be first-generation students (Orlans, 1992). According to Lawrence and Matsuda (1997), the fight
against affirmative action was “out of tremendous anxiety in a changing world, is an opening for a more progressive vision… The attack on affirmative action is an attempt to shore up a tottering tower of privilege” (p. 278).

**Benefits of a diverse population.** While special consideration to students from historically marginalized populations is debated, the benefits of a diverse population are significant (Milem, 2003). Colleges and universities with diverse populations and educational opportunities regarding various cultures and identities have shown numerous benefits for all students, regardless of personal identities or background (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Milem, 2003). Students that experience increased communication with others from differing identities will have increased cognitive and interpersonal development (Milem, 2003), gain a greater understanding of the world (Chang, 2003), become more culturally aware (Tanaka-Matsumi, Seiden, & Lam, 1996), as well as have an overall higher satisfaction with their higher education experience (Tanaka-Matsumi, Seiden, & Lam, 1996). Furthermore, Chang (2003) found that students are able to learn more about themselves through their interactions with a diverse population. Students from various backgrounds have differing opinions on topics, such as the death penalty, consumer protection, health care, drug testing, taxation, free speech, criminal rights, and the prevalence of discrimination (Chang, 2003). Through interaction with others, students are able to validate their opinion and/or explore different views (Chang, 2003).

In addition to the personal and interpersonal benefits, the overall society improves from a more diverse population in higher education (Chang, 2003; Milem, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001). This educational makeup fosters wide exposure to diverse ideas and customs (Chang, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001) and aids students in becoming future leaders of an increasingly complex society (Chang, 2003; Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003). The purpose of education is to
help students become active members of society, and with education and exposure, students are able to become more positive examples and members (Milem, 2003).

**Experiences of Historically Marginalized Populations**

Through the years, students from historically marginalized populations have fought to access higher education (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). These movements and strides were only accomplished through continuous perseverance and determination (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). Today’s students have greater access to higher education, although they face another challenge: bias-related incidents (Lawrence & Matsuda, 1997). These incidents can range from unintentional microaggressions, such as jokes, comments, and assumptions/stereotypes to intentional actions, such as identity-based slurs, vandalism, and even physical assaults (The University*, 2015). This study specifically defines bias-related incidents as “behaviors/actions directed toward an individual or group based upon actual or perceived identity characteristics or background (e.g., skin color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity and expression, age, or physical, mental, or emotional disability)” (The University*, 2015). It is important to note that a bias-related incident can be legal, illegal, intentional, or unintentional (The University*, 2015).

Students that experience a bias-related incident may have emotional, psychological, and physical harm (The University*, 2015). This abuse includes, but is not limited to, feeling vulnerable, fearing for safety, depression, feelings of helplessness, anxiety, sleep disturbances, low self-esteem, and internalized oppression (Beemyn, 2003). Bias-related incidents also have negative effects on student retention and success in higher education (Sue, 2010). Harwood et al. (2012) explains that students are “keenly wounded” (p. 166) after experiencing these forms of
bias-related incidents. Pope, Mueller, and Reynolds (2009) denote that students carry the weight of these experiences with them through their college career.

According to Siseros (2011) and Rankin (2003), students from historically marginalized populations perceive campus and residence hall climates to be more negative than their counterparts. These experiences are based on a number of factors, including historical legacy of the college or university, structural diversity, psychological climate, and behavioral climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Specifically, behavioral climate is composed of the prevalence of bias-related incidents (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Students from historically marginalized populations experience these incidents at an appalling rate, notably 33% of students of color (Hughes et al., 1998) and 41% of transgender students (Rankin, 2003) will be a target of a bias-related incidents in their higher education career. In addition, 51% of LGBT+ students choose to conceal their identity based on the fear of discrimination from fellow students and 34% of LGBT+ students don’t disclose their experience with bias-related incidents to university employees for fear of further discrimination (Rankin, 2003). According to Rankin (2003), 1,411 bias-related incidents targeted at LGBT+ students were reported in 1988. Rankin (2003) mentions that these numbers are grossly underreported based on the lack of reporting protocols in 1988.

Students from historically marginalized populations experience a range of bias-related incidents, including written derogatory terms (McKinney, 2005; Rankin, 2003; Solorazano, Ceja, & Vosso, 2000), graffiti (McKinney, 2005; Rankin, 2003), racially themed parties (Hunt, 2007; Smith, 2007), verbal threats (Beemyn, 2003; Harper et al., 2011; Harwood et al., 2012; McKinney, 2005; Rankin, 2003), and even physical assault (McKinney, 2005; Rankin, 2003). Recently, 19% of LGBT+ students fear their physical safety based on the prevalence of bias-
related incidents (Rankin, 2003). According to Hughes, Anderson, Cannon, Perez, and Moore (1998) and Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, and Bylsma (2003), students from historically marginalized populations experience bias-related incidents regularly. Swim et al. (2003) continues this idea by describing the occurrences of bias-related incidents for students of color as “everyday racism” (p. 40). “Everyday racism” explains that students of color experience prejudice and biased behaviors from others regularly, or in routine (Swim et al., 2003). This idea is true for students for other historically marginalized populations as well as students of color.

Students from historically marginalized populations have recorded their bias experiences in research studies (Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowen, Igram, & Platt, 2011; Johnson, 2003). Some of these stories explain unfair treatment and policies established by faculty and staff members at colleges and universities (Harper et al., 2011). For example, students of color have been asked to leave their backpacks outside the residential dining spaces based on their race, where White-identifying students were not asked to follow the same policy (Harper et al., 2011). Another recorded story explained that students of color have a hard time holding leadership roles and when these students are successful in leadership roles, the advising staff member showed surprise that the student was able to complete tasks (Johnson, 2003). In a study from 2005, McKinney found that colleges and universities were just starting their journey to support LGBT+ students. None of the colleges and universities involved in the study had non-discrimination policies to protect LGBT+ students and only 25% of the institutions had LGBT centers (McKinney, 2005). Based on recent efforts, students are uncertain if university employees will respond effectively and quickly (Rankin, 2003).

Another major theme of the published research shows that students from historically marginalized populations often hear messages of not belonging (Beemyn, 2003; Dugan, Kusel,
One account told the story of a student of color on their campus tour. During the tour, the student of color was told that they were likely to live in the lower end residence halls, or as the guides said “minority central”, “the projects”, “beehive”, and “Cabrini Green” (Harwood et al., 2012). Many students have reported bias-related incidents in classes and campus events by faculty and staff members (Hughes et al., 1998). Specific experiences of transgender students also include campus climate surveys asking students if they feel both genders are supported on campus and harassment when entering restrooms (Beemyn, 2003). According to Dugan, Kusel, and Simounet (2012) and Beemyn (2003), transgender students experiencing discriminatory messages regarding the classification of the transgender identity as a mental disorder under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III.

The Role of Policies

Administration in higher education needs to respond to the prevalence of bias-related incidents, as well as improve the negative campus climate for historically marginalized students (Harper et al., 2011; Harwood et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 1998; Milem, 2003; Rankin, 2003; Rowley, Hurtado, & Panjuan, 2002). Many higher administration practitioners are looking for solutions to low retention rates and student success (Hughes et al., 1998). Student success is not only connected to academic success, but the experiences of students and their perception of campus climate (Hughes et al., 1998). According to Hughes et al. (1998), retention is affected by level of satisfaction, sense of belonging, peer relationships, and low levels of bias-related incidents.

Colleges and universities need to move further than claiming support and value of diversity in their missions and values (Milem, 2003; Rowley, Hurtado, & Panjuan, 2002).
presentation, Rowley, Hurtado, and Panjuan explained that if colleges and universities want “to achieve a strong institutional commitment to diversity, [an institution] must go beyond mission statements to include articulation of diversity as a priority, activities that evaluate and reward progress, core leadership support, and the development of a diverse student body” (as cited in Rankin & Reason, 2005, p. 46). Resources and support for historically marginalized students have become a focus for institutions, and include cultural centers, diversity workshops, and multicultural Greek organizations (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). These efforts need to continue and grow to support targets of bias-related incidents (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009).

**Bias-related incident response.** As the need for bias-related incident response grows, colleges and universities are establishing protocols with a few objectives in mind: support of targeted students; clear reporting pathways for students, staff, and faculty; as well as reaffirm institutional commitment (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Community Relations Services, 2003; Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). At the basic level, colleges and universities work to support targeted students (Chief Diversity Office, 2013), which involves allowing students self-authorship in the process and response to the incident (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Community Relations Services, 2003). These protocols work to empower students and help them make meaning of these experiences. (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Community Relations Services, 2003). Response protocols also help ensure effective and consistent response to each student and the community (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). Before official protocols were established, students were unsure of reporting pathways (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). This was the cause for vast underreporting and lack of response to bias-related incidents (Community Relations Services,
2003). Lastly, colleges and universities collect the data from bias-related incidents to become more proactive and prevent bias-related incidents from recurring (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Community Relations Services, 2003; Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). When incidents are centrally collected, the institution can create community education opportunities, track patterns, and find sources of negative campus climate (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Community Relations Services, 2003; Office of Opportunity Development, 2013).

The general life of a report protocol is (1) receive the information and evidence of the bias-related incident, (2) support students and ensure safety, (3) evaluate parties needing to be involved for response, and (4) decide if response is needed/wanted by student involved (Chief Diversity Office, 2013; Community Relations Services, 2003; Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). The response to a bias-related incident can vary, and could include group discussions, diversity workshops, and university-wide messages (Community Relations Services, 2003). Georgia State University’s protocol is very direct and student-centered (Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). Once a report is created, the incident is sent to the Bias-Related Incident Response Team, where the team decides on the best representative as a liaison for the student (Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). This liaison works directly with the student and committee to ensure consistent messages and allows that student to feel supported and not overwhelmed (Office of Opportunity Development, 2013). The committee works together to evaluate the response needed and creates an action plan (Office of Opportunity Development, 2013).

Disclosure

Disclosure is the act of sharing personal information and experiences with others (Collins & Miller, 1994; Forgas, 2011; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). A number of studies
have looked at the appeal and need to share personal information with others, where these studies found that disclosures are the root of relationship building (Collins & Miller, 1994; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Individuals that disclose information have stronger relationships and intimacy with the individual receiving the information (Collins & Miller, 1994; Reis & Shaver, 1988). The increased intimacy is also a result of receiving a disclosure from an individual (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Reis & Shaver, 1988). According to Laurenceau, Barrett, and Pietromonaco (1998) and Reis and Shaver (1988), relationships are built on self-disclosure, partner-disclosure, and responsiveness of the partner. The response and reaction of the individual receiving the disclosure is as important as the disclosure itself (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Reis and Shaver (1988) explained that receiving parties need to understand the experience, validate the individual's experience, and provide care, based on the individual’s needs.

There are many factors that lead to increased disclosures: positive mood (Forgas, 2011), trust and liking for the receiving party (Collins & Miller, 1994), previous and close relationship (Altman & Haythorn, 1965; Slobin, Miller, & Porter, 1968), social approval (Taylor, Altman, & Sorrentino, 1969), responsiveness of receiving party (Taylor, Altman, & Sorrentino, 1969), and environment (Bennett, 1967). More specifically, Collins and Miller (1994) explained that when the disclosing individual and receiving party have a closer relationship, they are more likely to disclose information and experiences with each other. These disclosures are likely to become more intimate in topic (Taylor, Altman, & Sorrentino, 1969). Co-workers are common sources of disclosures. These relationships are often built on dependence and trust. Slobin, Miller, and Porter (1968) explained that individuals are more likely to disclose to co-workers that are one level different from their current role (i.e. direct supervisor or direct employee). Social approval
is also a significant factor of disclosures (Taylor, Altman, Sorrentino, 1969). Individuals decide if a topic is going to affect them socially before disclosing the information (Taylor, Altman, & Sorrentino, 1969). This idea causes individuals to not disclose on taboo topics, causing a lack of disclosures for sexual violence or other violent acts (Burgess, 1983). It is important that society creates an environment where disclosing is acceptable and safe for individuals (Bennett, 1967). Bennett (1967) explained this notion by stating “the overriding question is how to maintain an atmosphere of trust and confidence which will enable us to talk about personal affairs as we talk about automobiles; to share experiences as we share the weather” (p. 375).

**Disclosure as treatment.** When a trauma occurs, it is likely difficult to discuss the experiences with others (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). These disclosures are very important for survivors of trauma (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). If disclosures do not occur, the survivor is more likely to have negative health risks, including, but not limited to, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Bolton, Glenn, Orsillo, Roemer, & Litz, 2003), depression (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986), and isolation (Burgess, 1983). According to Pennebaker and Beall (1986), if a survivor does not want to disclose the experience, writing the experience in a journal can show positive effects. These effects are limited, according to Hunt (1997). Survivors have shown greater improvements, if they engage in emotional disclosures (Hunt, 1997).

**Sexual violence disclosures.** Survivors of sexual violence experience phases of response, according to Burgess (1983). These phases include shock and disbelief, pseudo-calm and detached, anger and rage, and lastly, integration of the experience into the survivor’s lifestyle (Burgess, 1983). Throughout these phases, survivors can disclose their experience to others, although there are many factors that stop survivors from disclosing (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003; Lievore, 2003; Staller & Nelson-Gardell, 2005). These factors include, perception
of severity (Fisher et al., 2003; Lievore, 2003), proximity to perpetrator (Lievore, 2003), perception and confidence of reporting process (Lievore, 2003; Staller & Nelson-Gardell, 2005; Unglar et al., 2009), feeling of self-blame, responsibility, and embarrassment (Fisher et al., 2003; Staller et al., 2005; Unglar et al., 2009), perception of lack of proof (Fisher et al., 2003), fear of retaliation (Fisher et al., 2003), and desire to protect family and friends from burden (Fisher et al., 2003). Based on these factors, only two in three survivors of sexual violence tell anyone about their experience (Golding, Siegel, Sorenson, Burnam, & Stein, 1989). Survivors of stereotypical violence were more likely to report (Fisher et al., 2003; Golding et al., 1989; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). These stereotypical assaults are described as a male stranger assaulting a woman with a weapon, likely outside of living environments (Fisher et al., 2003; Golding et al., 1989; Ullman & Filipas, 2001).

When disclosing their experience of sexual violence, survivors want to be supported and have someone listen to their experiences (Frazier & Burnett, 1994). These survivors are more likely to tell women about their experiences than men (Frazier & Burnett, 1994). According to Frazier and Burnett (1994), survivors do not want advice from the receiving party; they are looking for a receiving party that they can show raw emotion and the receiving party will listen to their experiences judgment-free. As stated earlier, the response by the receiving party is very important (Frazier & Burnett, 1994; Sudderth, 1998). When a survivor feels that they are understood, validated, and cared for they are more likely to feel the disclosure was helpful and be more willing to disclose to more people (Reis & Shaver, 1988). If the original disclosure does not go well, the survivor is not likely to disclose to anyone else and will internalize the experience as their fault (Sudderth, 1998). According to Golding et al. (1989), the receiving parties of disclosures can range from family and friends to police, and even rape centers.
Survivors report that rape centers are the most helpful, followed by family and friends, then police (Golding et al., 1989).

**Expected parallels to bias-related incident disclosures.** As stated in the introduction to this chapter, sexual violence disclosures will be used as a foundation to understand the disclosure process of bias-related incidents. There is little, to no, research on disclosures of bias-related incidents, so this current literature will serve as a foundation. Through this review of literature regarding sexual violence disclosures and literature of the experiences of historically marginalized students, there are many parallels to be drawn, including internalized messages, underreported nature of experience, factors that lead to lack of disclosure, and the experiences of unhelpful receiving parties of disclosures.

According to Swim et al. (2003), students of color, as well as other historically marginalized students, experience bias-related incidents regularly. These messages occur on routine and are often thought of as normative (Sue, 2010; Swim et al., 2003). This prevalence creates a lack of disclosures or reports, based on students not defining their experiences as bias-related incidents (Sue, 2010; Swim et al., 2003). The amount of bias-related incidents is thought to be vastly underreported (Sue, 2010). Since these messages are routine, the targeted students can also internalize these messages as normal, further causing a lack of disclosures (Harper et al., 2011).

Targeted students of bias-related incidents do not disclose their experience based on many other factors that are similar to survivors of sexual violence, including perception of severity, proximity, confidence in receiving parties, perception of lack of proof, and fear of retaliation (Chief Diversity Office, 2013). Survivors of bias-related incidents on a college campus often know or will see their aggressor on campus regularly, especially if the student lives
within the same residence hall as the aggressor (Johnson, 2003). The survivor is likely to think about the affects to the relationship between the aggressor and survivor, the chance for retaliation from the aggressor, and if a disclosure is worth the possible future harm, before disclosing their experiences (Beemyn, 2003).

The initial disclosure is vital (Harwood, 2012). If a survivor receives a message that their experience is not valid, they are likely to not disclose to others and disclose future bias-related incidents (Harwood, 2012). Students’ apprehension about employee support is rooted in a lack of administrator education and appreciation for the experiences of targeted students (McKinney, 2005; Beemyn, 2003). One example of concern about faculty awareness was illustrated by a student who reported that a faculty member teaching the class in which they were enrolled that homosexuality stemmed from families with overly dominant mothers and passive fathers (McKinney, 2005). The uncertainly of how faculty and staff will respond is a major barrier to disclosures (Rankin, 2003).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In Chapter Two, the current literature described the lived experiences of students from historically marginalized populations. Historically marginalized populations are defined as “a social group that is devalued in society. This devaluing encompasses how the group is represented, what degree of access to resources it is granted, and how the unequal access is rationalized” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The current literature indicated that these students experience bias-related incidents on a regular bases, although there is a lack of literature that acknowledges the decision process to disclose these experiences. The qualitative methodology, with a lens informed by phenomenological lens approach, was used to analyze the experiences of students when deciding to disclose a bias-related incident. This chapter was intended to reintroduce the purpose of this study and the research questions, and detailing the methodological approach for this study.

The primary focus of this study was to analyze the experiences of students when deciding to disclose a bias-related incident. While there has been previous research on the prevalence of bias-related incidents at higher education colleges and universities, little research has examined the reason why students choose to disclose or not disclose their experiences. The findings of this study will inform practitioners of short-fallings or beneficial aspects of current bias response protocols and campus environments. The primary research question that served as a framework to this study was: What is the experience of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents? In addition to the main research question, three sub questions helped further explore the topic: (1) What factors affected the student's decision to disclose the experience? (2) What factors affected to whom a student discloses? (3) What factors lead to future disclosures?
Research Design

Qualitative research served as a framework throughout this study, particularly with a lens informed by phenomenological methodology and semi-structured individual interviews, to analyze a student experience when deciding to disclose a bias-related incident. Qualitative research provided a deeper and richer understanding of the experiences, while a lens informed by phenomenological methodology offered insight into the phenomenon of the decision process (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is designed to answer three questions about a topic: (1) What are the experiences of a group of students, (2) How do they experience the phenomenon, and (3) What meaning do they make from this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This study attempted to capture the phenomenon of deciding to disclose a bias-related incident. This study used semi-structured individual interview techniques to allow for authentic individualistic reflection, while maintaining focus, order, and direction throughout (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

Participant Sampling and Recruitment

Potential participants were recruited through multiple methods. First, the student researcher met with various faculty/staff members to promote the study. The student researcher provided an email that these faculty/staff members were encouraged to send to possible participants. These faculty/staff members include Cultural Center’s staff, College of Liberal Arts faculty/staff, Housing Services staff and other faculty/staff members at The University. The student researcher also sent a recruitment email to the participants of two social justice retreats hosted by The University. Lastly, the student researcher presented to various classes across a variety of disciplines to inform potential participants about the opportunity to participate. Interested participants contacted the student researcher via email.
Participants were required to fit within the following criteria: (1) participants were currently enrolled at The University and could either be domestic or international students, (2) all participants must be proficient in conversational English, (3) participants needed to self-identify as having experienced a bias-related incident based on an actual or perceived identity. Only students who attend The University were selected in order to eliminate discrepancy based on various disclosure protocols and campus climates. The study consisted of eight participants; all participants fit within the specified criteria.

**Study Site**

The participants of this study attend The University during the time of the study. At this university, approximately 21.7% of students self-identify as domestic students of color, 46.8% self-identity as women, and 11.7% are international students (The University*, 2015). There are cultural centers on campus serving students from various historically marginalized populations, including racial, sexual orientation, and gender identities (Cultural Center*, 2015). Of the students that attend the university, approximately 16.5% of enrolled students lived in the residence halls at the time of the study (The University*, 2015).

If students at The University experience a bias-related incident, they have options for disclosing this information to university employees or police. These routes of disclosure can occur by telling an employee for support or reporting through formal or informal processes. At The University, the bias-related incident reporting is centralized through a Bias-Response Team. Student, faculty, and staff are able to submit reports of bias to the office in-person and through an online reporting form. The team follows similar steps as others cited in chapter two: support students, respond effectively, and track occurrences of these experiences.
Housing Services has a separate response protocol. This protocol is published and openly talked with residents of the residence halls. When a report is processed, the employee collects information about the incident, ensures the safety of the survivor, and provides a number of resources to the survivor. The Resident Director of the residence hall, commonly, becomes the liaison to the survivor and ensures that the student is continuously supported. Based on the desires of the survivor, further actions can occur, including educational workshops, public messages of unacceptability, and disciplinary actions. These reports are sent to the Bias-Response Team, but the majority of follow-up occurs within Housing Services.

When looking at the study site, it is important to understand the institutional context that affects the results of this study. The University places high value on social justice and diversity education. This value is put into action with required coursework, social justice retreats, establishment of university departments, and student involvement/leadership opportunities. While not all students, staff, or faculty are required to engage in dialogues regarding diversity and social justice issues, the institution itself has a culture of providing these opportunities.

Historically, The University has hosted numerous dialogues about campus climate and treatment of historically marginalized populations. According to personal interactions with well-established faculty and staff members, these dialogues occur almost every four years, or as cohorts of students persist through their educational career. One of the dialogues, or testimonial events (this term will be used throughout the remainder of this document), occurred in December of 2015. This event allowed students to share their experiences with bias-related incidents, campus climate issues, and what they would like to see from The University. Hundreds of students, staff, and faculty members attended, including the President and numerous Vice Presidents of The University. This event influenced many students to engage in future dialogue
and disclose their experiences more openly. The testimonial event occurred in the shortly before recruitment began for this study.

**Data Collection**

Individual interviews were conducted and lasted no longer than one hour. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed by the student researcher. The student researcher asked ten semi-structured questions to each participant regarding their experience deciding to disclose a bias-related incident. These questions addressed the bias-related incident itself, whom the student choose to disclose to, and their experience throughout the process (See appendix 1 for interview questions). The participant had the option to not answer any questions as well as withdraw from the study at any point in the interview, although all participants choose to answer all ten questions and complete the entire interview.

Within the consent form, participants are asked to choose a pseudonym (See appendix 2 for consent form). This pseudonym is associated with all data linked to the individual to maintain confidentiality. The individual interviews were conducted in a private room on campus that is regularly used for academic or co-curricular purposes. The door remained closed throughout the interview and a “Do Not Disturb” sign was posted on the door.

**Data Analysis**

The student researcher transcribed the audio-recordings after each interview. After all interviews were transcribed the student researcher utilized coding software, Dedoose, to analyze the transcription and code for themes between participants. The student research invited all participants to focus groups to validate the five themes and subthemes (see appendix 3 for focus group questions). This focus group was audio recorded and transcribed by the student researcher. Three participants choose to participate in the focus group.
Limitations

This study was conducted at one northwest university, The University. This study intended to look at the reporting protocols and campus climate of this university. With the limited participant pool and focus of the study, this research will not be generalizable nationally. New research or a larger-scale study will need be conducted to obtain generalizable results.

In addition, the method of recruitment may be limiting. In order to be eligible for participation in the study a student will need to be connected to various faculty and staff members (e.g. Cultural Centers, College of Liberal Arts, International Student Services, and Housing Services), student organizations, attend a social justice retreat, or currently taking a course selected for the recruitment presentation. Students with these connections can be more likely to disclose these experiences based on their previous relationships or connections to the university. This research is aiming to collect data from students that have disclosed and those who have not, but most students that participated in the study chose to disclose.

Personal Disclosure and Bracketing

Throughout this study, the student researcher practiced reflexivity to ensure that the data collected is accurate. To accomplish this, the student researcher kept a bracketing journal to record and acknowledge personal biases and perceptions. The student researcher recorded previous knowledge and experiences with the disclosure process to ensure the results are accurately representing the current findings and stories of the participants. Bracketing continued throughout the process until the study was completed. This journal will be documented in a final report in this document (see appendix 4 for final report).
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The current study interviewed eight participants and analyzed their experiences when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents. Their narratives and lived experiences increase the literature on bias-related incidents, as well as introduce new knowledge regarding the experiences of students when deciding to disclose a bias-related incident. Based on these interviews, this chapter will describe the participants’ experiences with bias-related incidents, decision to disclose or not to disclose, and perception of university resources. Five themes emerged from the data: prevalence of bias-related incidents, previous relationships and shared identities, validation and logistics, disclosure roadblocks, and current disclosures influence on future disclosures. In descriptions of each theme, participant quotes and specific narratives will be utilized to illustrate the lived experiences of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents.

Participant Profiles

Aviva. Aviva decided to disclose her religious affiliation to a friend. From that moment on, Aviva was the target of assumptions and hurtful comments about her religion. These comments included “Oh you must be wealthy,” “You have to be wealthy, you’re Jewish” and “That’s why you get the grades you do, because you’re Jewish.” Aviva continued to ask her friend to stop making these comments and explained how they were affecting her. The friend continued and ignored her request. Aviva explained that this changed their relationship forever by stating, “She’s a friend of mine and we’re in the same student organization and then also, you know, we work together outside of that with some research… It’s really difficult because I really enjoyed spending time with her before. It was all she could talk about.”
Aviva explained that she experiences bias-related incidents regularly about her religious affiliation, which has swayed her to hide this affiliation to protect herself from further experiences. Aviva only disclosed to individuals who already knew her religious affiliation. This was intentional so there wasn’t “another potential backfire.” Aviva told her partner and a few friends.

**Franco.** Franco was spending time with a group of friends. They were talking about an old classmate that chose to leave The University to get married. Another individual in the room stated, “Well yeah. Mexicans just have kids really young and they just go off and get pregnant when they are teenagers. And the husbands just go and work as gardeners.” This statement surprised Franco. She felt a mixture of emotions: anger, confusion, and shock. She couldn’t believe that someone would be as blatant about their biases, especially since this was coming from another person of color. Franco only told one friend and later disclosed to a mentor/supervisor.

**Matt.** Matt talked to me about the vast array of experiences that he faces regularly at The University based on his racial identity, which is African-American. Some the experiences that Matt spoke to were more subtle, although they still affected his experience. Matt explained, “It can be as like – as like – I guess non-blatant, but to me that’s blatant.” Here are a few subtle acts of bias that Matt has experienced. An individual was walking out of a campus building, when the individual saw Matt, he stopped, stepped back into the building, and watched Matt walk into the building. Another example involves overhearing student’s nickname two Cultural Centers as “the Trap House” and “the Burrito Barn.”

Matt’s experiences also included blatant acts directed towards him based on his racial identity. Matt talked about his experience being followed by police as he was running across the
MU Quad. He stated, “I can’t even jog on this campus without [the police] driving down the [Quad] and spot lighting me at 11 o’clock.” He also talked about strangers following his car while he drove home, and partially through the drive, they raised a Confederate Flag. Matt talked to multiple experiences of individuals calling him a nigger while he walked across campus. Throughout our interview, Matt described ten different bias-related incidents that he has experienced recently. All of these experiences were perpetrated by different people, including faculty, staff, and fellow students. Matt has never disclosed his experience to anyone.

**Rose.** Rose talked to an experience that was most prevalent to her, because it had occurred very recently. Rose explained that she has experienced numerous bias-related incidents based on her racial identity, which is Middle Eastern. Rose had attended a testimonial event at The University. This event was established to give students of color the space to speak to their experience and share them with the university’s administration. Rose explained that this event was very emotional for her. In a class, the instructors decided to have a discussion about this event, where she decided to share her experience. She stated, “I shared about my reaction to it. I don’t recall exactly what I had said in the room, but it was an emotional response.” Immediately after the class, one of the instructors approached Rose, pulled her in for a hug, and stated, “You are such a strong lady.” Rose talked about how this act made her feel belittled and physically violated. She explained, “So I felt paralyzed when it was happening. I specifically remember thinking what do I do with my hands. How do I walk away from this person? How do I distance myself from this person?” Rose only told two people about this experience: her partner and a coworker.

Rose talked about experiencing many other incidents of bias throughout her time at The University. She even explained that she didn’t even realize that she was a person of color until
she moved to The University. She was very clear that this was only one of the many experiences she faced. Rose talked about a few other experiences, many involved individuals placing different identities on her. She talked to experiences of seeing people writing notes about her being Hawaiian and individual speaking Spanish to her and expecting her to speak Spanish back. Rose is half Iranian and half White. When she talked about her reaction, Rose stated,

Anger in my own skin, at my dad, at this person. Confusion about why they needed to ask and felt that they could or should. Disappointment about the language a lot. Um, in myself for not speaking Spanish, because I am a person that looks like they should speak Spanish. Then feeling like well society thinks that I should, so why didn’t I pay more attention in high school.

Rose has not disclosed these experiences to anyone. She explained “it feels like something that happens so often that its – it does feel like something that I just need to get over and accept.”

Sam. Sam spoke to her continuous experience of individuals attaching inaccurate identities to her based on her appearance. Sam refers to this as “polite racism.” An example involved a new manager at her workplace asked her if she was from Hawaii. When Sam explained that she was from a local town, the manager explained, “Oh no, all the other Asian kids are from Hawaii, so I thought you were from Hawaii.” Sam talked about how she wasn’t offended at first, but felt generalized through the experience. Throughout the interview, Sam has explained that her coursework at The University has made her more aware of the subtle microaggressions that occur every day. Sam explained that this repetition is starting to wear on her patience. Sam stated,

Um, so I started feeling not so whatever about it nowadays, like holding grudges against that person… I try not to show it too much. I think that some people are just narrow-minded when they make comments about just the color of my skin. So I think nowadays it is getting a little more intense than it used to.

Sam has only told a few close friends about her experiences.
Sarah. When Sarah arrived at The University, she was excited to get involved. Her friend had been involved with the Multicultural Office at a different institution, and Sarah was excited for the opportunity to work for the Cultural Centers. During Sarah’s orientation tour, she approached the table for the Cultural Centers about possible opportunities. She was told, “Well we don’t have anything for you, because you are white.” Sarah explained that this is just one of many experiences she has faced at The University. She explained, “I have had a lot of experiences on campus where I am receiving racism, because I am white. And then people are telling me that that is not possible because I am white. That white people cannot receive racism.” Sarah explained that these experiences have made her feel bitter and have deterred her from getting involved on campus. Sarah has disclosed to a number of individuals. She immediately talked to her Resident Director, two Resident Assistants, her roommates, her partner, and her cousins. Sarah also reached out to the Cultural Centers about her experiences.

Sol. Sol spoke to an experience with bias-related incidents based on her racial identity, which is Latina. Sol had taken a course that focused on developing nations. During the term, the instructor provided articles and insight from various scholars. While the course focused on several countries, the scholars were not native to those countries, except one. The course was going to look into the research and literature by a woman born in Africa, who later went to Harvard University. Sol was very disappointed when this section was cut from the curriculum. The instructor explained that she wanted to class to read her literature, because the scholar was “actually really smart.” This comment shocked Sol. She explained, “I froze in class. I was thinking, did she just say that? So you’re saying that shouldn’t be in Harvard because she’s from Africa.” She became uncomfortable in this course, which became worst.
During the term, Sol was dealing with a serious personal issue. She was struggling to manage schoolwork and self-care. Ultimately, Sol reached out to her instructor and asked for an extension on an assignment. The instructor had agreed verbally. When Sol submitted the assignment, the instructor decided to accept the assignment and told Sol that she did not remember their agreement. Based on this assignment, Sol received the lowest grade in her colligate career. Sol explained, “I wonder how the professor would’ve approached this issue if I was not a person of color and I looked more like her or her children, who are white.” Sol disclosed to a few friends, her partner, and her current supervisors.

**Stephanie.** Stephanie spoke to an experience with a bias-related incidents based on her racial identity. During this interview, Stephanie did not disclose what racial identity she identifies with. Earlier this year, a police officer inaccurately identified Stephanie as a sexual assault survivor. He started questioning her about her experiences and she was shocked. Stephanie had not experienced an assault. She started feeling very uncomfortable and started panicking. Stephanie explained that she was not raised to talk to police officers. She decided to run, and the police officer tackled and arrested her. During the arrest, the officer started to make jokes about her name. She explained, “During the incident, the police officer was making fun of how we wanted our names to be pronounced, because we have Latino names, and we were pronouncing them that way. And he refused to pronounce them in that way.” Stephanie was terrified and didn’t know what could happen to her. Stephanie told her closest friends and roommates about this experience.

**Theme One: Prevalence of Bias-related Incidents**

The first theme highlights how prevalent bias-related incidents are for students. While interview questions prompted for one experience of bias, participants shared that these
incidences occur regularly and nearly in routine. Similarly, many participants mentioned that they were only sharing one of their many experience. Four participants prefaced their narratives with a disclaimer that this experience was one of many:

- “I don’t – it is hard to come up with examples. It is hard when you are not in my shoes, because a lot of things are like you see as racism because you see it every day” (Matt),
- “I don’t know if I can pinpoint one experience. To generalize it, for me it has always been that polite racism” (Sam),
- “I remember clearest because I have heard it so many times before and it really hurt me to hear it from her” (Aviva),
- “So I have had a few at [The University], so I am going to speak to the more salient, so the most recent” (Rose).

This indicates that students, especially from historically marginalized populations, experience bias-related incidents repeatedly. Furthermore, these experiences were unexpected by students. The participants named that they were expecting colleges and universities to be a place where they didn’t need to face bias-related incidents. Matt explained his surprise, “It is ridiculous. You know and you can’t even do to a prestige university and get away from it.” Moreover, Rose stated that she was unaware that she was a person of color until she attended The University.

Commonality emerged through the participants meaning making of the regular occurrence. Many participants talked to the societal issue of bias-related incidents. Rose stated, “Society has just decided this is a norm and we just need to get used to it. It just makes sense then that I never talk about it, because I just need to buck up and get used to it.” This indicates that students are feeling like society has endorsed bias-related incidents and individuals from
historically marginalized populations need to accept it as reality. Matt spoke to his loss of faith in society. He stated, “It’s like – it makes you lose faith. You know how like it happen everywhere. From like every different angle.” Additionally, when asked about how she feels about this reality, Rose explained,

Sadness that it feels like a truth that I have to deal with. Um – Disappointment in myself for not having the courage to speak about why it is an issue in the moment, but then also to report. I don’t feel comfortable to. And hope that it won’t happen again.

**Subtheme 1a: Emotion.** It is clear through the previous quotes and participants’ narratives that the entire experience of a bias related incident is emotional for students. Participants experienced emotions ranging from anger, depression, fear, confusion, and unworthiness. This reveals that students feel a number of emotions during the experience and when deciding to disclose. Narratives showed that these emotions were not felt alone; many students experienced a mix of emotions throughout their experience. Rose talked to this mix of emotions,

ANGER at my own skin, at my dad, at this person, confusion about why they needed to ask and felt that they could or should, disappointment about the language a lot. Um, in myself for not speaking Spanish because I am a person that looks like they should speak Spanish. Then feeling like well society thinks that I should, so why didn’t I pay more attention in high school.

These emotions rush to the students when they experience a bias-related incident. They find themselves reflecting on the experience, planning their response, and the impacts of the experience; all while the incident is occurring. Rose explained this reflection, “I also felt a lot of confusion and stress and kinda this sinking weight of now I have to deal with this.”

Anger emerged as a common emotion of the participants. Many spoke to anger as their initial response to the experience. Sol explained that she was extremely “pissed off.” Rose spoke to her “what the fuck” moment. She cited, “And I was like “What the fuck” – There was a ‘what the fuck’ moment. Like what are you saying? And after I was thinking, I know that was wrong.
That shouldn’t have happened.” Additionally, anger is felt toward the individual perpetrating the bias-related incident. Sam spoke to her anger,

I starting feeling not so whatever about it to nowadays like holding a grudge against that person. I don’t- I am not really good at confronting people about it, so I just keep things, like everything, inside myself. I get a little bit hot tempered. Um, but I try not to show it too much. I think that some people are just narrow-minded when they make comments about just the color of my skin. So I think nowadays it is getting a little more intense than it used to.

Sam later explained that this intensity is due to the reoccurrence of the experiences, as well as her better understanding her experiences as bias-related incidents.

In addition to anger, participants spoke to the fear they experience. Stephanie explained, “I was scared and I didn't know what all could happen to me.” These narratives indicate that students fear for their safety. Bias-related incidents make students feel that their lives do not matter. Participants cited that their experiences made them feel unsafe and uncomfortable on the college campus. Furthermore, participants shared their societal fear, such as future genocide or legalized slavery. Matt spoke to his fear of where our society is moving,

It is almost like when is it just going to go back to 1700s. When – I mean they are already about to make another holocaust with the Middle East and Trump’s ideas with all of those migrants and shit. When is slavery going to come back? When am I going to have to start saying my name is Toby again?

Additionally, Aviva explained that she is purposefully surrounding herself with friends that she can trust if another Holocaust were to occur. She described,

Maybe a Holocaust will happen again, you know? It's really doing your own mind is left to wonder. It's really difficult to deal with it… maybe there’s some people that I would be able to know people… they wouldn't – would help me hide or escape instead of driving me in for execution. It’s a really scary thought.

Participants indicated that they felt depression or hurt throughout the process. An emerging theme between the participants included the pain that these experiences cause them. They felt attacked by the incidents, weight for dealing with the aftermath, and their
unworthiness. Sarah explained that the entire experience, including the disclosure, caused her to feel unworthy. She stated, “I was very emotional. Um, I guess the word would be belittled – before and I guess a little bit after.” This unworthiness and depression affected some participants on a deeper level. Matt spoke to his depression,

It is just so depressing. It is painful that you try so hard because you assimilate but you don’t. That’s the thing that like I feel awful… I feel like I want to die. I went a through a six-month suicidal stage.

**Theme Two: Previous Relationships and Shared Identities**

The second theme that emerged from the participants were two major factors that lead students to disclose to specific individuals: previous relationships and shared identities. Throughout the narratives of the participants, there were no voluntary disclosures that occurred where the receiving party did not fit within one, or both, of these categories. Stephanie explained that she was required to meet with a university employee regarding her experience; she did not have a prior relationship or shared identities with either of these individuals. She explained that she would not have disclosed voluntarily. Looking specifically at voluntary disclosures, participants indicated that they look for one, or both, of these characteristics in a receiving party.

Participants shared that their previous relationship was a major factor in choosing the individual as the receiving party. Previous relationships provided the participants trust and affiliation. Sol spoke to the comfort in disclosing to close friends, “I think already having those relationships establish and just being already close to them really helped because if I didn't have those close relationships it would be a lot harder to even voice it, you know?” Additionally, the previous relationship provided value in the opinions of the receiving party. Sarah spoke to the value in her Resident Assistant, “I have approached her with other things in the past that were, like, you don’t need to go to the RA. Because I value her opinion.”
This theme amongst participants shows that a previous relationship is extremely important to an individual, when they are deciding to disclose. If a previous relationship is absent, the likelihood that a disclosure will occur voluntarily diminishes. Students find “their people” and only disclose those individuals. Sam spoke to her relationship with her friends,

Um, well I mean you can think of it as like really close sisters. I have known them since my freshman year. We have been together for a long time. I feel like I can share anything, even like the unnecessary personal details, so I think it is just open ended with them. Like there is no screen between us, so I don’t have to filter anything really.

Sam later explained that she tells everything to this group of friends: the good and the bad. If she chooses to not disclose to this group, she internalizes the experience and will likely never tell anyone.

Throughout the narratives of the participants, they indicated that having a shared identity was very important when disclosing their experiences of bias. Furthermore, students are looking for individuals with the shared identity to their targeted identity. Rose spoke to her relationship with her coworker,

So my coworker is the only other person of color in my office. So we have lots of conversations about the intersections of both race and family issues that we have and how that contrasts with the other coworkers that we work with. So we have grown very close together.

They grow their relationship on the shared identity and the similar experiences that they face based on that identity. This was common amongst the participants.

Many shared that they have relationships with individuals that can relate to their lived experiences. Stephanie spoke to her childhood and the messages that she received. She was taught to not trust the police. When an incident occurred based on this distrust, she turned to friends who received the same messages. Stephanie explained,

I felt like they could understand why I did feel uncomfortable talking to police officer because where I am from we don't – I wasn’t really raised to talk to officers when I have problems and so I don't really like talking to them and my friends similar backgrounds
were don't talk to police officers… I'll talk to other people who have had similar issues or worse issues with police officers because I thought they could understand where was coming from.

These narratives show that students feel comforted by the shared lived experiences and identities. Sam cited, “Um, and so I felt that they could relate to me in a way. So for me it was kinda like a source of comfort like to share my thoughts and feelings with.” Students want to feel safe and comfortable when sharing their experiences.

**Theme Three: Validation and Logistics**

The third theme that emerged from the participants revealed that students are looking for validation and/or logistics when deciding to disclose. When looking at validation, participants explain that they wanted someone to tell them that their emotions were justified, that the action shouldn’t have occurred, and support to process what occurred. Stephanie spoke to this validation; “I feel it's important for me to talk to my friends about things because that I don't feel like my reactions are sane or like appropriate for what happened.” Logistics consisted of finding resources, planning a response, and ways to address the aftermath. Rose explained that she opened up to her coworker for logistics. She stated,

> Um, and I shared with her about it, because she is also teaches. And I thought that maybe I could gain a new perspective about like how to approach if I did want to talk to my instructor and I know that she would understand.

Throughout the narratives, disclosures fit within these categories. The table below illustrates the voluntary disclosures of participants.
Table 1

*Voluntary Disclosures of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Receiving Party</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aviva</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franco</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>No Disclosures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coworker</td>
<td>Logistics</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sam</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roommates</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Validation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sol</td>
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<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Validation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtheme 3a: Early Disclosures and Validation.** During the initial disclosures, participants explained that they were looking for validation. The participants spoke to the desire for validation from trusted individuals soon after their experience of bias. Rose cited,

I just need to be okay with the fact that this just happened first. And that’s where my husband came in and hear the ‘that shouldn’t have happen’ and ‘that’s not alright’ and
‘I’m sorry.’ Yeah, that’s why I turned to him, because he was always that comforting person to me.

Rose’s narrative indicates that students need time to take in the experience before having the capacity to think about the logistics. Additionally, Franco talked about similar desires in validation. She needed someone to validate that her experience shouldn’t have occurred. Franco stated,

Probably someone to be like ‘what they heck, why would someone say that.’ Just someone to say ‘that person was so messed up for saying that’ ‘I always knew he was messed up’ or something you know? I just wanted support. More so for someone to agree with me that they were messed up.

Participants also revealed that these disclosures gave them time to sift through the emotions they were experiencing. As mentioned previously, students feel a wave of emotions throughout their experience. Validation disclosures prompt receiving parties to indorse these emotions. Franco explained, “I think I just felt angry and hurt and also my way to seek out support is to tell my friends about it. Just to talk about it with someone I am close to, but mainly just peers.” Similarly, Aviva spoke to her emotions, “I was just hoping reassurance that you are not crazy. You know? That I'm not crazy for thinking this is wrong and for thinking that she was treating me unfairly.”

**Subtheme 3b: Delayed Disclosures and Logistics.** When participants were able to receive the validation desired, they may look for logistical support. No participants disclosed for logistical reasons without receiving validation first, thus associating delayed disclosures with logistics. Participants spoke to logistics regarding resources, methods to address the aftermath, and ways to interact/avoid the perpetrator. Sol explained that she received the lowest grade in academic career as a result of the bias-related incident. She talked about how she approached her current supervisors to find ways to appeal her grade. Franco spoke to disclosing years later on the basis of avoiding the perpetrator in the future. She explained,
I actually did disclose to a higher up years later. I actually told my supervisor about it. Not because I wanted anything to happen to the person, but I just for a pretty specific reason… So I work for [Housing Services]. And there was a possibility to move to another building. The person that said this to me also worked in [Housing Services] and I didn’t want to get placed in the same building as them. That’s why I said it.

The participants denoted that logistical disclosures are for very specific reasons. The participants needed to perceive a desired outcome and specific skillset of the receiving party for these disclosures to occur. For example, Franco would not have disclosed her experience with her supervisor without the threat of working with the perpetrator. She also chose her supervisor based on their role in the possible move. Logistical disclosures are delayed, because individuals need to perceive the likelihood of an undesired outcome.

Subtheme 3c: University Employee Disclosures. If a student is disclosing to a university employee, they are likely looking for logistics and will have a delayed disclosure. Throughout the interviews, participants shared that disclosing to university employees is not desired. Similar to other receiving parties, university employees are likely disclosed to based on a previous relationship and/or shared identities with the student. Franco explained her relationships with her supervisor as “a personal mentor.” No participants cited desiring support or validation from a university employee.

In addition, if the university employee provided validation, without providing the logistics desired, the participant was unsatisfied with their disclosure. When asked about her disclosure to her Resident Director, Sarah explained, “He responded very politely. And I still see him as very polite and sympathetic as he was. But – um, I still didn’t appreciate his response.” Later in her interview, Sarah explained what her desired outcome was:

I have had a lot of reassurance that that is not how it is supposed to be… I wanted to know who I could talk to – to tell them that the cultural centers are not functioning how they should. Or try to find out who that woman was that talked to me and tell her how it affected me, but I didn’t really get any of that.
Sol explained that she had a similar experience. She cited,

> I was seeking for guidance in a way. For them to tell me like ‘you can do this.’ ‘You can appeal this’ Like, ‘this is really fucked up.’ You should do like – tell me and be assertive with it, you know? And give me more options. Don't just tell me – They can be sitting here listening to me, you know? Because yeah, I need that but I already have my friends, my partner. I need you to guide me and tell me like ‘yeah you can go to [Counseling Services], but you can also do this.’ ‘We can do this.’

**Theme Four: Current Disclosures Influence on Future Disclosures**

The fourth theme that emerged was the overall experience’s (i.e. the experience of a bias-related incident, decision to disclose or not disclose, and the disclosure itself) influence on their decision for further disclosures. When prompted to reflect on future disclosures, participants spoke to possible changes based on their experience in this current disclosure. Stephanie explained that she wasn’t willing to disclose to a university employee and likely will not in the future based on her current experiences. She stated, “I had already talk to other people the administrative I told them that I didn’t feel comfortable continuing.” Stephanie’s experience was similar to the other participants. Many mentioned how the reaction and support perceived their future disclosures.

Additionally, many participants mentioned that they were more likely to disclose based on their perception of severity. Sol explained, “This could make the difference between a C- and B+ because I don’t have C’s in my [Political Science] classes in so that's the only one that's the one that could haunt me.” She explained that the severity of receiving this grade influenced her to talk to her teacher. Furthermore, she is thinking about reaching out the chair of her department. The severity perceived by the participants was often long-term effects. Participants spoke to the effect their experience has continued to have on them and explained that this effect is why they would disclose to more individuals in the future. Franco cited, “Obviously those remarks stuck with me.” These narratives indicate that students reflect on previous disclosures
before deciding to disclose again. If a disclosure was positive, they are more likely to disclose in a similar manner. If their experience was negative, they will not.

**Subtheme 4a: Reaction of the Receiving Party.** The reaction of the receiving party will inform a student’s decision to disclose to the individual again. Participants indicated that they are analyzing how individuals interact with certain topics. Based on their reaction or opinions, the participants will decide if they will disclosure with the individual. Matt explained,

> It would be like – like we will talk about immigration and someone would be ‘well I just think that if they want to become citizens then they should just, you know, become citizens.’ Like shit like that. Then you are just like, well I wonder what you think about black people, you know? Ha ha. You know? I wonder what you think about people from the Middle East. Like, it’s like that kind of stuff.

When he interacts with an individual, he is looking for statements or ideologies. He uses this to decide if should engage with the person. He states, “Like you can say it is judge-y, but as a minority, you have to be judge-y in order to protect yourself.” Later in the interview, Matt spoke to the missed relationships based on this level of protection.

> Participants also spoke to disclosures that went badly. Some explained that individuals made jokes about their experience. Others talked to experiences of being labeled based on their disclosures. Matt talked to this labelling,

> Like talking, just talking. I am not afraid to sit back and talk to people about it, but what is frustrating is like when you get passionate about something, like not even angry, like excited. I am a flamboyant person. I like to get into shit. I like to laugh. I like to have fun. But at the same time, I like to put as much energy into the bad shit, because it should be paid attention to. 80% of the time people just think that you are the pissed off black dude just yelling. You know what I am saying?

This narrative indicated that Matt felt that he was being labeled based on racial stereotypes (i.e. the angry black man). These stereotypes are not new to the participants. They indicated that the threat of being labeled adds to their complexity to their decision to disclose. Ultimately, the
reaction of the receiving party can influence the participant to keep their experiences to
themselves, and possibly never disclose again.

**Subtheme 4b: Long-term Effects.** Participants illustrated their attempt to minimize the
harm bias-related incident caused them. As mentioned earlier, the narratives show that
participants look for validation for peers or mentors, but infrequently did participants look for
logistics. They only continued to disclose if they perceived a need for logistics. If a student
perceives long-term effects, they are likely to disclose to more individuals if a similar incident
were to happen again. Matt explained,

> One of the greatest things told to me was ‘it is going to come up in the future, I am going
to say something. And depending on how it went down to get to that point is going to
depend on my reaction.’ But I am never going to see this person again and nothing I say
will change it. Walk away and laugh, because they are the idiot and you’re not.

Matt alluded to the progression towards disclosing. A threat for long-term effects needs to be
present to influence him to speak up or disclose.

Participants spoke to their emotions as a long-term effect. Some mentioned that they
wished they would have done more and disclosed to university employees, but were unable to
find the capacity. They were weighed down by the emotional toll. Sol stated, “I fell shitty, so I
don't know like I was ready to fight back. Then, I think I was taking it all in and so maybe that
took me a while to like stand up for myself.” She illustrated the process needed to find the
capacity to speak up and look for results. Similarly, Rose talked about her need to distance
herself from the incident,

> When I was closer to the experience, I was thinking, ‘oh I can get through this, I have
tools to cope through it.’ But now, I don’t ever want to see this instructor again, if I could
help it. And that is not okay. I think if I would have addressed it in the moment or shortly
thereafter, in some way, it would have helped that relationship. Instead I just retreated.

Rose later explained that she might still reach out to the instructor. Additionally, she explained
that this informed her that reaching out is important, if a similar incident were to occur again.
Participants also spoke to the long-term effects of records. Stephanie explained that she was thinking about reaching out to university employees about her experience based on the police and conduct record as a result of the incident. This police record could have detrimental effects later in her academic and professional career. Similarly, Sol talked about her academic transcript and the effect her low grade would have. She stated,

There is a Political Science scholarship every year and I wanted to apply for it, but now that all of this has happened I don't want to, you know? Because then I would know that like ‘oh my gosh, what if she's in the review committee.’

Sol is explaining that she is constantly thinking about how her grade and interactions with her faculty member will affect her in the future. She later explains that she will likely talk to the faculty member or the chair of her department, if a similar experience were to occur again.

In addition, the long-term effect on The University community is influencing students’ decisions to disclosure. Participants described their worry for societal endorsements of bias-related incidents. Some mentioned their fear of others experiencing the same incidents that they do every day. Franco talked about her regret for not addressing the incident she experienced. She stated,

But now as a graduating senior, and if this happened to me, especially in the residence halls, I would probably tell the staff of the building, at least someone I feel very close with. Because like – I recognize that not only was this a personal insult, but what if it was on-going and they made other people with identities similar to mine feel uncomfortable where they live. You know? Like I didn’t live where this person lived, and what if they had been saying something and people were uncomfortable or feeling unsafe. Like I could see that it’s a bigger problem than a person insult to me. So I would probably tell someone else about it.

Franco spoke to her desire to protect others from the experience she faced. Her narrative shows that the idea that others are facing bias-related incidents influences action.
Theme Five: Disclosure Roadblocks

Previous findings have shown that bias-related incidents are vastly underreported; this current study confirms this finding. The participants shared their frequent experiences within bias-related incidents, although only three participants voluntarily disclosed to university employees. Additionally, none of these participants disclosed for the purpose of reporting the incident. It is clear that reporting bias-related incidents is not a priority or desired by students. The first four themes articulated the reasons that individuals have disclosed and reasons they will disclose in the future. This theme illustrates the three major reasons that a student does not disclose: lack of previous relationship, perception of the severity of their experience, and perception of the individual as an ally.

**Subtheme 5a: Previous Relationship with University Employees.** Students only voluntarily disclose to university employees if they have a previous relationship with the individual. Previous themes have indicated that participants disclose to individual they have a prior relationship with. Similarly, participants spoke to disclosing to university employees they had a prior relationship with. Sol explained, “I feel like I had good relationship with my RD.” Sarah described her relationship with her Resident Director, “I am part of hall council, so I have worked with him fairly directly through various things… So he was someone that I thought – I saw that I could talk to him about it.” Their narratives show that they trusted and respected the university employee, whom was the receiving party.

An emerging theme of the participants illustrated that disclosures to strangers, especially university employees, were not desired. Participants voiced their concern that these disclosures had the potential for further harm. Sol explained,
It’s like I am not going to go talk to strangers and exposing myself… I just didn't feel comfortable enough I guess and I don't want to go around like I didn’t want to go round share my story with everybody.

Matt voiced his concern that a disclosure of this nature would “red flag” him. He explained,

It just like red flags you. Like – you talk about three strikes, well you can give me four because I have a brain. So like – if – let’s say my boss is really racist. Like my boss’ boss is racist. Like I tell my boss and we go to someone to tell them how racist this person is. When really these persons share the same views. Well now there is a red flag on us, because we are trying to do the right thing.

Sarah shared, “Didn’t know how they would react. If they would be helpful or not.” These are a few of the many narratives of the participants. Their fears indicate that students predict further harm when disclosing to a university employee with whom they have no established relationship.

Furthermore, participants spoke to the undesired process of explaining the entire experience. Rose cited, “It feel like something to really understand what it feels like, you would have to explain so much to a person that- I would have way too much to explain and that it is easier to just take to hit.”

Subtheme 5b: Messages of Lack of Severity. Throughout the interviews, narratives emerged that illustrated messages that bias-related incidents lacked severity. Students regularly receive messages that their experiences are not severe enough for further action. Some participants spoke to being told that they needed to “get over it,” while others spoke to their interpretations of the messages. Ultimately, participants shared the messages and doubts that consume them when deciding to disclose. Aviva reflected,

I'm sure things were much worse for my grandparents are going to school, you know? Who am I to complain about this? And I'm probably having it better than my ancestors ever did. So it's just – I definitely felt like it wasn't a legitimate concern.

While she spoke to her doubts that these experiences were a legitimate concern, she described the hardship this has caused her. She struggled to continue her relationship with the perpetrator, she worked to manage her emotions, and she questioned how she would survive future
Holocaust. While she doubts the severity, she faces the adversity of experiencing bias-related incidents repeatedly.

Participants spoke to the messages that suggest that bias-related incidents can’t change. Sam explained, “When it comes to micro-racism or something like that, um, I feel like that is something that is harder to change, because it is more of an ideology.” She continues to explain that this is why she doesn’t disclose to the university. She believes that there is nothing that can be done to change someone’s ideology. Similarly, Franco cited,

To this day, I am still like, is this a bias incident? It just like, just because it was a verbal thing, it mostly wasn’t like they didn’t vandalized anything of mine, they didn’t write on my white-board, they verbally said this to me on campus. I didn’t think anything would be done anyway.

Aviva similarly explained that she receives messages stating, “Nothing we can do, you know? You should just like – sticks and stones can break your bones but words will never hurt.” These messages, and self-doubt, influence students to internalize their experience. They do not think that others, especially The University, can, or will, do anything about their disclosure.

Additionally, participants described their interactions with individual who minimize their experiences. Aviva explained,

I just I didn't know if they would care, because I have had a lot of people, you know, told me throughout my life, ‘well you know not – that's different its religion. It's not you know – not race. It's not – there not being racist or not being sexist. You – There is nothing we can do about it if it's not racism or sexism.’

Aviva is addressing messages of minimization, in response to support for other forms of bias.

She later explains that these messages suggest her emotions and experience are invalid, because religion is a choice. She explains,

I didn't really feel comfortable telling anyone in authority cause the response I've gotten used to it is that not really – that’s religion that's different that's not you. You are right that they can't be doing something, you know? That's religion, it's something that you chose to be.
Rose also spoke to her messages of minimization,

People usually make fun of getting upset about this. Yeah. It is usually laughed off, or told that it is a compliment, or that I should be thankful that they care, or that I look exotic and that it good. So it is having to tell someone that not only did this happen, but here is how I felt, and here is why you are wrong, and having to defend my feelings on top of it.

Students receive messages that they are being too emotional for what occurred. They should just move on and accept the reality of bias-related incidents.

**Subtheme 5c: The University as an Ally.** Through the interviews with participants, commonality emerged that students have doubts that The University is an ally for them.

Participants shared numerous roadblocks to reporting bias-related incidents. These included the messages they have received from university employees, their experiences of bias perpetrated by university employees, and the lack of established relationships with the university. Although this distrust continues, students do not feel that the university is on their side. Matt alludes to the notion that The University is ignoring the incidents that are occurring on campus. He illustrates, “It is everywhere. It is like the air, man. You can only see it and not see it as much as you try to look.” He is trying to point out that the university is purposefully ignoring the prevalence of bias-related incidents on campus.

Additionally, participants believe that the burden is placed on the students to address the issues occurring at The University. Recently the university hosted a testimonial event for students of color. Many addressed their experiences at the event, the emotional weight they felt throughout the event, and the disappointment in the results. While most participants were excited the space was created, participants were still aware that students created that space for them. The University did not. Matt spoke to this burden,

Like get some people in here that are not just students that are trying to get some awareness. Like get some power to actually be like “yeah this is bullshit” like what are you doing? You know what I am saying? Like stop – stop leaving it to the students. They
can’t do shit. Like you won’t listen to us… Like – there is nothing here. Like if you want to hear what minorities feel from my voice – ‘There is nothing here for us.’

His narrative addresses the weight that students are facing. If change is to occur, students believe that they must ask for it. They need to create the change. Students are tired of being the only agents of change.

Participants also talked to the lack of diversity on campus. While The University is a predominately white institution, the population of historically marginalized groups is minute. Students lack mentorship and staff members with shared identities. Matt describes an interaction in class,

This student made a comment saying ‘it is so amazing and fascinating having a black teacher, who opens my mind so much. I just haven’t had one before.’ He just sat there and was like ‘Yeah when I think about it there is like me and Dwaine, and then there is me and Dwaine, and then I think there is like me, and then there is like Dwaine.’ And I was like, that is so true.

The lack of diversity on campus is not hidden to student. They understand that they are one of few individuals that hold their identities. When participants talked about the resources that The University provided, they either didn’t know something was established to support them, only knew that the Cultural Centers were available, or acknowledged that support services were more prevalent for international students. Matt explained, “There are not [historically marginalized] people on this campus… The vast majority of minorities on this campus are people from other countries.” He continued his thought by explaining how The University has placed an emphasis on international students, instead of domestic students. This narrative brings forth questions on why the institution has more emphasis on international students. Matt believes that most of the universities decisions are based on money, and international students bring more money to the institution.
The experiences of the participants illustrate the overall climate at The University. Students from historically marginalized populations experience bias-related incidents on a frequent basis. They hear messages that their experiences are insignificant and that bias-related incidents are a reality. The climate at The University has students living in fear. Rose explained that she hopes after every incident of bias that it was the last. Aviva explained that her experiences have influenced her to keep her religious affiliation concealed. Participants spoke to the change they would like to see at The University, although this change can only occur with the university admits that there are problems. Matt cited,

The point is that people come here to get an education and feel safe. And it – not only do you have a campus that people feel belittled by teachers and students. You have a place that people fear police, fear security. Their job managers, they can’t even get respect from their job managers. You have the blatant shit that happens on campus. You have people spray paint racist shit on campus. Like you see it. Stop covering it up. Like grow the fuck up. We don’t – stop acting like people are pointing fingers cause like yeah we are but you need to change it and that is why. We wouldn’t have to sit here and point fingers if you would stop fucking up.

The students at The University are speaking up, because no one else will. Students are requesting a change to the campus climate. Student want to feel safe, empowered, and want to attend the university without experiencing bias-related incidents as routine.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The current study adds to the understanding of bias-related incidents, as well as introduces knowledge regarding students experience when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents. Specifically, the narratives and lived experiences of these students will inform future practices and principles to support students, create a more positive campus climate, and promote environments where historically marginalized populations feel more comfortable disclosing. This final chapter discusses the results of this study and implications for colleges and universities. Ultimately, this chapter will provide recommendations for Student Affairs professionals and faculty members, so they can better support and promote more positive campus climates and safer environments for students from historically marginalized populations.

Research Questions and Themes

Guiding Question: What is the experience of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents? Through the lived experiences of the participants, a theme emerged indicating that bias-related incident occur regularly. Many of the participants prefaced their narratives by explaining that they were sharing one of many experiences they have faced at The University. Matt stated, “It is hard to come up with examples. It is hard when you are not in my shoes, because a lot of things are like you see as racism because you see it every day.”

Participants spoke to their surprise that bias-related incidents were prevalent on a college campus. Rose explained that she was unaware of her identity until she attended The University and started experiencing bias-related incident. Additionally, Matt explained, “It is ridiculous. You know and you can’t even do to a prestige university and get away from it.”

While participants explained that bias-related incidents occur regularly, the experience of bias is still emotional. Emotions range from anger, depression, fear, confusion, and
unworthiness. Furthermore, these emotions are experienced throughout the entire experience (i.e. during the incident itself, when deciding to disclose, and during the disclosure). The narratives of these participants indicate that the regular occurrence of bias-related incident doesn’t make the experience itself less emotional. Many participants spoke to experiencing anger and confusion during the time of the incident. Sarah explained how she couldn’t comprehend what was happening, so she just walked away from the incident. Additionally, Rose explained, “There was a ‘what the fuck’ moment. Like what are you saying? And after I was thinking, I know that was wrong. That shouldn’t have happened.”

Some participants elaborated that depression and fear were a result of the frequent experiences of bias-related incidents. Matt and Aviva spoke to their societal fears, such as mass genocide and slavery were a possible reality based on their reoccurring experiences. Matt continued to explain that these experiences have caused his to battle severe depression and suicide ideation. He cited,

And – but best believe that like when you sit here, you finally realize your debt, your family doesn’t want to listen to anything you have to say, you can’t get a job, all of this shit happens to you on campus, and then you look at the patterns of history and you are extremely intelligent on the patterns and connectivity on that. It makes you feel a lot like – why even live.

With narratives and previous literature that indicates vast underreporting of bias-related incident, it is disturbing to know that even one student lives in fear and face suicide ideation based on their frequent experiences of bias-related incident. It is also alarming that Matt spoke to this depression and was the only participant that has not disclosed his experiences to anyone. Where Franco explained that the act of disclosing was a coping mechanism for her. These narratives support the mission to increase bias-related incident disclosures.

Through the decision process, participants described a level of emotional management. The emotional wave that participants experience weighs on them. Many spoke to their disclosure
as a means to manage their emotions. Common amongst the participants were their need for validation for the emotions experienced. This need influenced participants to disclosure as a way to receive the validation needed. Participants indicated that they frequently question if their emotions are valid.

Similar to emotional management, participants engaged in a process of meaning making. At the time of every incident, the participants engaged in a period of reflection. This reflection examined and compared their experience to prior incidents or experiences of others. Sam explained that she never believed the experiences of bias-related incidents were severe based on the incidents she has seen on the news. Many participants described rating their current experience’s severity based on their previous experiences. In addition, participants explained that they reflected on their role in the incident. Rose explains that she blames herself for experiencing the incident. She stated,

Disappointment about the language a lot. Um, in myself for not speaking Spanish, because I am a person that looks like they should speak Spanish. Then feeling like well society thinks that I should, so why didn’t I pay more attention in high school.

She is describing a level of internalization. Her meaning of this experience, as well as any future experience, is compared to this internalized image. Moreover, participants reflect the possible implications of their experience. Sol talked to her fear that the experience would hinder her chances of receiving a scholarship. She spoke to the lower grade that she had received as well as the role the perpetrator could have on the scholarship committee.

Overall participants indicated that these frequent experience come with an emotional toll and process of reflection. While these participants already face many obstacles at college and university, they utilize additional energy to manage their experience of bias-related incidents. This energy could be better utilized in their academic pursuits.
Sub-question 1: What factors affected the student's decision to disclose the experience? The decision to disclose was completely personal to each participant. Through the meaning making process, participants evaluated the incident based on their lived experiences, understanding of bias-related incidents, and experiences of others with shared identities. Participants illustrated this process as ranking specific characteristics on a spectrum. Characteristics included the emotional toll, perception of severity, possible and definite implications, and their relationship with the perpetrator. Ultimately, if the participant perceived that their ranking surpassed a threshold, they would decide to disclose. The threshold and scale was personal to each participant and was based on their lived experiences.

One of the common characteristics was the emotional toll of the experience. Participants spoke to the vast amount of emotions they experienced throughout the process. When the emotional toll was substantial, participants indicated that the likelihood of a disclosure would increase. After her arrest, Stephanie was very emotional and expressed fear, hurt, and confusion. She disclosed her experiences to her friends to manage these emotions. Additionally, Rose explained that her initial disclose was on the bases of managing her emotions. She stated,

And that’s where my husband came in and hear the ‘that shouldn’t have happen’ and ‘that’s not alright’ and ‘I’m sorry.’ Yeah, that’s why I turned to him, because he was always that comforting person to me.

Franco explained that her disclosures were used as a coping mechanism. She explained that she has always felt better after talking through an experience with a friend. These narratives illustrate moments when participants perceived substantial emotional toll, which influenced them to disclose their experiences. A common theme amongst the participants is the purpose of disclosing for validation. Participants revealed that their initial disclose is for validation of the experience and emotions.
Many participants spoke to their perception of severity of their incidents. As mentioned earlier, Sam explained that she does not believe her experiences are severe enough based on stories she has heard on the news. She characterizes her experiences as “polite racism.” Based on this lack of severity, Sam decided to only disclose to her closest friends. Similarly, Franco explained that she still questions if her experience is technically a bias-related incidents. She stated,

To this day, I am still like, is this a bias incident? It just like, just because it was a verbal thing, it mostly wasn’t like they didn’t vandalized anything of mine, they didn’t write on my white-board, they verbally said this to me on campus. I didn’t think anything would be done anyway.

Franco continued to explain that she doesn’t perceive her experience as severe since physical harm or continued harassment were to occur. Franco also intended to tell her closest friend at the time of the incident. It is interesting that both these participants shared their doubts of the severity in their experiences, but still engaged in the study. Franco even stated, “Obviously those remarks stuck with me.” This was a common theme amongst the participants. They continually receive messages that their experiences are not severe and participants commonly question the impact the experience has had on them.

While it is important to look at the factors that have led to disclosures, it is also important to understand that roadblocks are in place, which leads to nondisclosures. Matt has decided that disclosures are not beneficial for him. Throughout his interview, he referred to his suicide ideation, implications of his driving record, and the severity of his experiences, but these never broke the threshold needed to disclose. There is no equation or simple dissection that explains why he has not disclosed. This is a completely personal decision and threshold.

Sub-question 2: What factors affected to whom a student disclose to? While the factors that lead a student to disclose is complex, the factors that lead a student to disclose to a
specific receiving party is straightforward. Participants described two major factors that influenced the participants to disclose to a specific individual: shared identities and previous relationships.

Notably, no participants voluntarily disclosed to an individual that did not have an established relationship with the individual. Participants spoke to the importance of a previous relationship had on their decision to disclose; they explained that they knew the receiving parties would be validating and support them throughout the process. Participants explained that their initial disclosure were to the individuals that they felt closest to. Sam explained that the receiving party was “her people.” Furthermore, participants felt more inclined to disclose to individual they had disclosed previous bias-incident to.

Participants also acknowledged their desire to disclose to others with shared identities, specifically with individuals whom have the shared targeted identity. There narratives indicated that these receiving parties were desired based on their understanding of the participants lived experiences. Stephanie explained that she disclosed to her friends based on their shared perception of the police. She knew that they had similar lived experiences and would understand the emotions she was experiencing.

Commonality amongst the participants showed that university employees an unlikely receiving party, which confirms the reality that bias-related incidents are vastly underreported. Only three participants cited disclosing to university employees. Amongst these disclosures, all receiving parties had a previous relationship with the participant. There narratives showed that university employees must have a previous relationship to be considered as a receiving party. Furthermore, participants indicated that they disclosed to these individuals based on the role and/or skillset they possess. Participants spoke to specific desired outcomes based on these
disclosures. Franco wanted to avoid working with her perpetrator. Sol was looking for resources to appeal her grade. Sarah asked for specific methods to engage with the perpetrator. Additionally, participants stated that they look for university employees that have shared identities with them. Amongst the participants that did not disclose to a university employee, some mentioned the lack of diversity on campus as a major issue for them.

Ultimately, participants desired a receiving party that was an ally. They wanted to ensure that the receiving party would provide support, validation, and are on their side. The previous relationships with the receiving parties provided the participants with proof of allyship. Amongst the participants, commonality emerged regarding doubts that The University was an ally. Whilst some of the participants believe that the university is moving in the right direction to support students, narratives emerged that the university has not acted in support up to this year. Additionally, some participants spoke to the current strides of the institution are due to the efforts of the students, not the institution itself. At the time of this study, the participants felt that The University has not proven their allyship.

**Sub-question 3: What factors lead to future disclosures?** Participants indicated that each incident is incorporated into their lived experiences for a future incident’s meaning making. When a new incident occurs, they refer back to their overall experience of the incident when deciding to disclose. The overall experience includes the bias-related incident itself, the decision to disclose, and the disclosure itself. Each experience of a bias-related incident adjusts the person threshold of the individual.

When participants referred to the bias-related incident itself, they explained that the severity and perpetrator influenced the change in their threshold. The more severe the incident is perceived the more likely they are to disclose. Some participants indicated that their threshold for
disclosures increase after each incident. Franco referred to this as a “thicker skin.” Although this is true, it is important to remember that the emotions do not decrease with each incident.

Additionally, the participants explained that the relationship with the perpetrator is important. The threat of continuing the relationship with the perpetrator adjusts the threshold for many participants. Franco disclosed years after the experience based on the threat that she would need to work with the perpetrator. She would not have disclosed her experiences with her supervisor if this threat had not emerged.

During the disclosure, participants indicate that they evaluate the response. Based on this evaluation, they decide if they will ever disclose to the same individual again. Participants explained that when a receiving party responds in a negative manner, they decided that they shouldn’t disclose to the individual again. Rose described her experience with a negative response,

People usually make fun of getting upset about this. Yeah. It is usually laughed off, or told that it is a compliment, or that I should be thankful that they care, or that I look exotic and that it good. So it is having to tell someone that not only did this happen, but here is how I felt, and here is why you are wrong, and having to defend my feelings on top of it.

In contrast, participants indicated that positive or supportive responses influence students to continue to disclose their experiences to this receiving party.

Participants stated that the aftermath of the experience is also a factor that leads to further disclosures. When a participant spoke to a long-term effect, they later indicated that they were likely to disclose to more individuals if a similar incidents were to occur. Many participants indicated that they did not have the capacity to continue disclosing, but later wished that they had. These participants explained that they perceived a long-term effect after removing themselves from the incident. Aviva explained that she continuous interaction with the perpetrator has been an influence on continuing to disclose her experience. Franco stated that she
wished she had interacted with the perpetrator, so she could possibly protect others from his comments. At the moment of the incident, she was unable to reach this level of reflection, but was able to understand the larger issue when was further removed from the situation.

**Implications of Study**

The missions of most colleges and universities are to provide access to students from various backgrounds, enhance the diversity, and support retention for all students. While these efforts are needed, universities and colleges are not adequately supporting students from historically marginalized populations. The purpose of this study is to provide narratives of the lived experiences of students whom have experienced bias-related incidents and their decision to either disclose or not disclose these experiences. The follow section serves to explore the implication based on the narratives shared by the participants.

The first implication of this study is to examine the structure and organization of The University. Based on the narratives shared in this study, the participants do not feel The University is structured in a way that promotes disclosures of bias-related incidents. If colleges and university hope to be involved in the disclose process, they should collaborate with students to create and implement bias-response protocols and procedures. For example, the newly formed Bias Response Team at The University has the intention to address bias-related incidents and the associated effects. However, the narratives shared by the participants in this study indicate that students do not have personal connections to the institution as a whole, which discourages them from disclosing. In addition, the participants shared doubts that the institution is willing to act on the disclosures of bias-related incidents despite policies and procedures created for this purpose. Participants named that the creation of offices and teams is not enough to promote and encourage disclosures of bias-related incidents.
A second implication of this study is the role that The University has in perpetuating bias-related incidents. Amongst the narratives of participants in this current study, it was common that the perpetrator of the bias-related incidents was a university employee. Participants described incidents perpetrated by their current supervisor, staff members, faculty members, and the police at The University. The participant’s narratives that The University is not an ally for historically marginalized populations will continue until the employees of the institutions are not the common perpetrator of bias-related incidents. An emerging theme of the participants indicated that students only disclose to individuals they can trust to be supportive and validating. While university employees perpetrate bias-related incidents, it will be incredibly difficult for students to trust The University itself.

The third implication of this study is the importance that Student Affairs professionals and faculty members understand and are prepared to address the real and severe effects that students experience based on the prevalence of bias-related incidents. The narratives of the participants illustrate severe emotional strain throughout the experience of bias-related incidents. Participants described a lack of capacity to address the experience as well as a lack of energy and focus on their academic pursuits. Additionally, it is important to understand that suicide ideation and severe depression occurred based on the experiences of bias-related incidents for a participant. Based on this occurrence, even for only one participant, future research should occur to analyze possible association between suicide ideation and experiences of bias-related incidents based on the strong emotional impact that these experiences cause.

The final implication of this study is the importance of each disclosure for a student whom has experience a bias-related incident. The narratives of the participants of this study illustrate that each experience of a bias-related incident is incorporated into their lived
experiences and adjusts the thresholds for future disclosures. The following figure illustrates the never-ending cycle of experiences and reflection that students from historically marginalized populations continually engage in. Student Affairs professionals and faculty members need to be aware that their reaction, level of support, and response is incorporated into the lived-experiences of the student. If this interaction is perceived to be negative, a student will be deterred from disclosing to the same individual and may result in a higher threshold for disclosures to any university employee.

Figure 1

*Cycle of Experiences and Reflection*
Recommendations

This section will outline the recommendations for colleges and universities based on the narratives of the participants in this current study and the implications based on their narratives. Based on the experiences and perceptions of students, whom have experience a bias-related incident, recommendations are offered to Student Affairs professionals and faculty members regarding future practices and principles to support students, create a more positive campus climate, and promote environments where historically marginalized populations feel more comfortable disclosing. It is important to understand that these recommendations are specific to the study site based on the established culture of The University. These recommendations cannot be blindly implemented at other institutions without taking the campus climate, culture, and values of the particular institution into consideration. Additionally, many of these recommendations can be interconnected and will be most beneficial if implemented together.

**Vocalization of Allyship.** The narratives of the participants indicated that they are excited to see vocal support and action by colleges and universities around the country. While the excitement is present, participants still doubt that the institution is an ally based on the lack of support and action throughout the previous years. Additionally, participants indicated that they worry this recent action is only a result of the persistence and fortitude of the students, instead of the genuine care and support of the institutions. If colleges and universities hope to gain the trust of their students, they need to continue their actions and vocalize their allyship. Matt cited,

> Like get some people in here that are not just students that are trying to get some awareness. Like get some power to actually be like “yeah this is bullshit” like what are you doing? You know what I am saying? Like stop – stop leaving it to the students.

Participants explained that the prevalence of bias-related incidents is causing a lack of capacity to focus on academics and manage the toll these experiences cause them. It should not be left to
the students to create change. Colleges and universities should be vocal that it is their duty to create more positive campus climates for all students and that students should be able to count of the institution for support and allyship.

It is important that institutions continue to work to create a more positive campus climate and safer environment for students from historically marginalized populations. Colleges and universities should collaborate to understand the lived experiences and needs of the students; only with the collaboration of student will the initiatives be successful. Colleges and universities should be proactive and reactive in their initiative to create a more positive campus climate and a safer environment for students from historically marginalized populations. Throughout this study, participants have shared the prevalence and frequency of their experiences with bias-related incidents. Colleges and universities should acknowledge these experiences and vocalize their opposition to their prevalence. Matt spoke the current lack of acknowledgment,

The point is that people come here to get an education and feel safe. And it – not only do you have a campus that people feel belittled by teachers and students. You have a place that people fear police, fear security. Their job managers, they can’t even get respect from their job managers. You have the blatant shit that happens on campus. You have people spray paint racist shit on campus. Like you see it. Stop covering it up. Like grow the fuck up. We don’t – stop acting like people are pointing fingers cause like yeah we are but you need to change it and that is why. We wouldn’t have to sit here and point fingers if you would stop fucking up.

In response to bias-related incidents, students should not feel that the institution is covering up the incident, but should be aware that the institution is attempted to lessen the impact of the incident while vocalizing that they do not condone the incident itself. Many institutions are adapting notices that an area is the scene of a bias-related incident, the message was removed, and the institution does not condone the actions of the bias-related incident. Based on the narratives of the participants, this type of acknowledgement should be common practice for colleges and universities.
Training and Education of University Employees. Based on the role that an institution provides, trainings and education should be provided and required by all Student Affairs professionals and faculty members. The narratives of the participants of the current study indicate that college and university employees are common perpetrators of bias-related incidents, provide messages that the students’ experiences are not severe, and have a large role in how the students perceive the institution as a whole. From the training sessions, university employees should have a better understanding of bias-related incidents, their role in perpetuating the experiences, and their role in the disclosures process. Ultimately, these training sessions should be required for tenure or continued employment at the institution.

Even at The University, where social justice dialogues are common and available to all students, staff, and faculty members, many individuals do not utilize these opportunities. Based on varied involvement, diversity in identities, and level of student’s interactions, staff and faculty members have different levels of understanding of the issues regarding campus climate and bias-related incidents. Training sessions should be required to begin to narrow the dissonance between faculty and staff members. Additionally training sessions should be tailored to previous knowledge of the group of employees. For example, training sessions for staff whom engage with social justice education/dialogue would be more advanced than those whom do not regular engage with these issues. Throughout the trainings, all staff and faculty members should obtain a understanding of bias-related incidents and the lived experiences of students from historically marginalized populations, the prevalence of bias-related experiences, the real and severe effects these experiences have on students, and the harm that bias-related incidents have the emotional wellbeing, academic pursuits, and capacity of students. The reality of suicide ideation, severe depression, and sense of unworthiness should be recognized within these sessions.
Furthermore, the role that college and university employees play in the disclosure and reporting processes should be included in training sessions. The narratives of the participant indicated that the perpetrator of their experiences were commonly university employees. These sessions should publicize this reality and education university employees on their actions that are considered as bias-related incident. Additionally, college and university employees should understand their role in the disclosure process. Since participants illustrated the importance of previous relationships, university employees should understand that they could be the receiving party of a disclosure. This training session needs to emphasize the importance of their reaction and its influence on future disclosures.

**Relationships.** Throughout this study, participants indicated that a receiving party must have a previous relationship with the individual for a disclosure to occur voluntarily. Students do not risk further harm or exposure by disclosing to individual whom they have no established relationship with. Based on these narratives, it is important that colleges and universities understand the role of personal interactions with students. If a college or university is seeking more reports or disclosures of bias-related incidents, they need to emphasize and commit to personal interaction with students. This includes going to spaces that predominately for students (i.e. dining centers, residence halls, campus lounges, study spaces, cultural centers, etc.) and building genuine relationships. It is on all faculty and staff members to build relationships with students. Based on the number of staff and faculty members at The University, every student should have an established relationship with someone associated with The University.

Participants explained that the creation of new offices, response teams, or protocols would not increase the prevalence of disclosures or reports of bias-related incidents. Simply creating a space is not enough; students need to have an established relationship with the
individual to disclose their experiences. According to participants, if staff and faculty member increased their commitment and intentionality in personal interactions, more disclosures will occur, in comparison to the creation of new offices.

**Transparency.** Amongst the participants, narratives emerged that students receive messages that their experiences are not severe enough for further action. Franco continued to explain that she was still unaware if her experience would be considered a bias-related incident. Similarly, many narratives emerged that students are unaware of what the university can do in response to their disclosure. Based on these experiences and narratives, colleges and universities should be more transparent with their definitions of bias-related incidents and with their ability to respond. Franco suggested that the institution publish a spectrum of possible bias-related incidents, so students are aware of the severity of their experience. While this could be helpful, it is important that the published spectrum acknowledges the real and severe emotional strain that students experience across the entire spectrum. Additionally, it would be helpful for students to understand that colleges and universities are not able induce disciplinary measures, unless the incident surpasses a threshold (i.e. harassment, physical harm, and/or discrimination).

Throughout the narratives of the participants in this study, the largest roadblock is the uncertainty of the reaction and actions of the receiving party. This roadblock can be avoided with increased transparency.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

This study has just started to research into the experiences of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents. While implications and recommendation emerged from the narratives of the participants of the current study, more research is needed to better understand
the experience of these students. I hope that future research will build from this current study and provide further narratives of students whom have experienced bias-related incidents.

**Differences amongst identities.** In the current study, most participants experienced bias-related incidents based on their racial identity. The experience of these students proved to be different than the participants that experience bias based on her religious identity. Aviva explained that these experiences have caused her to conceal her religious affiliation as a means to avoid future experience of bias-related incidents. While Aviva is able to engage in this concealment, students that experience bias-related incidents based on their racial identity are unable to hide this identity. I am interested in seeing the differences between visible and nonvisible identities and the meaning making process of these participates.

**Differences amongst historically marginalized and predominant identities.** Similarly to the difference amongst identities, narratives were vastly different between individuals from historically marginalized populations and predominate identities. Sarah was the only participant that had predominant identity (e.g. white racial identity), while the other participants had historically marginalized identities. Her narrative was vastly different from the other participants. She disclosed to a large amount of individuals and indicated that she was intending to continue her disclosure process. She was also the only individual that disclosed their experience to the perpetrator. I am interested to see if this phenomenon is generalizable. Do students from historically marginalized populations disclose to fewer individuals than students from predominant identities?

Additionally, participants from historically marginalized populations described narratives of internalizing their experiences. Rose explained that she blamed herself for the experience, because she didn’t know Spanish as an individual who looks like she should speak Spanish.
Sarah did not have any narratives that indicated internalization of her experience. I would like to see future research on the internalization process and if there is a difference between individuals from historically marginalized populations compared to individuals from predominant populations.

**Role of Diverse Faculty and Staff Members.** Narratives emerged indicating that students notice a lack of diversity amongst the faculty and staff members at The University. Some participants explained that they feel less connected and have less trust in the institution based on this lack of diversity. I hope to see future research that looks at the role diverse faculty and staff members have on the experiences of students from historically marginalized populations. In this current study, narratives indicate that students notice the lack of diversity, but cannot show if this characteristic has an effect on the students’ experience.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Throughout the previous literature of bias-related incidents, it is clear that students from historically marginalized populations have vastly different experience from their counterparts. They live and interact in environments where they frequently are the targets of bias-related incidents. In this current study, the narratives of the participants illustrated that these experiences occur frequently and in routine. While these narratives exist, colleges and universities are not supporting students from historically marginalized populations to an acceptable level. Until the narratives of suicide ideation, internalized hatred and anger towards their own identities, and the fear of personal safety don’t exist, colleges and universities need to continue their initiative to support these students. At the time of this study, the current organization and form of bias-related incidents response protocol are not conducive to disclosures. Colleges and universities need to
collaborate with students to reevaluate their current initiatives. Only through this recreation and collaboration will results occur.
REFERENCES


Rowley, L. L., Hurtado, S., & Ponjuan, L. (2002). Organizational rhetoric or reality? The disparities between avowed commitment to diversity and formal programs and initiative in higher education institutions (unpublished paper). New Orleans, LA.


*The University is a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and protection for the participants.*
APPENDIX ONE

Interview Questions

1. You identified as having experiences a bias-related incident, please tell me about that experience.
   
   Probe: What was your initial reaction to the experience?

2. Did you tell anyone about your experience? If so, who? If not, why?

3. Please describe your relationship with this individual.

4. Why did you choose to tell them?

5. What were your goals for the disclosure?

6. Did you tell anyone else about your experience? *If so, I will ask questions 3-5.

7. What were you feeling while making this decision?
   
   Probe: Was this an emotional time for you?

   Probe: Were you feeling stress or pressure in either direction?

8. What options did you think were available to you?

9. How are you feeling about your decision to disclose/not disclose?

10. If you experienced a similar incident, would you disclose now? Why?
1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this research study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear.

2. WHY IS THIS RESEARCH STUDY BEING DONE?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Previous research has shown that students on college campuses experience bias-related incidents, although research has not shown why students choose to disclose or not disclose their experiences to university employees. A bias-related incident is defined as “behaviors/actions directed toward an individual or group based upon actual or perceived identity characteristics or background (e.g., skin color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity and expression, age, or physical, mental, or emotional disability)” (Oregon State University, 2015). The purpose of this research study is to analyze the experience of students when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents to university employees. The results of this study will be analyzed through the interpretations of the student researcher and will be confirmed by the participants in a follow-up focus group.

The study is being conducted by the student researcher for the completion of a Master’s thesis in College Student Services Administration.

Up to fifteen (15) may be invited to take part in this study.

3. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are a current student at Oregon State University, domestic or international. You are proficient in conversational English. You self-identify as having experiences a bias-related incidents (see definition above). You also are over the age of 18.
4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

The study activities will include a personal, one-on-one interview between you and the student researcher. The student researcher will be taking observation notes and audio record the interview for the research findings. You will be invited, via email, for a focus group to validate the findings gathered during the personal interviews.

Study duration: Your participation in this study will be limited to one hour for the personal, one-on-one interview, and one additional hour for the focus group. The interview will be focused on your experience when deciding to disclose bias-related incidents to university employees, where the focus group will be used to validate the findings from the personal interviews.

Recordings and photographs: The student researcher will be audio recording the interviews and focus group. The audio recordings and text documents collected from the interview will be kept in a password-protected file, accessible only to the researchers. The researcher will transcribe the audio recordings in a private room using headphones. During the transcription, the researcher will use participants’ pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The researcher will use her laptop to transcribe the audio files to Word document files. The transcribed files will be password-protected. Only the principle investigator and student research will have access to the password. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, you should not participate.

5. WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the being in the study include:

The individual stories of students are important for this work. Potential risks, though low, may include emotional reactions with regard to you reflecting upon a bias-related incidents based on your actual or perceived identity.

Since you are currently a student at Oregon State University and will likely still be students once the study is complete, there is a risk that you could be identified based upon their interview responses. To minimize this risk, pseudonyms will be used to identify participants during the study. You will have the opportunity to self-select your pseudonym.

The student researcher will use email to communicate with you. There is a risk that the security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or contain viruses. To minimize these risks, the student researchers will not open any email accounts, or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study. This study will not collect any private information via email. Email will only be used for scheduling interviews and focus groups.
We will ask members of the focus group to maintain the confidentiality of comments made during the discussion. However, there is still a risk that comments you make during the discussion may be shared outside of the group.

6. **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

This study is not designed to benefit you directly.

7. **WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will be paid for being in this research study. Each participant will receive $10, in the form of University Housing and Dining Services meal card, for participating in an individual interview and the follow-up focus group (total of $20).

8. **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

The information you provide during this study will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. All records associated with this study will be kept on a password-protected external hard drive in a locked cabinet at the principal investigator’s university office to ensure secure storage. During the research process, the first and last name as well as the email addresses of interview participants will be stored separately from the records of the interview sessions. The audio recordings and text documents collected from the interview will be kept in a password-protected file, accessible only to the researchers.

The researchers will not open any email accounts, or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study.

The researcher will transcribe the audio recordings in a private room using headphones. During the transcription, the researcher will use participants’ pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The researcher will use her laptop to transcribe the audio files to Word document files. The transcribed files will be password-protected. Only the principle investigator and student research will have access to the password.

Under Oregon law, researchers are required to report to the appropriate authorities any information concerning child abuse or neglect. The researchers may also report threats of harm to self or to others.

Names will be provided to the Business Center for the sake of compensation.

9. **WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I DO NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep
information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your grades or standing in the university.

10. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Larry Roper at Larry.Roper@oregonstate.edu or Pamela Altmaier at Pamela.Altmaier@oregonstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu
APPENDIX THREE

Focus Group Questions

1. Through my findings, I noticed that ___________________ is a theme from the participants. What are your initial thoughts based on this finding? *
   a. Does this surprise you?
   b. Do you believe this is accurate for students throughout Oregon State University?
   c. Do you have any further thoughts/reactions?

2. Do you have any final thoughts, comments, or reactions you would like me to include in my findings?

*I will be asking these questions, or questions similar to these, for each theme and sub-theme listed below.

Theme 1: Students experience bias-related incidents regularly.

Sub-Theme 1a: Students feel a number of emotions (e.g. anger, confusion, fear, hurt, and unworthy) during the experience and when deciding to disclose.

Theme 2: There are two major factors that lead students to disclose to specific individuals: previous relationships and shared identities.

Theme 3: Students are looking for validation and/or logistics when deciding to disclose.

Sub-Theme 3a: When a student discloses immediately (i.e. within two-days of the experience), they are likely looking for validation.

Sub-Theme 3b: When a student discloses is delayed (i.e. more than two-days of the experience), they are likely looking for logistics.

Sub-Theme 3c: If a student is disclosing to a university employee, they are likely looking for logistics and will have a delayed disclosure.

Theme 4: There are three major reasons that a student does not disclose: perception of the individual as an ally, lack of previous relationship, and perception of the severity of their experience.

Sub-Theme 4a: Students have doubts that Oregon State University is an ally for them.

Sub-Theme 4b: Students only voluntarily disclose to university employees if they have a previous relationship with the individual.

Sub-Theme 4c: Students regularly receive messages that their experiences are not severe enough for further action.
Theme 5: The student’s overall experience (i.e. the experience of a bias-related incident, decision to disclose or not disclose, and the disclosure itself) will inform their decision for further disclosures.

Sub-Theme 5a: The reaction of the receiving individual will inform a student’s decision to disclose to the individual again.

Sub-Theme 5b: If a student perceives long-term effects, they are likely to disclose to more individuals if a similar incident were to happen again.
Pre-research Dialogue

Before engaging in the literature and research, I engaged in dialogue with various colleagues and advisors. This dialogues examined my prior knowledge of the study and topic, specifically I looked into my beliefs/biases regarding bias-related incident response protocols. Through this dialogues, a theme emerged regarding my current role. At this moment, I am a Resident Director on campus, and work very closely with the bias-related incident response protocol. At this moment, I believe that disclosures are beneficial for all students. I have seen beneficial outcomes in previous responses within my hall. It is hard for me to understand a reason that disclosure is not best for students.

Through dialogue, I have realized that this bias is affecting the research question of this current study. I am wanted to look at the roadblocks and influences to support more dialogues to university employees. While I still think this is important, I am deciding to broaden the scope and look at overall disclosures. Through these dialogues, I have realized that I need to constantly be aware that disclosures may not be the most beneficial path for all students. Hopefully, this research will open my eyes to the possibility of other options for students.

Additionally to my current role, I am entering this research with personal experience of bias-related incidents. When I was an undergraduate student at a different four-year institution, I experienced bias-related incidents regularly in my classes. As mathematics major, I received messages regularly that I should find a different field because I was never going to be successful enough for mathematics. I started wondering why I was receiving these messages regularly when I had better grades, in comparison to my male counterparts. Throughout my reflection, I wish I had spoke up. I wish I talked to someone about my experiences, but never found the courage to
do so. I didn’t know whom to turn to, because I was receiving the messages from multiple instructors within the department. As a Student Affairs professional, I still don’t know what options were available to me.

I bring this lived experience with me throughout my work and research. I understand that my experience was not severe and other students receive messages from more people than I did. I understand that students from historically marginalized populations, especially students of color, regularly experience these messages of not belonging or inaccurate/harsh stereotypes. As a Student Affairs professional, I hope that this research, as well as a lifetime of work, could create environments were students don’t need to face these experiences.

**Literature Review**

Throughout the literature review, my understand of the prevalence of bias-related incidents were confirmed. Many of the stories shocked me and saddened me that students face these experiences. Through the literature, I continued to wonder what experiences were occurring at The University. I was hoping that students were not facing blatant and overt bias-related incidents.

Additionally, during my literature review I reevaluated my participant requirements. At the beginning, I was only looking at interviewing students of color about their lived experiences at The University. At this time, I decided that I would expand my pool to any student that self-identities as experiencing a bias-related incident. During this transition, I expanded my literature search and included more narratives of students from other historically marginalized populations.

**Testimonial event**

On November 16, 2016, The University hosted a student “Testimonial event.” This Testimonial event was organized and requested by the students at The University. I attend this
event and listened to the many narratives of experience with bias-related incidents at The University. These stories opened my eyes to the vast amount of bias-related incidents that occur each and every day at The University. Students spoke to the pain they had experienced and the hardship these experiences has caused them. Additionally, this event confirmed that bias-related incidents were vastly underreported.

This event added to the timeliness of this study. Students are willing to speak to their experiences and university employees are starting to listen. It is unfortunate that students needed to take action into their own hands, but I am glad the dialogue is starting at The University. Since this event, The University has released a statement that they are intending to create a new office and hire more employees to create a better campus climate.

**Interviews**

This section of my bracketing report includes thought and biases that emerged based on the interviews of each participant.

**Aviva.** Aviva spoke to her experiences of bias based on her religious identities. Throughout this interview, Aviva referred to two types of disclosures: identity and incident. At times, Aviva would switch between the two types of disclosures without stating the transition. For example, Aviva explained that she disclosed to her supervisor. She talked about how she felt closer to this supervisor and trusted her. Further into the interview, she explained that this disclosure was an identity disclosure. Aviva never stated that she disclosure her experiences of bias to this supervisor. As a researcher, I caught myself connecting these disclosures together. During the analysis portion of the study, I separated these disclosures and only analyzed the bias-related incident disclosures. Aviva’s identity disclosure was not included in this study. Further
research would be needed to analysis when individual disclosure their identities with receiving parties.

**Franco.** It is important to note that I have a previous relationship with Franco. She works in the same department and I have worked directly with her. During our interview, we did not address or mention our previous relationship. I do not believe our previous relationship affected the interview, although Franco may have felt more comfortable sharing her experiences with me.

**Matt.** There where a few times in Matt’s interview that I noticed myself react to his narratives. I do not believe that my reaction affected his narratives, but I am aware that I was processing his story, while we were interviewing. The moments in his interview included narratives regarding school shootings and his perception of the police.

While Matt spoke to his suicide ideation, he explained that he understood why individuals were commit school shootings. He explained that when you are the target of harassment and bullying constantly, you would eventually break. He was referring to his suicide ideation. He explained that his must be similar to school shooters. Matt continued to explain that he does not condone school shootings and that these emotions don’t justify their actions. This narrative was very shocking to me and I reacted to the statement.

Additionally, Matt spoke to his lived experiences with the police. He had many emotions and beliefs about the police. It is important to understand that I am a police officer’s daughter. My lived experiences are vastly different than Matt’s. As a researcher, I know that we come from different perspectives and lived experiences. In the interview, Matt referred to police officers as “wife beaters.” Again – I was shocked by this comment. While I continued to listen to his narrative, I know that I reacted to this comment.
Rose. Similarly to Franco, I know Rose on a personal level. I do not believe that our personal relationship had an effect on the interview, but it is notable that we have engaged previously. Additionally, I was aware of the individual perpetrated the incidents of bias.

In Rose’s interview, she explained that a fellow classmate witnessed the bias-related incident. The classmate approached Rose after the incident concluded and they talked about what occurred. When asked, Rose explained that she was not planning on disclosing to this individual. Based on this, I didn’t include this interaction in my study. I based this decision on three reasons: (1) Rose had no intention on disclosing to this individual, (2) the classmate was a witness and not necessarily a receiving party, and (3) I removed all involuntary disclosures from the study, since the purpose and characteristics of these disclosures are vastly different.

Sam. I do not have any perceived biases or matters from Sam’s interview.

Sarah. Sarah’s interview was very unique. Sarah was the only participant that had narratives of bias, while they have privileged identities. Sarah explained that she experiences bias-related incidents based on being white-identified. When I changed my study to any individual whom self-identities as experiencing bias-related incidents, a committee member asked about students from privileged identities. I explained that I was going to include these individuals, because the study is based on self-identifying. During Sarah’s interview, it was clear that I was not expecting someone to self-identify whom has privileged identities. When Sarah explained her incident, I remember controlling my expression. I did not want Sarah to perceive the surprise that I was experiencing.

In addition, I know I reflected later about her narrative. I thought that Sarah was not going to fit within the themes of the other students. There were many prominent differences between their narratives. Sarah disclosed to a large amount of receiving parties, where other
participants did not. This information would be great for future research, but was not important to this study. Ultimately, Sarah’s narratives were similar and fit within the themes of the other participants.

**Sol.** When I was deciding on opening the study to all experiences of bias-related incidents, I decided that I would not included sexual violence. I did not want to have the research to cause undesired reports of sexual assault (since I am a mandatory reporter professionally). Sol began her narrative by explaining that she was sexually assaulted. I was shocked by this disclosure and starting planning my response to inform her that I must report. Sol explained that she already reported this experience to the university, so I did not need to report. I know that I reacted to this narrative.

Additionally, Sol’s experience of bias was connected to her sexual assault. Throughout the interview, Sol continued to sidetrack from the actual experience of bias. I continued to ask Sol to only look at the bias-related incident, but she continued to sidetrack to the sexual assault. I only included the information that was specifically related to the bias-related incident itself.

**Stephanie.** The police perpetrated Stephanie’s bias-related incident. Similarly to Matt, I needed to check my biases about the police through the interview. At the beginning of her narrative, I wondered why she ran from an officer. When she explained that she was socialized to avoid the police, I understood why she ran. While I understood that we have different lived experiences, it is important to note that I perceived a bias during our interview.

Additionally, Stephanie explained that she was required to meet with the conduct office on campus. She explained that she had no intention of disclosing to these individual, but were required to. I did not include these interactions as disclosures, based on the involuntary nature of
them. It was important to note their occurrence in the findings, because these interactions were influential to future disclosures.