Critically Conscious Identities: HESA Graduate Students' Conceptualizations of Critical Consciousness in a Diversity Course

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Antonique E. Flood

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ANTONIQUE E. FLOOD

has been approved for

the Department of Counseling and Higher Education

and The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education by

David J. Nguyen

Associate Professor of Counseling and Higher Education

Sara Helfrich

Interim Dean, The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education

Abstract

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Critically Conscious Identities: HESA Graduate Students' Conceptualizations of Critical Consciousness in a Diversity Course

Director of Dissertation: David J. Nguyen

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how HESA graduate students' conceptions of critical consciousness transform and evolve during a diversity course and the pedagogical practices that foster consciousness-raising. Each of the twelve participants completed two semi-structured interviews and three journal prompts. Using a case study approach, I conducted interviews at the beginning and end of the semester to compare participants' initial understandings (1st Interview) against participants' evolving understandings (journal prompts, 2nd Interview). To create the interview protocol, I followed Castillo-Montoya's (2016) four recommendations by: (a) aligning interview questions to the conceptual frameworks, (b) using follow up questions, (c) requesting feedback, and (d) piloting the protocol. To analyze interview data, I used open, *in vivo*, and axial coding. I analyzed the journal prompts by compiling the responses into main and sub-categories.

In the first, article I use Flavell's (1979) model of metacognition and Watts et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of critical consciousness to explore HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development through metacognitive journaling. Findings illustrated that metacognitive journaling prompted participants to assess their learning by pinpointing the mastery and limitations of their social justice knowledge and preceding

presumptions. In the second article, I employ Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning and Watts et al.'s (1999) stages of sociopolitical development to investigate three participants' changing understandings of critical consciousness. Findings indicated that participants made moderate to substantial gains in critical consciousness development, with only one of the three participants displaying action-taking behavior. In the third paper, I apply Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning to explore how three pedagogical approaches foster critical consciousness. Findings highlighted how creating opportunities for reflection and integrating theory and diversity can foster consciousness-raising.

I conclude this dissertation by discussing the totality of the work, its connections to the literature, offer future directions for research, and explicate specific ways of improving pedagogical practices within HESA graduate programs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Despite the incorporation of diversity coursework in the majority of higher education/student affairs (HESA) graduate programs, HESA graduate students report feeling underprepared to enact social justice work (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019). New professionals possess social justice knowledge but struggle to convert social justice knowledge to social action or position their identities in relation to institutional and societal forces. Researchers posit that a significant reflective gap is responsible for this readiness deficit, calling for HESA graduate programs to prioritize transformative instructional approaches that allow HESA graduate students to reflect on their development as critically conscious beings (Edwards et al., 2014; Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Iverson & Seher, 2017). While the research examining the efficacy of diversity courses is growing (Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019), few studies examine how HESA graduate students develop critical consciousness.

Even with an increased call for diversity training, only 43% of the 223 existing Higher Education/Student Affairs (HESA) graduate programs infuse at least one diversity course into their curriculum (Kennedy et al., 2015). This data suggests that over half of HESA graduate programs lack a specific diversity course requirement, which stands in direct juxtaposition to the field's expressed commitment to furthering social justice and inclusion competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The degree to which HESA graduate

students are multiculturally competent for early career success is not a novel topic. In fact, it is one that has been a part of the graduate preparation conversation for over 23 years (Morgan-Consoli & Marin, 2016; Flowers, 2003, Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Perez et al., 2019; Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Pope et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007). Researchers argue that current instructional methods foster surface-level familiarity (e.g., awareness-raising) with key concepts but fail to cultivate reflective practitioners capable of rendering culturally responsive decisions (Gansemer & Topf, 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Reason & Broido, 2005). While awareness-raising has merit, diversity courses should integrate dynamic pedagogical practices that help student convert multicultural knowledge to practical multicultural skills (Gayles & Kelly, 2007).

Recognizing the need to shift from an awareness orientation towards a social justice orientation, professional organizations such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), replaced the original *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion* competency with *Social Justice and Inclusion* (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). A social justice orientation empowers student affairs professionals to engage in critical reflection about their own identities, to understand power and privilege, and to comprehend the historical roots undergirding structural inequality (ACPA/NASPA, 2015; Keehn, 2015). There is an assumption that providing access to social justice topics is sufficient for fostering social engagement (van Montfrans, 2017), yet social justice issues are multifaceted, requiring a heightened-level of metacognitive awareness and consciousness-raising (Freire, 1970; Montfans, 2017). Achieving a strong locus of critical consciousness cannot be achieved through simple

exposure to course content. The intentional development of metacognitive and critical reflection practices are necessary for the true embodiment of social justice and the furthering of equity and inclusion-focused work.

Centering critical reflection at the heart of diversity education is essential to developing student affairs practitioners capable of engaging in critical social action. Neglecting the "critical" component of social action often results in unreflective, well-intentioned diversity efforts that cause undue harm to minoritized students, administrators, and faculty (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Kelly & Gayles, 2010; Linder et al., 2015; Quaye, 2012). Harm can present itself in the form of discomfort, tokenism (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Kelly & Gayles, 2010), and racial battle fatigue (Hubain et al., 2016). Well-intentionality can be insidious as it communicates allyship and advocacy, yet well-intentioned individuals rarely examine their roles in perpetuating systems of oppression (DiAngelo, 2021). Creating inclusive communities and fostering a sense of belonging requires practitioners and faculty who actively assess their intersectional social identities in relation to power, privilege, and oppression. Critically reflective practice endeavors to decrease incidences of emotional and psychological harm by provoking the self-introspection necessary for enacting transformative social change.

Problem Statement

Higher education/student affairs (HESA) graduate programs have attempted to prepare aspiring student affairs administrators to answer the call for increased multicultural competency through diversity courses, yet research suggests that new

professionals still feel ill-prepared to navigate conversations around power, privilege, and access (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). Numerous studies have criticized the ability of diversity courses within HESA graduate programs to engender critical consciousness towards meaningful social action (Desroches, 2016; Edwards et al., 2014; Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Hubain et al., 2016; Morgan-Consoli & Marin, 2016; Pope et al., 2009). Researchers have called for the renovation of curricular approaches that promote awareness and for the creation of innovative, "pedagogical spaces" that "explore what it personally means to be a racial/cultural being (i.e. to unpack one's biases and prejudice)" (Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018, p. 485) in relation to structural inequality. Edwards et al. (2014) echo these sentiments, positing that without re-envisioned instructional practices "that offer student affairs graduate students an education robust with competencies necessary to transform cocurricular experiences, the goals of equity and justice on college campuses will continue to elude us" (p. 3).

Metacognition—tracking cognitive processes while engaged in learning---is a viable approach for transforming pedagogical spaces towards increased critical consciousness. The field of educational psychology focuses on the science of learning, using metacognitive strategies (e.g., self-reflection, self-regulation, self-assessment) to help students monitor their own cognition. Before aspiring HESA professionals can engage in dialogue about difference or advocate for systemic change, they must be aware of their own social identity and its influence on others. A metacognitive framework can be applied within HESA graduate programs to contextualize the complexities of

cognitive processing, thus building critically conscious administrators capable of addressing social inequalities within oppressive institutional structures (Misco & Shiveley, 2016).

We have a limited understanding of the role of metacognition in shaping HESA graduate students' critical consciousness within diversity courses. While educational psychologists emphasize the influence of metacognition on meaningful knowledge construction (Fung et al., 2019; Gómez-Barreto et al., 2020; McGuire, 2015; McAlpine et al., 1997; Mok et al., 2006), diversity education research has not engaged in significant scholarship to explore how this concept could be applied to student learning. The study of metacognition in relation to critical consciousness could expand our understanding of how HESA graduate students come to develop critically conscious identities, which is crucial considering the increased demand for civic-minded, justice-oriented higher education administrators (ACPA/NASPA, 2015; American Council on Education [ACE], 2016; Gansemer & Topf, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019).

Conceptual Framework

Two concepts--Flavell's (1979) model of metacognition and Watts et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of critical consciousness guide this study. Metacognition provides a vehicle for tracing and interrogating the cognitive pathways of the learning process as it is transpiring. Critical consciousness asserts that the development of one's personal and social identity in relation to structural inequalities is a pre-requisite for achieving personal transformation and engaging in social action. Drawing from these two bodies of work

constructs a conceptual backdrop that undergirds the criticality of deliberate cognitive monitoring and heightened self-awareness in engendering social action.

Metacognition

Metacognition explains the self-regulation of cognition. In simplest terms, it is the process of thinking about one's own thinking. Flavell's (1979) model of metacognition is comprised of four components--metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experiences or regulation, goals, and actions. Metacognitive knowledge refers to the extent to which individuals comprehend how they learn and process information. This type of knowledge requires learners to be reflective and introspective about their own cognitive processing. For example, being aware of optimal learning environments or being able to guesstimate the levels of cognitive energy necessary to complete a particular task or subject.

Metacognitive experiences or regulation is the ability to monitor or control one's cognitive processing through the use of metacognitive strategies (Flavell, 1979). Not to be conflated with cognitive strategies, which are employed to set a prescribed goal, metacognitive strategies are used to determine if the prescribed goal has been achieved. For example, a cognitive strategy would be setting a goal to understand the difference between equality and equity, whereas a metacognitive strategy would be evaluating one's understanding of the difference between equality and equity. Goals refer to the targeted purpose of the cognitive endeavor, and actions refer to the strategies employed to achieve the pre-determined goals.

Critical Consciousness

Freire (1970) espoused an egalitarian approach to learning, positioning the learner and teacher as co-constructors of knowledge. Rather than ascribe to the normative "banking" model of education, Freire advocated for the creation of active, engaging, and communal learning environments. The concept of critical consciousness was born out of a constructivist paradigm, positing that individuals are purveyors of their own knowledge and that introspection and dialogue are key ingredients for realizing one's potential for self-enlightenment. Freire (1974) determined that individuals must think critically about their social identities within oppressive systemic structures, specifically in relation to the historical contexts that sustain structural inequality. It is only through the development of critical consciousness that individuals can be empowered to challenge inequality and chart a more equitable course.

The capacity to engage in meaningful social action is determined by the degree to which an individual is critically conscious. Building upon Freire's original conception, Watts et al. (2011) outlined three core elements of critical consciousness—critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. Critical reflection, within a critical consciousness construct, challenges individuals to assess internally held assumptions through the lens of critical theory. The critically reflective engage in perpetual critique of social inequalities, paying careful attention to the role of larger systemic structures. Political efficacy refers to "the perceived capacity to effect social and political change by individual and/or collective activism" (Watts et al., 2011, p. 46). The perceived ability to influence social change increases the likelihood of social action (Watts et al., 2011).

Critical action refers to community, institutional, and political activism aimed at creating social change (Watts et al., 2011). According to Freire (1974) critical action and critical reflection share a cyclical relationship with critical reflection traditionally serving as a pre-requisite for critical action. The stronger the locus of critical consciousness, the greater the capacity to engage in critical action.

Tying These Concepts Together

When students use metacognitive strategies, their capacity to engage in active learning increases (McGuire, 2015). As students transition from passivity to proactivity, they develop the ability to monitor and regulate their cognitive processing (Flavell, 1979; McGuire, 2015). Metacognition also imbues students with the ability to gauge the depth of their learning, differentiating superficiality from profundity (McGuire, 2015). Critical consciousness centers self-awareness at the heart of social justice efforts. An authentic understanding of critical consciousness empowers students to operate from a position of vulnerability and strength as they interrogate their biases, assumptions, and prejudices towards the end of creating more equitable systems. Collectively, metacognition and critical consciousness, applied within a diversity course context, provide HESA graduate students with the tools necessary to monitor the development of a critically conscious identity.

Purpose of the Study

This study will utilize Flavell's (1979) model of metacognition and Watts et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of critical consciousness to explore the role of metacognitive strategies in shaping critically consciousness in HESA graduate students. Rather than

maintain an awareness-focused culture, HESA graduate programs should adopt a culture of metacognition within diversity courses. A culture of metacognition is concerned with illuminating how students engage in the learning process and providing tools for students to chart their own learning processes (Flavell, 1979; Fung et al., 2019; McGuire, 2015; Mok et al., 2006). While the student affairs field positions consciousness-raising as a pre-requisite to social action, the extant literature does little to provide frameworks for mapping the cognitive road to critical consciousness. This study aims to better understand how a "metacognitive justice" orientation can help students think critically about their own identities.

Research Questions

This basic qualitative study employs a constructivist approach to understand how the application of metacognitive strategies influence the critical consciousness development of HESA graduate students. Semi-structured interviews and journal analyses will be conducted to explore the research questions guiding this case study:

1. How do metacognitive journals promote HESA graduate students' learning towards critical consciousness development?
2. How do HESA graduate students' understandings of critical consciousness change during the course of a graduate diversity course?
3. What teaching practices promote HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to an understanding of the role of metacognition in consciousness-raising, and it is significant to a number of constituencies, including but not limited to:

This study is significant to HESA graduate preparation programs. As college campuses continue to operate as microcosms of an increasingly diverse society, the need for self-aware, intentional, and culturally competent administrators will only become more pressing and relevant. Specific knowledge of critical consciousness and metacognition is valuable to HESA graduate programs as they strive to prepare graduate students to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Preparing HESA graduate students to successfully engage in social justice and inclusion work requires a programmatic shift from "a goal of simply acquiring competence to one of acquiring critical intercultural consciousness" (Landreman et al., 2007, p. 277). Engaging in social action is predicated on an intimate, authentic understanding of oneself within historical and political contexts. This intense level of consciousness is necessary for perspective transformation and a pre-requisite for leading social change efforts (Freire, 1970; Landreman et al., 2007; Theosaris, 2007). Understanding the relationship between critical consciousness and metacognition can transform curricular approaches from awareness-focused to consciousness-focused.

This study is significant to faculty. Expanding knowledge of metacognitive processing and critical consciousness can improve instructional approaches for fostering social responsibility and creating inclusive communities. Changes in traditional

pedagogical practices are needed “to fulfill institutional and societal concerns about preparing students for a pluralistic society and world” (Smith et al., 1997, p. 31). Metacognition and critical consciousness can assist HESA graduate faculty with developing innovative, culturally responsive pedagogy aimed at integrating immersive, self-reflective learning. Attention to identity realization is crucial to developing critically conscious professionals capable of enacting social justice-oriented efforts.

This study is significant to early career student affairs professionals. Understanding how a metacognitive framework contributes to consciousness-raising can increase early career professionals’ propensity to become self-reflective practitioners who confidently engage in social action. New professionals report feeling inadequately prepared to enact or lead social change initiatives (Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005) which is likely due to diversity education preparation focused on competence acquisition instead of transformative self-examination and systematic critique (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Landreman et al., 2007). Schon (1987) emphasizes the circuitous relationship between learning, reflection, and practice for translating abstract concepts into action. Metacognition provides a vehicle for new professionals to better comprehend their learning processes, reflect on their critical consciousness development, and inform their participation in constructing inclusive campus environments.

This study is significant to the literature on the effects of diversity courses. Despite repeated reference to the importance of critical reflection in engendering critical consciousness development, the student affairs diversity literature notes a reflective

deficit in HESA diversity courses (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018). A thorough review of the literature reveals few studies focused on HESA graduate students and critical consciousness. Metacognition has the potential to serve as a conceptual framework for understanding how HESA graduate students develop as critically conscious beings. Metacognition has not yet been used to study the effects of diversity courses, thus rending this study as the initial attempt to apply this conceptual framework within diversity education research. If metacognition proves to be valuable, researchers could expand its application within student affairs diversity scholarship.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is organized using a three-article format. This format differs from the traditional long-form dissertation as it is comprised of three independent articles intended for journal publication. Chapter two focuses on Flavell's (1979) model of metacognition and Watts et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of critical consciousness to answer the first research question. Chapter three traces critical consciousness development using Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory and Watts et al.'s (1999) stages of sociopolitical development to answer the second research question. Chapter four re-introduces transformative learning theory to answer the third research question. Individually, each framework offer a unique lens. Collectively, these frameworks provide an innovative approach for exploring HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. Similar to traditional dissertations, chapters two, three, and four include an introduction, literature review, methods, findings, discussion, and implications section.

Chapter 2: Raising HESA Graduate Students' Critical Consciousness Through Metacognitive Journaling

The preparedness of higher education/student affairs (HESA) graduate students to enact social justice work has received increased attention with the student affairs field's transition from an awareness orientation to active orientation (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019). Despite this new posture towards engaging in social action, new professionals report feeling underprepared to enact social justice work (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). This lack of preparation can be attributed to an overemphasis on social action and a de-emphasis on the cognitive processes (Desroches, 2016). Placing an overwhelming emphasis on enacting social change can negate the cognitive process necessary to cultivate consciousness-raising. Contemporary scholars have called for a balanced dialogue in HESA graduate programs that supports social action and investigates the intricacies of cognition (Desroches, 2016; Edwards et al., 2014; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018). In order for students to engage in social action, cognitive processing must be acknowledged and explored. While critical reflection is positioned as a pre-requisite to social action (Freire, 1970; Joes-Boss, 2018; Watts et al., 2011), the extant literature does little to provide frameworks for mapping the cognitive road to critical consciousness.

The degree to which HESA graduate students are multiculturally competent for early career success is not a novel topic (Flowers, 2003, Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Morgan-Consoli & Marin, 2016; Perez et al., 2019; Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Pope et al., 2009;

Theoharis, 2007). In fact, multicultural competence has been featured within the graduate preparation conversation for over 20 years (Pope & Reynolds, 1997). Current instructional methods foster surface-level familiarity (e.g., awareness-raising) with key concepts, but fail to cultivate reflective practitioners capable of rendering culturally responsive decisions (Gansemer & Topf, 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). While awareness-raising has merit, diversity courses must incorporate dynamic pedagogical practices rooted in social justice that "assist [students] in translating multicultural awareness and knowledge to skills they can use as practitioners" (Gayles & Kelly, 2007, p. 203). As Cuyjet et al. (2016) determined, pedagogical approaches such as perspective-taking, reflection, and intergroup dialogue are essential to cultivating multicultural skills.

Drawing from the concepts of metacognition (Flavell, 1979) and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), I examine the ways metacognition in shapes HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. A strong locus of critical consciousness is necessary for enacting social justice work (Cadenas et al., 2018; Harris-Jones, 2019; Jones Boss et al., 2018; Landreman et al., 2007; Pena, 2012; Watts et al., 2011) which can be achieved through the integration of deeper learning through metacognitive reflection practices. While HESA graduate programs have attempted to prepare aspiring student affairs administrators to answer the call for increased multicultural competency, numerous studies have criticized the ability of diversity courses to engender critical consciousness towards meaningful social action (Desroches, 2016; Edwards et al., 2014; Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Hubain et al., 2016;

Morgan-Consoli & Marin, 2016; Pope et al., 2009). This study addresses the following research question: How do metacognitive journals promote HESA graduate students' learning towards critical consciousness development?

Literature Review

Many student affairs graduate programs use the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) competencies as a guiding framework (ACPA/NASPA, 2010/2015). In 2010, ACPA and NASPA collaboratively released the first edition of *The Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* which outlined ten core competencies for successful student affairs practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). The development of a defined competency model legitimizes a field like student affairs by outlining shared expectations, objectives, and standards (Klegon, 1978; Rodriguez et al., 2002). In 2015, professional competencies were revised to better reflect the evolution of the student affairs field. For example, the original Equity, Diversity, and Inclusio*n* competency was replaced with Social Justice and Inclusion to highlight the shift from an awareness to an active orientation (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Graduate programs prepare future professionals through an intentionally designed curriculum to develop a knowledgeable and skilled workforce (Hoffman, 2012; Waple, 2006). Perez et al. (2019) asserted that the goal of master's level education is to "equip students with theory, content knowledge, and skills that may be leveraged to address problems of practice in their respective disciplines" (p. 2). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education ([CAS] 2015) formalized learning

outcomes to guide curriculum development. Despite these guiding principles, significant differences in programmatic content and objectives persist, resulting in varied student learning experiences (Herdlein et al., 2013; Waple, 2006). To summarize, while graduate education intends to prepare students to be culturally responsive administrators, the variances in curricular content and educational experiences lead to disproportionate capacities for cultural responsiveness.

As the demand for culturally responsive administrators increases, graduate preparation literature examining the effectiveness of diversity courses has received expanded attention (Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019). HESA graduate programs have responded to this call for increased multicultural competency through diversity courses yet, research suggests that new professionals still feel ill-prepared to navigate conversations around power, privilege, and access (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). Similarly, faculty feel ill-equipped to engage in conversations about race due to a lack of facilitation and emotional training (Garran et al., 2014; Gayles et al., 2015; Quaye, 2012). Researchers have called for re-envisioned curricular and instructional approaches (Edwards et al., 2014; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018), as well as increased faculty support and training (Kelly & Gayles, 2010; Moriña et al., 2015) to develop engaged and reflective practitioners.

A common thread in the literature is the significance of reflection as a transformational praxis for developing critically conscious student affairs professionals. Reflection serves as the foundation of critical consciousness which is a pre-requisite to

social action (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011.) Edwards et al. (2014) noted that developing critical consciousness hinges on self-reflexivity. Iverson and Seher (2017) reported that HESA graduate students enrolled in a diversity course grounded in reflection experienced significant gains in multicultural competence. Similarly, Kennedy and Wheeler (2018) discovered that including reflective elements (e.g., journals, immersion papers) can lead to enhanced multicultural competency development. Without reflective practice, there can be no action; the two share a reciprocal relationship (Freire, 1970). Despite references to critical reflection as an essential pedagogical tool, the student affairs diversity literature points to a substantial reflective gap (Edwards et al., 2014; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Iverson & Seher, 2017). New professionals have diversity awareness but struggle to situate their identities within institutional and societal structures or understand their role in enacting social change efforts. One way HESA graduate students can strengthen their capacity for engaging in reflection towards consciousness-raising is through metacognitive practices.

Conceptual Framework

Two concepts--Flavell's (1979) model of metacognition and Freire's (1970) critical consciousness--framed this qualitative study. Critical consciousness emerged from a constructivist paradigm, positing that individuals are purveyors of their own knowledge and that introspection and dialogue are key ingredients for realizing one's potential for self-enlightenment. Freire (1974) determined that individuals must think critically about their social identities within oppressive systemic structures, specifically in relation to the historical contexts that sustain structural inequality.

Building upon Freire's original conception, Watts et al. (2011) identified three core elements---critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action---for engaging in critical consciousness. Critical reflection*,* within a critical consciousness construct, challenges individuals to assess internally held assumptions through the lens of critical theory. The critically reflective engage in perpetual critique of social inequalities, paying careful attention to the role of larger systemic structures. Political efficacy refers to "the perceived capacity to effect social and political change by individual and/or collective activism" (Watts et al., 2011, p. 46). The perceived ability to influence social change increases the likelihood of social action (Watts et al., 2011). Critical action refers to community, institutional, and political activism aimed at creating social change (Watts et al., 2011). According to Freire (1974) critical action and critical reflection share a cyclical relationship with critical reflection traditionally serving as a pre-requisite for critical action. The stronger the locus of critical consciousness, the greater the capacity to engage in critical action.

Metacognition explains the conscious self-regulation of one's cognitive activities. In short, it is the process of thinking about one's own thinking. Flavell (1979) described metacognition as understanding current progress to predict future progress and subsequent goal completion. For example, a student realizes they are still having difficulty understanding the difference between equity and equality, so they assess their current knowledge in order to create strategies aimed at improving their understanding (Flavell, 1979). Metacognition can transpire before, during or after a cognitive endeavor, and it is usually activated when one identifies failings in their own cognition as in the

example above. To summarize, when students use metacognitive strategies, their capacity to engage in active learning and gauge the depth of their learning increases, thus transitioning them from passive to active learners (McGuire 2015).

Together, critical consciousness and metacognition provide a multifaceted lens for framing the intricacies of learning and identity development within HESA diversity graduate courses. Further, these frameworks answer Edwards et al.'s (2014) call for HESA graduate programs to integrate pedagogical approaches and "educative spaces that best support the development of critically conscious student affairs practitioners" (p.1). Consistent with Flavell and Freire's metacognitive and critical consciousness approaches, I explored how HESA graduate students used metacognitive journaling to think about their critical consciousness development within the context of a diversity course.

Methods and Data

This qualitative case study examined HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. This case study took place in the context of a master-level student affairs diversity course. In case study research, there are five essential components: (a) a case study's questions, (b) a case study's propositions, if any, (c) the case, (d) the rationale connecting data to propositions, and (e) the criteria for interpreting findings (Yin, 2017). A case study design is most appropriate when trying to answer "how" and "why" research questions specifically aimed at studying a "contemporary phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context" within bounds (Yin, 2017, p.153).

Data collection for this study incorporated Yin's (2017) five criteria. First, the research questions focused on asking "how" which renders a case study design befitting

and relevant. Second, propositions helped narrow the scope of the study (e.g., metacognition reflection positively influences the development of HESA graduate students' critical consciousness). Propositions guided my selection of relevant research related to diversity education, critical consciousness, metacognition, and critical reflection.

Third, the study was bounded, through studying a finite number of HESA graduate students within a specific diversity course, over a 15-week semester. Fourth, collecting journal entries at multiple points throughout the semester and conducted interviews at the beginning and end of the semester sought to connect data to the propositions. Lastly, acknowledging plausible counter-explanations to initial propositions strengthened the case study's findings.

The Case

This study was conducted at a public university located in the Midwestern U.S. Due pandemic constraints; instructors taught the course online. This diversity course focused on diversity, social justice, and inclusion concepts within a higher education context. Further, the course instructors incorporated varied instructional approaches designed to foster consciousness-raising, develop social agency, and promote social action.

In the diversity course, students engaged in self-examination through self-reflective exercises, including a positionality exercise, a counter-narrative, an access story, and an uncomfortable reading assignment. Course readings presented identity dimensions such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability wrapped within

complex concepts such as intersectionality, power, privilege, oppression, and access. In addition to multicultural awareness and knowledge through self-reflection and scholarly texts, the course provided space for students to develop multicultural skills through action-taking assignments and modeling. The diversity initiative analysis civil discourse demonstration were designed to increase students' comfortability with and confidence about navigating social justice advocacy within a professional role. Finally, the course instructors provided opportunities for positive peer interactions through facilitated classroom dialogue. The design of this course is comprised of the educative components that Edwards et al. (2014) stressed are necessary for developing critically conscious student affairs professionals, thus rendering it as an appropriate site for this study.

Participants

Twelve full-time HESA master's students enrolled in a required diversity course constituted the population for this study. I arranged with the instructor to solicit participation during the first week of class. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that their decision would have no bearing on their course grade. After the in-class presentation, I sent a follow-up email asking interested students to complete a short demographic survey. The demographic compositions of the participants included six cisgender women, five cisgender men, one gender non-conforming, and two persons of color. The racial demographics mirrored the demographics of the HESA master's cohort, as well as the campus in which the study was situated. To protect their identity, each participant self-selected a pseudonym. At the time of the study, participants held varied graduate assistantships in multiple functional areas. Additionally, participants

displayed a high-level of study engagement, which can be attributed to required isolation and a subsequent reduction in social distractions.

Table 2.1

Participant Demographics

Name	**Race**	**Gender**	**Social Class**
Alex	White	Cisgender Man	Upper-Middle Class
Ava	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Catherine	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Chris	White	Cisgender Man	Upper-Middle Class
Clover	White	Cisgender Man	Lower Class/Limited Income
Corey	White	Cisgender Man	Working Class
Douglas	Black or African American	Cisgender Man	Working Class
Grace	White	Gender Non-Conforming	Lower Class/Limited Income
Nia	Black or African American	Cisgender Woman	Working Class
Olive	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Ray	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class to Working Class
Vivian	White	Cisgender Woman	Working Class to Middle Class

Data Collection

I collected data for this study from two interviews and monthly learning journals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the beginning and end of the semester to understand what participants knew (1st Interview) against what participants have learned

(Journal prompts, 2nd Interview). To create the interview protocol, I first mapped interview questions to theoretical frameworks. Second, I "constructed an inquiry based conversation" by using a variable question structure and follow-up prompts (Castillo-Montoya, 2016, p. 813). Third, I solicited feedback from first-year, first-semester HESA graduate students to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the interview protocol as a research instrument. Finally, I conducted a pilot interview to test the interview protocol and make necessary revisions prior to the commencement of the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

The initial interview determined students' knowledge of diversity and social justice concepts as well as their understandings of their own self-awareness. Sample interview questions included how what kinds of undergraduate experiences have you had with diversity and social justice? How would you describe your understandings of oppression and privilege? The second interview explored how student knowledge changed over the course of course enrollment. Sample interview questions included how have your understandings of oppression and privilege changed throughout the class? How has intentionally thinking about your personal development influenced understandings of yourself during the course?

Self-reflection prompts were strategically designed to track students' thinking about their own consciousness-raising. In a study exploring critical reflection typologies, Gorski and Dalton (2019) determined that critical reflection assignments "prompted students not just to reflect on their attitudes, beliefs, and values, but also interrogate their attitudes, beliefs, and values in their roles creating just schools and school systems" (p.

6). Centering Gorski and Dalton's (2019) recommendations in mind, I developed prompts consistent with research and course activities/assignments.

I collected journal responses during the fourth, ninth, and thirteenth weeks of the course. Timeframes were selected by reviewing the syllabus and identifying common topical themes. The first four weeks focused on foundational diversity and social justice topics such as bias, prejudice, oppression, privilege, and intersectionality. Weeks five through nine investigated identity dimensions such as gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, and nationality. Finally, weeks ten through eleven explore action-taking topics such as activism, advocacy, and civil discourse. During the reflection week, participants were emailed a unique reflection link. The reflection link remained active for one week to give participants an adequate amount of time to respond. Students were encouraged to provide at least a five to seven sentence response for each question. A reminder email was sent 24 hours before the link was deactivated.

Data Analysis

The process of identifying interview themes was trifold, involving thematic analysis which followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) recommendations for data analysis. First, I re-listened to each audio file to record significant vocal characteristics such as tonality, emphasis, and affect. These notes provided an emotive backdrop to the text as I read through each transcript. Second, I read through each transcript to develop a familiarity with the data. After reading through the data the first time, I employed two first-cycle coding methods -- In Vivo and Open Coding (Saldaña, 2016). *In Vivo* coding captures the participant's exact language in order to draw out what is particularly

significant (Saldaña, 2016). Open coding adds a layer of depth as it "breaks down qualitative data into more discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences (Salaña, 2016, p. 115).

Axial coding served as the second cycle coding method. The goal of axial coding is to "reassemble split or fractured" data from open coding in order to pinpoint predominant and subordinate codes (Saldaña, 2016, p.244). The data is then reassembled with the most illustrative codes (Saldaña, 2016). I revised the initial coding list, collapsing similar codes into a coding scheme. I then reviewed the data again using the coding scheme and grouped codes into categories and themes. For this article, I focused on themes connected to participants' experiences navigating learning journals and participants' understandings of their learning and critical consciousness development.

Thematic qualitative text analysis was used to analyze student journals. Kuckartz (2014) outlines six phases for thematic qualitative analysis---1) initial work with the text, 2) develop main thematic categories, 3) first coding process, 4) compile text passages, 5) create sub-categories, and 6) code data using a category system. Initial work with the text means careful reading by recording comments and observations in the margins and creating memos. Next, I developed main categories derived from the research questions and the data. After main categories were established, I "worked through the text section-by-section and line-by-line to assign text passages to categories" (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 72). Following the first coding process, I compiled the text passages and main categories in order to *create sub*-categories. The combination of main categories and sub-categories created my coding frame or the structure of my data analysis (Schreier, 2012).

Qualitative Trustworthiness

I engaged in several strategies to support qualitative trustworthiness. First, I engaged in member checking by sending transcripts to each participant for accuracy review. Second, I developed my interview protocol and journal prompts by mapping them to two guiding conceptual frameworks, Flavell's (1979) metacognition and Freire's (1979) critical consciousness. Third, I engaged in peer examination by calling upon critical readers to review my interview protocol, journal prompts, and coding. Fourth, I employed thick description where I intentionally inserted direct quotes throughout the findings section to showcase the richness of the participants' interview and journal responses to the results. Finally, I attended to my positionality through self-reflexivity. Milner (2007) recommended researchers ask themselves "racially and culturally grounded" questions to surface "seen, unseen, and unforeseen" biases and perspectives (p. 395). To this end, I endeavored to be cognizant of how my identity as a Black, cisgender woman influenced my research approach and interactions with research participants. Centering self-reflexivity complements Freire's emphasis on critical reflection. During the data collection and analysis process, I maintained extensive memos detailing my thoughts, reactions, and questions.

Findings

Cultivating a heightened sense of critical consciousness develops from critical reflection, which requires interrogating an individual's positionality within social and political contexts. Metacognitive journals helped HESA graduate students crystallize their learning towards a more profound understanding of self and course material. Three

learning development themes emerged: learning requires reflection, reflection fills knowledge gaps, and social justice learning is a lifelong process.

"It was Integral to Understanding my Development:" Learning Requires Reflection

Metacognition -- the process of thinking about one's thinking -- encourages students towards self-regulated learners capable of monitoring and evaluating their own cognitive processing. Developing critically conscious practitioners necessitates that HESA graduate students locate, interrogate, and question their social identities within the context of newly acquired knowledge. Nine participants reported that completing metacognitive journals throughout the semester contextualized learning and enhanced critical consciousness development. Serving as welcomed "self-checkins," participants articulated that journal prompts provided a connective backdrop, "braiding together" the course material with critical self-reflection. For Alex, journaling offered structured space to examine his social identities (e.g., race, social class) within and across enduring oppressive systems. He shared:

> [With the journals], it was look at yourself, how do you fit into all of these [social identity] categories? Where are systemic issues? Where are your recognized privileges? Where are your limitations? And why do you think those are there? … [journals] allowed me to engage on a more fundamental level, less, lofty academic…[the journals asked] how are you? What are you doing with all this knowledge now?

In this example, Alex captured the significance of learning journals in supporting

learning development and promoting critical introspection. The journals provided regular learning check-ins, prompting him to integrate metacognitive reflection into his student affairs practice. The capacity to develop a critically conscious identity rests on the foundation of critical reflection and adding a metacognitive layer supports students in strengthening their self-reflective practice.

Ray shared a similar perspective, noting that the journals "provided guided self-reflection" and "routed a lot of [her] learning." Additionally, she explained that the journals foregrounded her learning and identified connections between and among diversity concepts such as meritocracy, systemic oppression, and white privilege. She said:

> They just gave me an extra reason to think about all these things and piece them together. I think it's really easy to go through each unit and be like, Oh, I learned this thing. I learned this thing, I learned this thing. But being able to tie everything together and get a bigger picture of everything, I think is really crucial to learning in general, not just to this stuff specifically. I think that the self-reflection was a really good way to do that because even now, when we're talking, I feel like I'm connecting a lot more dots than I did before.

Clover echoed Ray's sentiments, highlighting how the journals illuminated connections of diversity and student development concepts to his present and future lived experiences:

> [The journals] allowed me to reflect back on what I was learning throughout the semester. Questions about student development and diversity would come back in

> different contexts, and it made me think about each component of the class and how they played together and helped either directly, consciously or subconsciously learn these concepts and apply them to not only my past experiences and my current ones, but also something to prime in my head for future experiences as well. Having that room to think about them was great; it was an extra little assignment to do throughout the semester like just a self-check.

Clover's and Ray's responses illustrate how metacognitive practice enhances students' abilities to connect course content to personal development. Specifically, Ray's phrases "tie everything together" and "connecting more dots" showcase how she is forging deeper understandings of her learning. Similarly, Clover's usage of the word "apply" highlights the emergence of higher order thinking skills---he is not simply understanding the course material, he is applying it to new and different contexts. The metacognitive journals surfaced Clover and Ray's subconscious learning by fostering a culture of intentional self-reflection and inquiry, both of which are essential for developing critical consciousness.

For Nia, the journals "showed what [I] was learning and how that impacted her or changed [my] ways of thinking." Essentially, journaling provided space for her to contend with and grapple with diversity concepts in relation to her own personal development. Chris also reported that the journals were "nice beaconed points throughout the semester that got [him] thinking" about how he engaged with course content and "action steps [he] can do moving forward." He credited journaling with enhancing his critical consciousness by encouraging "action steps" to act on this newly acquired

knowledge. In summation, Chris shared, "[The journals] were radically life changing in the sense of understanding myself, my identity, and the world more, and how I can engage with it, and make sense of what is going on around me."

While all participants noted benefits of metacognitive journaling, a couple participants highlighted difficulties engaging in a guided self-reflective process. For Nia, carving out the space, time, and mental bandwidth necessary to approach the prompts with intentionality proved to be challenging. She shared:

> I thought that [the journals] were hard. I feel like reflection is hard. You have to sit down and force yourself to think about what's changed or what's different. Anything that has to do with yourself is always hard, because you're like, Okay, what did I really learn? You've learned so much, but it's hard to articulate that. It was a task for me. I had to really sit down and think about what I've done and what I want to reflect on… It took time to reflect and be intentional and I'd be like does this really make sense to me?

Nia's response illustrates how reflection is not always an intuitive endeavor, especially when asked to think purposefully about one's learning and critical consciousness development. It not only was difficult for her to organize her thoughts and experiences, but it was also difficult for her to convey them in a way that resonated with her. Grace shared a similar perspective, underscoring how the specificity of the prompts added a layer of complexity . She explained:

> They were hard for me, honestly. I tend to I do a lot of introspective analysis about who I am and how I've grown, and in what ways I still want to grow, but it's

> more vague or less defined. It's not as much written out, thought out, prompted, specified. Also, sitting down and writing things is sometimes hard for me. I have all these thoughts, and I have all these things that I want to process and I do process those but not necessarily all at one time. I'm not a journaler. I'm not a writer. It was hard for me to sit down and do it.

In this example, Grace emphasizes the difficulty she experienced engaging in written, prompted reflection. While familiar with free-form introspection, thinking and writing about her growth within directed parameters was a novel, perplexing experience. As with any skill, engaging in metacognitive reflection requires consistent practice. Nia's and Grace's responses give voice to the challenges students can encounter when engaging in metacognitive practice for the first time.

Prompted journaling allowed participants to check-in with their learning and critical consciousness development throughout the semester. The preset questions provoked participants to track newly acquired knowledge and evaluate the utility of pre-existing knowledge. This metacognitive self-reflection provided structured license for HESA graduate students to interrogate the edge of their self-understanding within social, historical, and political contexts.

"Being Asked if I Have Questions is a Powerful Tool:" Reflection Fills in Knowledge Gaps

Cultivating critical consciousness necessitates active examination of one's learning development. It requires that "learners taking agency over their own learning" (Jones Boss et al., 2018, p. 375). Seven participants credited the journals with helping

them self-assess comprehension deficits in course content (e.g., intersectionality, systemic oppression, privilege, etc.) and creating personal action plans for continued development. For Grace, journaling provided space for identifying knowledge gaps enhanced her self-understanding and provided a roadmap for assessing her learning. She shared:

> [Journaling allowed me to] focus on what you still need to grow in or what gaps there are really important when thinking about growth because…there cannot be intentional development and you cannot intentionally work on yourself until you see what you need or until you can state what you need to grow or learn. So, I always find that type of activity really helpful. Thinking I'm at a beginners level in this, what can I do to become intermediate? Or like, what can I do to like, grow in this area?

Alex shared a similar perspective, explaining that journaling about lingering questions "was a really powerful tool" because he was able to critically examine his cognitive progress beyond the classroom. Using the journal prompts as a model, he developed his own line of metacognitive questioning to further evaluate his growth and understanding. He explained:

> To be asked [if I have any questions] in the context of my growth and understanding let me think what is something I'm not getting? What is something I feel like I just need to figure out? I thought that was a really great point to probe the edge of where is my knowledge ending. Where is my competency stopping? Where do I begin to feel uncomfortable? That's where the learning has to happen,

> but where is that line? I thought [asking if I had any questions] was great for benchmarking [my learning].

Grace's and Alex's responses demonstrate how metacognition stimulates an internal dialogue that leads to significant self-regulation and monitoring, which considers ACPA/NASPA's (2015) call for a more active learning orientation. Metacognitive practice imbues students with the ability to self-assess their areas of proficiency and set development goals towards consciousness-raising. Corey also reported that the learning journals "helped keep the conversation going in [his] head" and encouraged him to "set more goals about the things [he] wants to expand on and learn more about in the future." Additionally, Ray acknowledged that the journals compelled her to connect her learning outside the classroom environment to her professional practice. Using the ACPA/NASPA competencies, she evaluated her progress and created plans for future learning development:

> I'm a big list person. I have an Excel sheet that has the ten competencies that we learned about and I have them color coded for where I'm at and how I want to get to that kind of thing. I think that I will probably do something similar [in the future] so I can have a fuller picture of here are areas where I do need to work on that stuff, whether it's information about specific identities that I would like to learn more about or different tactics in social justice that I want to work on. I think it'll be easier for me to see the big picture that way if here's everything that I've just learned, how can we go deeper with all those things and what more do I need to learn?

Ray's response demonstrates how metacognition fosters self-regulated learning. The journals prompted her to monitor her own development. The metacognitive prompts also modeled the types of critical questions she could ask herself in order to assess her progress. By setting learning goals through metacognitive practice, Ray is actively developing her social justice competency, which can produce increased political efficacy and lead to social action (Watts, 2011). Similarly, Catherine explained that the journals stimulated questioning about her comprehension of the course material and provided her with "action items or areas where [she] needs to find action." She shared:

> A lot of times, I think I don't have questions and then I do have questions. So, that was a time for me to write those down and what I need to be on the lookout for within the next couple classes, or things that I need to learn about or ask my professors about. Advocacy [was] one of the things I talked about a lot with questions about how do you advocate for students when you are put in a position we can't based on higher administration or people who are in power? Then, our last class was about that so it forced me to pay attention a little bit more because I was like, Okay, this is a question I've been having.

Journaling prompted Catherine to identify 'advocacy' as a competency area requiring further development. Her response illustrates a metacognitive orientation in action. Not only did she determine a knowledge gap, but she also set a goal to bridge the gap, and then she acted on the goal. One objective of critical consciousness is for individuals to advocate for change through the dismantling of oppressive systems. Catherine is

regulating her critical consciousness development identifying her need to expand her advocacy skills.

Metacognitive knowledge refers to the awareness of one's own learning process while metacognitive experiences involve conscious, intentional self-regulation of one's learning. By identifying areas of competency and growth, participants were able to measure their current learning development to set future learning goals. The metacognitively-focused journals empowered participants to direct their own learning by providing guided space for participants to critically reflect on their progress towards constructing critically consciousness identities.

"There is Always Room for Growth and More to Learn :" Social Justice Learning is a Lifelong Process

Social justice is both a process and a goal (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). Engaging in the process and achieving the goal requires an active learning orientation. An active learning orientation requires that individuals be able to participate in critical self-inquiry, identify knowledge gaps, and create intentional plans towards increasing social justice competency. Metacognition stimulates an active learner orientation by encouraging students to guide their own learning. Metacognition paired with critical self-reflection, in the form of journals, engaged students in the transformative lifelong learning necessary to promote consciousness-raising. Six participants mentioned that the metacognitively-focused journals helped them realize that learning about diversity and social justice is a lifetime endeavor. For Vivian, intentional self-reflection helped her to recognize there is always room to expand her social justice knowledge. She shared:

> [The journals] just kind of made me be a little bit more…humble because I was never necessarily confident enough to have these conversations unless I was asked, but to just self-reflect on where I'm at…I might think I'm somewhere but reminding myself I'm not probably as knowledgeable as I think I am. There's always more to know.

Vivian's response illustrates how metacognitive practice cultivates a spirit of sustained social justice learning. Her choice of the word "humble" highlights her newfound willingness to admit that she is not an expert; there is always space for continued social justice learning. Similarly, Chris credited journaling with recognizing the ever-evolving conceptualizations of social justice. He shared that his "understanding of diversity and social justice is going to be a lifelong process [that he] will have to be actively and consistently engaged in if [he] wants to make a difference." Vivian's and Chris's responses illustrate how thinking about social justice learning and personal development creates active learners who are more concerned with process than goal. Critical consciousness is not a state but a trait requiring an enduring investment in self-education and self-examination (Watts, 2011). Metacognitive practice primed participants, such as Chris and Vivian, to understand the value in this investment and commitment to actively contributing to it.

For several participants, journaling quelled the pressure to be the 'perfect' social justice advocate by giving them permission to identify and embrace areas of growth. Hyper-focusing on a state of perfection can discourage honest self-assessment out of a

fear of not measuring up to unattainable expectations. Grace explained how the journals helped her learn to become "more empathetic with [herself]:"

> I became more understanding of the gaps or areas I needed to grow in versus at the beginning of the semester, I think I was very harsh towards myself or very, like, strict with myself of, well, you need to be the best at diversity versus I think that I have become more understanding that I am a human and I have had certain experiences and knowledge that I've learned that have put me where I'm at. So I'm okay with where I am as long as I'm still actively working on being better, I don't need to be the best.

Grace's usage of the words "gaps," "grow," and "actively" demonstrate an active learner orientation. She is able to assess gaps and areas of growth in her social justice knowledge, and she is able to actively to direct her social justice learning. Alex shared a similar perspective, noting that the journals encouraged him not to strive for perfection but to focus on continuous self-improvement. He articulated:

> I think I'm learning to be okay with not being perfect. I hate that phrasing, but I think it's accurate. I've never been a perfectionist, but there is such a strong sense of needing to not mess up on the topic of diversity, not wanting to outright be insensitive, or harmful or hurtful, but also not wanting to be perceived that way. And so that comes with a nervousness that comes with walking on eggshells, regardless of competency. Sometimes striving for perfection actually ruins the really productive middle ground. I think that's something that I've taken away from looking at my own [social justice knowledge] development.

Here Grace and Alex convey how engaging in metacognitive practice helped them appreciate the progress of their own personal development. Relinquishing the perceived expectation of perfection provoked both participants to develop a lifelong learner orientation grounded in critical self-reflection. While relinquishing the pursuit of perfection removes a barrier to critical consciousness development, it is important to note that an over-reliance on empathy can lead to the development of blind spots and the unintended emotional and psychological harm of Black students, faculty, and administrators (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Kelly & Gayles, 2010; Quaye, 2012; Linder et al., 2015). Harm can manifest itself in the form of tokenism, discomfort (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Kelly & Gayles, 2010), and racial battle fatigue (Hubain et al., 2016). Critical reflection strives to reduce harm by provoking the authentic self-assessment necessary to help student affairs practitioners strike the difficult balance between self-empathy and self-accountability.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how metacognitive journals promote HESA graduate students' learning towards critical consciousness development. All participants highlight the benefits of metacognitive reflection in engendering self-introspection, contextualizing learning, and promoting a spirit of lifelong social justice learning. These findings support conceptions from previous researchers underscoring the importance of reflection in developing critical consciousness (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018). Reason and Broido (2005) argued that self-understanding is essential to the development of a "justice-cognizant identity"

(p. 82). Participant responses support Mezirow (1990)'s assertion that critical reflection is vital to transformative learning and perspective transformation. Given that most participants credited the metacognitive journals with helping them to evaluate their social justice knowledge and make sense of their own social identities within systemic structures, this study's findings highlight the need for the integration of more reflective opportunities in diversity courses. Edwards et al. (2014) suggested that that without re-envisioned instructional practices "that offer student affairs graduate students an education robust with competencies necessary to transform cocurricular experiences, the goals of equity and justice on college campuses will continue to elude us" (p. 3).

Findings from this study support the need for pairing of metacognition and critical consciousness. Particularly, participants highlight Edwards et al. (2014) assertion that diversity courses should provide space for reflection as it is essential to expanding individuals' capacity to engage in social justice work. Individually, critical consciousness can present as a nebulous concept. Adding metacognition as a complementary framework operationalizes critical consciousness by providing a metacognitive blueprint for learning. Focusing on learning during the reflective process is important as competency translates to enhanced confidence which produces increased political efficacy (Reichert, 2016). Increased political efficacy, in turn, leads to a greater capacity to engage in social action (Reichert, 2016; Watts, 2011). Through the honest assessment of competency areas, students can actively generate strategies aimed at filling knowledge gaps. Metacognition combined with critical consciousness could answer the call for HESA graduate preparation programs to produce culturally responsive new professionals.

Implications

HESA graduate programs can help cultivate critically conscious students who have an increased propensity for engaging in social action by infusing metacognitive reflection into diversity courses. Integrating metacognitive reflection and critical consciousness raising can contextualize and deepen social justice learning, thus increasing political efficacy and subsequently students' capacity for enacting social justice work. By engaging in reflection through a metacognitive lens HESA graduate students can develop the autonomous critical thinking skills necessary to problematize existing oppressive systems (e.g., standardized testing, admissions policies, financial aid packages (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2015). Preparing HESA graduate students to successfully engage in social justice and inclusion work requires a programmatic shift from "a goal of simply acquiring competence to one of acquiring critical intercultural consciousness" (Landreman et al., 2007, p. 277). Engaging in social action is predicated on an intimate, authentic understanding of oneself. This intense level of consciousness is necessary for perspective transformation and a pre-requisite for leading social change efforts (Freire, 1970; Landreman et al., 2007; Theosaris, 2007). Metacognition can provide a conceptual framework for understanding how HESA graduate students develop as critically conscious beings.

Second, integrating metacognitive practice and critical consciousness can improve instructional approaches for fostering social responsibility and creating inclusive communities. Despite repeated reference to the importance of critical reflection in engendering critical consciousness development, the student affairs diversity literature

notes a reflective deficit in HESA diversity courses (Edwards et al., 2014; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Iverson & Seher, 2017). HESA graduate programs should train faculty to incorporate metacognitive journaling as a way of enhancing critical consciousness. Changes in traditional pedagogical practices are needed "to fulfill institutional and societal concerns about preparing students for a pluralistic society and world" (Smith et al., 1997, p. 31). Metacognition and critical consciousness can assist HESA graduate programs with helping faculty to develop innovative, culturally responsive pedagogy aimed at integrating immersive, self-reflective learning. Understanding the relationship between critical consciousness and metacognition can transform teaching practices from awareness-focused to consciousness-focused.

Finally, while less than half of HESA graduate preparation programs include a diversity course, new professionals still report feeling inadequately prepared to enact or lead social change initiatives (Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). These feelings of under-preparation can likely be attributed to current diversity education practices focused on competency acquisition rather than transformative self-reflection and systematic critique (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Landreman et al., 2007). This study's findings suggest that engaging in metacognitive reflection produced benefits beyond self-awareness. Participants noted completing the journals helped them better comprehend their learning processes and reflect on their critical consciousness development, thus increasing their capacity to engage in social action. New professionals have varied diversity course experiences which influence their preparedness to confidently serve as culturally responsive practitioners. Yet, findings suggest that

including metacognitive journaling enhanced social justice competency and self-understanding, which are essential to enacting social justice work. Metacognition and critical consciousness help support what Schon (1987) calls the circuitous relationship between learning, reflection, and practice needed to translate abstract concepts into action.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be considered before interpreting findings and applying them to future research. First, not all HESA graduate programs offer diversity courses or opportunities for students to engage in social justice focused conversations. Second, conducting the study at one institution limits the transferability of findings to other institutions. The study should be replicated before considering the results as representative of HESA graduate student diversity course experiences. Third, the diversity course selected for this study was taught remotely due to pandemic restrictions. Future research should investigate the experiences of HESA graduate students within an in-person diversity course. Finally, this study only followed the experiences of first semester, first year students enrolled in a diversity course. Future research opportunities should consider the ways students develop throughout their graduate program.

Conclusion

As college campuses continue to operate as microcosms of an increasingly diverse society, the need for self-aware, intentional, and culturally competent administrators will only become more pressing and relevant. The findings illustrate the

ways in which HESA graduate students utilized metacognitive journaling as a way of making sense of their learning towards critical consciousness development. As previous scholars have asserted, dynamic instructional approaches are necessary to develop professionals capable engaging in critical dialogue, implementing equity-based practices, and creating inclusive communities. Metacognition and critical consciousness can be used to enhance early career professionals' propensity to become self-reflective practitioners who confidently engage in social action.

Chapter 3: HESA Graduate Students' Changing Understandings of Critical Consciousness During a Diversity Course

The degree to which higher education/student affairs (HESA) graduate students become critically conscious and multiculturally competent leaders has been a mainstay in the graduate preparation literature for over 20 years (Flowers, 2003, Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Morgan-Consoli & Marin, 2016; Perez et al., 2019; Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Pope et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007). Despite the increased call for culturally responsive practitioners, Kennedy et al. (2015) found only 43% of HESA graduate programs incorporate diversity coursework into the curriculum. This finding indicates that the majority of HESA graduate programs do not include a required diversity course, which conflicts with the field's espoused dedication to advancing social justice and inclusion proficiency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Furthermore, numerous studies have censured diversity courses for not fostering critical consciousness towards social action (Desroches, 2016; Edwards et al., 2014; Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Hubain et al., 2016; Morgan-Consoli & Marin, 2016; Pope et al., 2009). In light of America's current racial reckoning, the need for critically conscious social justice advocates has never been more pressing and pertinent in the field of student affairs than it is at this moment.

HESA graduate programs endeavor to develop multiculturally competent and critically conscious practitioners (Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Jones Boss et al., 2018; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019). Pope and Reynolds (1997), pioneering scholars in multicultural education, called for diversity

courses to prioritize multicultural competence as a means of measuring student affairs professionals' preparedness to create inclusive campus environments. However, Kelly and Gayles (2010) assert that the effectiveness of diversity courses in cultivating critical consciousness towards social action is uncertain. Current teaching practices familiarize students with core diversity concepts but fail to cultivate reflective professionals who possess the awareness, knowledge, and skills required to engage in critical dialogue, implement equity-based practices, and create inclusive communities (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005).

There is limited understanding of how HESA graduate students comprehend and apply critical consciousness ideas from a diversity course. While the research examining the effectiveness of diversity courses is expanding (Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019), few studies specifically focus on investigating how HESA graduate students' conceptions of critical consciousness develop, evolve, and transform within the context of a course. Drawing from Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory and Watts et al.'s (1999) stages of sociopolitical development, I seek to fill this gap by exploring how HESA graduate students shift their conceptualizations of critical consciousness during a diversity course. A heightened sense of critical consciousness is a pre-requisite for engaging in social action (Jones Boss et al., 2018; Cadenas et al., 2018; Harris-Jones, 2019; Landreman et al., 2007; Pena, 2012; Watts et al., 2011) which requires an intimate understanding of self through reflection. Freire (1970) posited that the understanding of self or critical consciousness is the foundation upon which social

action rests. This study addresses the following research question: How do HESA graduate students' understandings of critical consciousness change during the course of a graduate diversity course?

Literature Review

In 2010, ACPA and NASPA published the first edition of *The Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* which identified ten core competencies for successful student affairs practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). Each competency area is divided into foundational, intermediate, and advanced levels to show "the increasing complexity and ability" practitioners should exhibit through their career progression (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 4). Within each competency area, brief descriptions are provided accompanied by detailed learning outcomes that are classified by the abovementioned progressive levels. Since their preliminary iteration, the ACPA/NASPA competencies have been used to guide graduate curriculum planning (DiRamio, 2014), job description language, and professional development (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The creation of a comprehensive competency framework helped to professionalize the student affairs field by delineating collective benchmarks, goals, and principles (Klegon, 1978; Rodriguez et al., 2002). In 2015, ACPA and NASPA revised the competencies to mirror the advancement of the student affairs field. For example, Social Justice and Inclusion replaced the initial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion competency to account for the field's evolution from awareness to social action.

Student affairs graduate preparation programs introduce students to the competencies and skills necessary for entry-level work (Hoffman, 2012; Perez et al.,

2019; Waple, 2006). In an attempt to maintain consistent curricular development and learning outcomes within a variable collegiate system, many graduate preparation programs utilize the standards created by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [(CAS, 2015)]. Despite this guiding framework, substantial variances in programmatic design persist, resulting in diverse student learning experiences (Herdlein et al., 2013; Waple, 2006). In summation, though HESA graduate programs strive to develop culturally responsive administrators, differences in content, objectives, and educational experiences produce inconsistent skills and competencies for enacting social justice work.

The efficacy of diversity courses has received increased attention as the call for "justice-cognizant" administrators has intensified (Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). Even with the incorporation of diversity coursework into HESA graduate curricula, research suggests that early-career professionals are inadequately prepared to be multiculturally competent leaders (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Perez et al., 2019). Similarly, faculty report feeling underprepared to guide difficult dialogues due to a dearth of emotional and facilitation training (Garran et al., 2014; Gayles et al., 2015; Quaye, 2012). Preparing graduate students to be active participants in stimulating social change requires HESA graduate programs to "investigate the [pedagogical approaches] and educative spaces that best

support the development of critically engaged" and reflective practitioners (Edwards et al., 2014, p. 1).

Iverson and Seher (2017) explored graduate students' multicultural competency development in two HESA graduate programs. University I's diversity course integrated activities and assignments focused on intergroup dialogue, consciousness-raising, reflection, and action-taking. University II's diversity course situated multicultural education and counseling within educational contexts. University I students demonstrated substantial growth in 20 out of 34 inventory items, while University II students only demonstrated growth on four inventory items. The reason why University I graduate students demonstrated increased growth was uncertain but findings suggest that intentional pedagogical practices directly influence the extent to which students develop multicultural competence. Surprisingly, both cohorts displayed marginal developmental gains in action-taking. Neither cohort displayed an increased dedication to addressing racism or setting goals towards filling multicultural competency knowledge gaps. Iverson and Seher (2017) concluded HESA graduate students' multicultural skills development required increased attention with a specific focus on translating awareness to practice.

Jones Boss et al. (2018) applied a critical consciousness framework to study post-master's student affairs professionals' perspectives on engaging in social justice. Specifically, the researchers sought to uncover how student affairs professionals translated theory to practice when engaging in social justice-focused work. Jones Boss et al. (2018) collected data from 14 student affairs professionals who hailed from nine different graduate programs and were between one to five years post-master's.

Participants positioned self-reflection as an integral component of consciousness-raising. Self-reflection also developed participants' ability to question the legitimacy of knowledge construction within the student affairs field. Additionally, Jones Boss et al. (2018) determined assistantship supervisors assist in critical consciousness development by providing space for critical reflection and facilitating conversations about institutional realities.

Endemic to the diversity course literature is an emphasis on reflection as a transformational instructional practice for cultivating critically conscious student affairs professionals. Central to critical consciousness is the concept of praxis which refers to the cyclical or reciprocal relationship between reflection and action (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) positioned reflection as a prerequisite for social action, stating that "reflection, true reflection, leads to action" (p. 66). Kennedy and Wheeler (2018) reported that multicultural competency can be enhanced by including reflective course assignments (e.g., journals, immersion papers). Despite repeated reference to the importance of critical reflection in engendering critical consciousness development, the student affairs diversity literature notes a reflective deficit in HESA diversity courses (Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017). Early career professionals are diversity conversant but struggle to navigate complex institutional structures and comprehend their responsibility in enacting social justice work. In order to develop multiculturally competent social justice advocates, HESA graduate programs must nurture an increased aptitude for self-understanding which can in turn, generate an increased aptitude for action-taking.

Conceptual Framework

Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory and Watts et al.'s (1999) stages of sociopolitical development guided this qualitative study. Derived from a constructivist orientation, transformative learning theory highlights *how* individuals achieve personal transformation by reconciling outdated assumptions and understandings with new preconceptions and interpretations. In an attempt to protect the familiarity of cognitive safety, "we have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p.92), instead gravitating towards ideas that confirm them. Mezirow (1990) argues that certain frames of reference can become deeply embedded "habits of the mind" that are difficult to amend without the assistance of a powerful transformative experience called a 'disorienting dilemma.' Transformative learning theory is a dynamic pedagogical approach that illuminates how individuals evaluate and negotiate constraining and faulty assumptions in order to construct more appropriate and functional sense-making structures (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

Taylor (1998) posited Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory is comprised of three essential themes—the learner's experience, critical reflection, and dialogue. First, the learner's experience is the catalyst for "perspective transformation" and critical reflection (Taylor, 1998, p.15). A 'disorienting dilemma' disrupts previously held assumptions, priming the learner's cognitive soil for new perspective germination. Second, critical reflection prompts us to assess and interrogate our assumptions, behaviors, values, and routines so that we can become responsive to alternative ways of thinking and acting. Critical reflection is essential for examining limiting and inconsistent

frames of reference (Mezirow, 2003). Lastly, dialogu*e* is the conduit through which "perspective transformation" is nurtured. Dialogue requires individuals to engage in active discussion, acknowledge the constraints of their own assumptions, and assess the validity of differing perspectives (Taylor, 1998). Summatively, transformative learning cultivates "perspective transformation" through encountering a disorienting experience, engaging in critical reflection, and participating in dialogue.

Watts et al.'s (1999) stages of sociopolitical development is comprised of four progressive phases. First, the adaptive stage refers to minimal development in one's understandings of social justice. This stage signifies a minimal awareness that inequality exists, but there is an inability to recognize its systemic nature. Individuals struggle to engage in critical self-reflection and identify the presence of oppression and privilege (Watts et al., 1999). The pre-critical and critical stages mark an increasing awareness of the systemic nature of oppression (Watts et al., 1999) indicating emerging critical consciousness development. There is a growing recognition that asymmetry exists—the unequal distribution of resources---and a desire to acquire more information about oppressive systems and potential solutions. Individuals in these stages also engage in critical inquiry and reflection regarding their role in enacting social change (Watts et al., 1999). The liberation stage signifies an awareness that "oppression is salient and liberation behavior is tangible and frequent" (Watts et al., 1999, p. 263). Liberation behavior refers to social action or a sincere desire to remedy oppressive conditions. In this stage, the person acts as an agent of transformative change (Watts et al., 1999). Together, Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory and Watts et al.'s (1999)

stages of sociopolitical development illustrate how participants learn about critical consciousness. In alignment with Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory, I explored how participating in a diversity course reconstructed HESA graduate students' conceptions of critical consciousness.

Methods and Data

I employed a qualitative case study approach to understand HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. Qualitative approaches explore the meaning behind a particular phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). More explicitly, qualitative researchers are interested in three components 1) "how people interpret their experiences," 2) "how they construct their worlds," and 3) "what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). Given that this study is focused on illustrating how HESA graduate students interpret, construct, and ascribe meaning to critical consciousness development, a qualitative methodology was most befitting. A case study design addresses "how" and "why" research questions aimed at examining a "contemporary phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context" within bounds (Yin, 2017, p.153). This case study is bounded and narrowed in scope by studying graduate students within a specific Diversity in American Higher Education course over a 16-week semester.

The Case

This study occurred at a public university situated in the Midwestern U.S. This diversity course was intentionally selected due to its emphasis on diversity and social justice concepts within a higher education context. The diversity course asked students to

engage in self-introspection through self-reflective exercises, including a counter narrative, positionality exercise, an uncomfortable reading assignment, and an access story. Course readings discussed social identities such as gender, sexual orientation, race, and disability in conjunction with complex concepts such as power, privilege, oppression, intersectionality, and access. In addition to consciousness-raising, the course instructors also provided opportunities for students to develop multicultural skills through action-taking assignments and modeling. The civil discourse demonstration and diversity initiative analysis were created to enhance students' confidence in and comfortability with enacting social justice work. Finally, the course instructor created space for facilitated classroom dialogue. The design of this course renders it a fitting site for this case study as it incorporates self-reflection and faculty commitment, two educative components Edwards et al. (2014) identified as essential to developing critically conscious student affairs practitioners.

Participants

Twelve full-time HESA master's students enrolled in a required diversity course comprised the sample for this study. With the instructor's permission, I solicited participation during the first week of class. I informed participants that participation was voluntary and that their decision would not affect their course grade. After the in-class visit, I sent a follow-up email requesting that interested students complete a brief demographic survey. The demographic makeup of the participants included one gender non-conforming person, five cisgender men, six cisgender women, and two persons of color. The racial demographics reflected the demographics of the HESA master's cohort,

as well as the campus in which the study was located. To maintain their anonymity, each participant self-identified a pseudonym. At the time of the study, participants maintained diverse graduate assistantships in varied functional areas.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Name	**Race**	**Gender**	**Social Class**
Alex	White	Cisgender Man	Upper-Middle Class
Ava	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Catherine	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Chris	White	Cisgender Man	Upper-Middle Class
Clover	White	Cisgender Man	Lower Class/Limited Income
Corey	White	Cisgender Man	Working Class
Douglas	Black or African American	Cisgender Man	Working Class
Grace	White	Gender Non-Conforming	Lower Class/Limited Income
Nia	Black or African American	Cisgender Woman	Working Class
Olive	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Ray	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class to Working Class
Vivian	White	Cisgender Woman	Working Class to Middle Class

Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews at the beginning and end of the semester to compare what participants knew (1st Interview) against what participants learned (2nd

Interview). I employed Castillo-Montoya's (2016) four recommendations for developing interview protocols. First, I created the interview protocol by aligning interview questions to the study framing. Second, I employed follow up prompts and a variety of questions to cultivate "an inquiry based conversation" (p. 813). Third, I strengthened trustworthiness and reliability of the interview protocol as a research tool by requesting feedback from first-year, first-semester HESA graduate students. Finally, I piloted the interview protocol to test its efficacy and make necessary alterations prior to launching the study.

The initial interview determined students' baseline knowledge of diversity and social justice concepts as well as their understandings of their own self-awareness. Sample interview questions included how would you describe your understandings of oppression and privilege? What kinds of undergraduate experiences have you had with diversity and social justice? The second interview explored how student conceptions evolved during enrollment in the course. For example, how has intentionally thinking about your personal development influenced understandings of yourself during the course? How have your understandings of oppression and privilege changed throughout the class? Collectively, I conducted 20 hours of interviews with an average interview time of 45 minutes.

Data Analysis

To begin my analytic strategy, I re-listened to each audio recording to note important vocal attributes such as affect, emphasis, and tonality. These notes provided an illustrative background to the text as I reviewed each transcript. Second, I read through each transcript to become acquainted with the data. After the initial review of the data, I

utilized two first-cycle coding methods – In Vivo and Open Coding (Saldaña, 2016). *In Vivo* coding encapsulates the participant's precise language to elicit significant concepts (Saldaña, 2016). Open coding provides an additional layer of profundity as it "breaks down qualitative data into more discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences" (Saldaña, 2016, p.115).

I employed axial coding as the second cycle coding method. Axial coding seeks to "reassemble split or fractured" data from open coding in order to identify principal and subsidiary codes (Saldaña, 2016, p.244). The data is then restored with the most descriptive codes (Saldaña, 2016). I modified the initial coding list, coalescing similar codes into a coding system. I then reviewed the data again using the coding system and assembled codes into overarching categories and themes. For this article, I focused on themes associated with participants' shifting conceptions of social justice, oppression and privilege, self, and social action to illustrate key elements of critical consciousness development.

Table 3.2

Coding Structure

Open Code	In Vivo Code
"Social Justice is more so about taking away barriers and the systems that are currently in place."	Taking away barriers and systems
With privilege and oppression, privilege is how you're viewed under systems	Viewed under systems
Social justice is standing up for what you believe is right	Standing up

Qualitative Trustworthiness

I employed several strategies to ensure qualitative trustworthiness. First, I refined the interview protocol using Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggestions. Second, I engaged in member checking by asking participants to review transcripts. Third, I engaged in peer examination by inviting critical readers to review my interview protocol and coding. Fourth, I employed thick description by incorporating direct quotes to highlight the richness of participants' responses. Finally, I addressed my positionality through self-reflexivity. Milner (2007) suggested researchers ask themselves "racially and culturally grounded" questions to uncover "seen, unseen, and unforeseen" biases and perspectives (p. 395). Consequently, I endeavored to be conscious of how my identity as a Black, cisgender woman influenced my research approach and participant interactions. Centering self-reflexivity echoes Mezirow's focus on reflection. During data collection and analysis, I kept detailed memos describing my reactions, thoughts, and questions.

Findings

I selected three exemplars that represented the kinds of learning experiences HESA graduate students had within the context of the course. Three profiles among 12 total participants illustrate how understandings remain static, evolve, or transform during a diversity course. Each profile represents a stage in Watts et al.'s (1999) framework of sociopolitical development. Watts et al.'s (1999) model provides a framework in which to discuss and conceptualize critical consciousness development. None of the participants demonstrated characteristics of the most fundamental stage, acritical, thus rendering the adaptive stage as the earliest stage of development.

Adaptive Stage: Olive

Olive grew up in a predominately White suburb. She had no exposure to diversity concepts before taking the diversity course. She has, on occasion, engaged in difficult dialogues with friends and family about race.

During the initial interview, Olive described social justice as "having conversations or opportunities available to all people." Here Olive conveys rudimentary knowledge of social justice. Her usage of the phrase "opportunities available to all people" highlights the general premise of social justice, but does not capture the complexities (e.g., access, equity, political/social/economic systems) that traditionally signify a firm grasp of the concept (Barrera et al., 2017). During the final interview, her social justice description expanded slightly with the addition of "conversations with people who don't understand what social justice is, so standing up for what you believe is right." By adding these advocacy focused pieces, Olive demonstrates a budding comprehension that social justice involves action; however, her response remains underdeveloped, indicating static critical consciousness development. The phrase 'standing up for what is right" is general and avoids naming specific systems of injustice (e.g., racism, classism, ableism, etc.).

When discussing her evolving conceptions of oppression and privilege in the final interview, Olive offers basic thoughts that demonstrate marginal critical consciousness development. She described oppression as "somebody who's not given fair opportunity. They don't have privilege would be a good way to put it." For privilege she said, "it is being given opportunities." While these descriptions are not incorrect, they are

incomplete. Olive struggles to articulate dynamic thinking, negating the systemic components that typically illustrate a sound understanding of how these concepts interact in society.

Olive indicated that she grew the most in her understanding of White privilege, saying “White privilege, I didn't know too much about that. Obviously, as a white person, I think that will help me.” While she acknowledges White privilege is a topic, she is unable to explain how her understanding of White privilege has changed or why knowledge of White privilege is important to her as a White person. Her response illustrates surface-level awareness but doesn’t convey the deeper cognizance necessary to demonstrate transformative learning and critical consciousness development.

At the beginning of the semester, Olive rated her preparedness to engage in social justice work on a scale from 0-10 as a 6 stating, “I have the confidence and the skill set to be able to do that. And I’m not really biased when it comes to different types of people.” Her rating conveys a confident overestimation considering her underdeveloped understandings of social justice concepts. Her statement “I’m not really biased” signifies she is operating from a color-neutral perspective instead of a race conscious perspective. A race conscious perspective strives to identify race and work towards racial justice rather than ignore it as a significant factor (Warmington, 2009). By not acknowledging her biases, Olive struggles to engage in critical reflection. Critical reflection requires an honest assessment of self within the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression. While she has been introduced to these concepts, she has not begun to contend with them or make sense of them within herself or broader society.

At the end of the interview, Olive rated her preparedness to enact social justice work as an 8 out of 10 which is an increase from her initial rating of 6. She attributed her increased rating to a better "understanding of topics like diversity and inclusion," thus preparing her to "stand up for what [she] thinks is right." The reappearance of 'right' without context shows that she still struggles to explain why social justice is 'right' or why injustice is 'wrong.' When discussing social justice topics, her responses remain undefined and continue to showcase marginal development. Her increased rating continues to illustrate a reflection gap as her perception of knowledge acquired does not equal knowledge displayed.

Pre-Critical/Critical Stage: Catherine

Catherine grew up in a predominately White suburb as well as a racially and ethnically diverse city. She had no formal diversity education prior to the diversity course; however, she had some previous experience attending protests and engaging in difficult dialogues about race and sexual orientation.

Catherine's initial conceptions of social justice demonstrate an elevated understanding. She described social justice as "the distribution of fairness," specifically as it relates to "wealth and resources." She also emphasizes that social justice focuses on "lifting everyone up." The inclusion of words like "distribution," "wealth," and "resources" illustrate an evolved comprehension. She is not just explaining what social justice is; she is explaining how social justice operates. During the final interview, Catherine expanded her definition of social justice by adding that it is less about fairness and more about "taking away barriers and systems." Catherine's acknowledgement of

"barriers" and "systems" shows a bourgeoning understanding that social justice work does not only involve the distribution of resources but the removal and rectification of oppressive systems.

At the beginning of the semester, Catherine demonstrated a solid understanding of oppression and privilege. She defined privilege as "something that is given to you whether you want it or not based on the different identities you hold." To underscore her point, she highlighted how being White is a privileged identity. Alternately, she described oppression as "how people [within] systems are treated based on their different identities. She also discussed intersectionality, highlighting how she moved from thinking about her identities independently to thinking about them interdependently. Catherine's unprompted, detailed responses showcase critical consciousness development in the pre-critical stage. She not only understands the role of oppression and privilege in society, but she is also able to think critically about her own positionality.

After reviewing her thoughts about privilege and oppression from the initial interview, Catherine determined she was satisfied with her descriptions but wanted to add that privilege and oppression are systemic. To illustrate her newfound knowledge, she named college admissions and the prison system as examples of systems that discriminate against certain identities. Furthermore, she asked "if I'm applying to college, how does the system interact or not interact with me [based on my identities]? This response shows that she is simultaneously engaging in critical inquiry and critical reflection. She is starting to think about enduring oppressive systems and how they operate in society and higher education, as well as how they influence students. She acknowledged she had

some knowledge of systems prior to the start of class, but she developed a grasp of how the systems are "conducted" and "how they work against certain populations." Here Catherine conveys her newfound understanding of her positionality within systemic barriers which is indicative of progress to the critical stage. She is emerging from a sophomoric comprehension to a more complex, nuanced comprehension as she situates her own privileges alongside systemic structures.

Prior to the start of the diversity class, Catherine read *White Fragility* as a means of educating herself on White privilege and racism. When asked if she would like to highlight key takeaways from the book, Catherine said "it is my responsibility as a White person within the context of social justice and racial inequality. If someone were to call me out, I need to ask myself 'why do you feel discomfort?" Catherine displayed a critically reflective orientation prior to entering the course. Characteristic of the pre-critical stage, she sought to acquire more information about her identity and responsibility as a White person. She also demonstrates a mature ability to interrogate her reactions to being "called out." During the final interview, Catherine identified engaging in action as an area of continued development which demonstrates a transformative shift from the pre-critical stage to the critical stage. In the critical stage, individuals begin to critically reflect on their role in enacting social change.

In the initial interview, Catherine rated her preparedness to enact social justice work as a 4 out of 10. She said she is "somewhat prepared" but there are always areas "she would like to work on." In the final interview, Catherine rated her preparedness to engage in social justice work as 7 out of 10. While she feels more comfortable, she

acknowledges that she “doesn’t know all the answers.” Her increased rating highlights her notable growth while acknowledging room for continued development.

Liberation Stage: Ava

Ava grew up in a predominately White small town. She had no formal diversity education prior to the diversity course; however, she started voluntarily reading books on race and racism prior to the start of the course.

Ava’s original thoughts about social justice illustrate a general understanding. She described social justice as “recognizing that some people don't have the same resources and opportunities as other people and fighting to change that.” This response shows that she is aware that social justice involves access, resource distribution, and action. In the final interview, Ava decided not to amend her initial conception of social justice. While Ava did not expand her description, she demonstrates growth in her understanding through her expanded description of oppression and privilege.

Regarding privilege and oppression, she realized how much bigger it is than [she] was aware of in the beginning” and how much privilege she has as a White person. She illustrated her new understanding of systemic oppression by talking about how being in a lower social class can negatively influence the trajectory of an individual’s life. She shared, “it was so infuriating to read, how no matter what people did, they still were discriminated against and not provided any resources.” Ava’s recognition of oppressive systems demonstrates a progression from a basic understanding of the aforementioned concepts to a more complex, nuanced understanding. Her reference to social class

stratification and continued discrimination despite access shows an evolving comprehension that oppression is systemic, not individualistic.

Ava described a social justice advocate as “someone who educates themselves on how to constantly be better, and not being afraid to speak up” against injustices. She acknowledged that she struggles with speaking up because ‘[she] doesn’t like conflict.” She tried to have conversations with family and friends who hold opposing viewpoints but found it difficult to express her viewpoint due to a lack of social justice education. She often leaves these conversations feeling “flustered” and “nervous” and without “fully saying what [she] wants to say.” These negative feelings led to her not engaging in difficult conversations. She identified ‘speaking up’ as an area of growth. Ava is aware that advocacy involves action, but she doesn’t feel prepared to enact it.

Prior to the diversity course, Ava rarely engaged in social action. She shied away from difficult conversations due feeling underprepared. In the final interview, she was excited to share that she navigated a challenging conversation with a family member over their usage of an inappropriate word. She described feeling more confident in her ability to articulate her thoughts and provide evidence to support her perspective. In addition to engaging in difficult dialogues, Ava also started serving as an advocate in her graduate assistantship through her interactions with students, and she joined an identity-based student organization focused on activism. Her progression from no social action to multi-layered social action demonstrates the liberation stage. She internalized social justice knowledge acquired in her courses and engaged in critical reflection to enact social justice work. Her developing self-awareness, plus an increase in political efficacy

(confidence), equals an increased propensity to engage in social action. Ava transformed from "talking the talk" to "walking the walk," which she highlighted as essential to advocacy.

Ava rated her preparedness to engage in social justice work as a 6 out of 10 because she is "pretty self-aware" of her areas of growth. She "knows there's so much more to learn," and she "has already started educating [herself]." At the end of the final interview, Ava rated herself a 9 out of 10, which she attributed to her extensive growth in "knowledge, confidence, and comfortability." Ava left room for continued development as she does not believe she can ever know all there is to know. Ava's rating aligns with her transformational shift in critical consciousness development. Over the course of the semester, she evolved from a general understanding of oppression and privilege to a more nuanced understanding that accounts for systemic structures and barriers. She engaged in critical reflection to identify social action as an area requiring continued development and through reflection, she took steps towards engaging in action with her family, within her graduate assistantship, and in her personal time. The liberation stage is characterized by acknowledging the need for enacting change and serving as a social change agent.

Discussion: Synthesis of Findings Across Critical Consciousness Stages

This study examined how HESA graduate students' understandings of critical consciousness transform during enrollment within a diversity course. The profiles represent a snapshot of the critical consciousness development stages experienced across the full study's participants. In an effort to provide comparable data, three White, cisgender women were selected for the profiles. Teaching students with privileged

identities to explore their positionality within social and political constructs can be a challenging undertaking, typically met with feelings of cognitive disequilibrium and subsequent resistance (Mayhew & Engberg, 2010). Resistance can manifest itself in the form of avoidance, deflection, or minimization (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Kelly & Gayles, 2010; Linder et al., 2015), which can serve as a barrier to consciousness-raising.

The finding that only Ava achieved the Liberation stage supports prior research emphasizing that early career practitioners struggle to translate social justice knowledge into social action (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). Furthermore, findings affirm that HESA graduate students enrolled in a diversity course often self-report growth in multicultural competence, but rarely in individual action-taking (Iverson & Seher, 2017). The profiles spotlighted in this study move graduate preparation conversations beyond the traditional categorization of data by providing rich accounts of select participants' experiences. Instead of differentiating between participants, the aim of this study was to illustrate *how* HESA graduate students' conceptions, articulations, and comprehensions of critical consciousness develop during enrollment in a graduate diversity course.

My findings confirm prior research that HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development was influenced by the extent to which their graduate assistantships expressed commitment to social justice and integrated opportunities for self-education, dialogue, and self-reflection (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Perez et al., 2019). For example, Ava's assistantship required her to engage in ten

hours of social justice-focused professional development. Additionally, her department included guided conversations around power, privilege, and oppression. Ava credited her assistantship's social justice focus as being instrumental in helping her think about social action in a professional context. Conversations with her supervisor and colleagues boosted her confidence and prompted her to envision how she could enact social justice in her current work. Ava's response supports previous recommendations calling for graduate preparation programs to emphasize the synergistic interaction of professional practice and curriculum (Hirschy et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). The dialogic and self-reflective experiences in both her coursework and fieldwork contributed to her significant "developmental gains" (Perez, 2019).

Catherine is on the precipice of engaging in social action, yet a barrier seems to stem from her perceived political efficacy. She rated her preparedness to engage in social justice work as 7 out of 10, explaining that while she feels more comfortable, she "doesn't know all the answers." Even though she displays a nuanced understanding of social justice concepts (e.g., systems, White privilege, intersectionality), Catherine is not confident in her social justice competency. Reichert (2016) posits that an individual's perceived competency directly correlates to their perceived political efficacy. Perceived political efficacy, in turn, directly influences whether an individual engages in social action. A social justice focused graduate assistantship could have helped her translate theory-to-practice through reflective and authentic conversations about personal identity and professional realities.

This set of profiles suggests that the majority of HESA graduate students experience "developmental stasis" (Perez, 2017) or slight developmental gains during a diversity course. Olive remained in the Adaptive stage despite the incorporation of reflective assignments and classroom dialogue while Catherine progressed from the Pre-critical to Critical stage with her progression falling just shy of liberation. Despite Catherine's depth of social justice knowledge and personal activism prior to the diversity course, she was unable to navigate social justice work within a professional capacity. Gansemer-Topf and Ryder (2017) reported that new professionals struggle to fuse social justice knowledge with personal values, which results in value incongruence. Hirschy et al. (2015) assert that value congruence--- the integration of professional standards and principles into practice---is an essential component of establishing a professional identity. Curricular design and experiential learning opportunities are significant factors influencing values congruence (Hirschy et al., 2015). Reflection and dialogue in both educative and graduate training environments are necessary to help students make significant developmental gains.

Implications

HESA graduate programs can produce critically conscious practitioners capable of enacting social justice work by weaving together theory and practice. Using coursework to frame the development of professional identity and vice versa is essential to building new practitioners' confidence in and comfortability with actioning-taking. This finding supports Renn and Jessup-Anger's (2008) call for graduate programs to intertwine graduate and early-career preparation, thus providing a holistic approach to

new professional development. Similarly, Marshall et al. (2016) recommended that HESA graduate programs infuse opportunities for students to engage in authentic conversation regarding the realities of the profession within the curriculum. The disconnect between knowledge acquisition and practical application render new professionals diversity aware but unable to navigate social action within complex institutional environments (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017). An equitable focus on competencies and knowledge acquisition could better prepare new professionals to engage in social justice work within the context of professional identity and the realities of organizational dynamics. Graduate programs should include practice-based projects that ask students to reflect on their learning, translate theory to practice, and address institutional considerations (Nguyen et al., 2019). These kinds of projects could simulate the realities of enacting social justice work within organizational constraints. Additionally, graduate assistantships and practicum experiences can serve as invaluable training grounds for helping students navigate the intersections of professional identity, social action, and institutional bureaucracy.

Second, findings from this study support the need for faculty to incorporate opportunities for critical reflection, which is essential for operationalizing critical consciousness development and transformative learning. Cunliffe (2009) argued that "dialogue-with-self about our fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting" open us up to evaluating and reconstructing outdated frames of reference (p.88). Without critical reflection, there can be no perspective transformation and no subsequent progression towards social action. HESA graduate programs should train faculty to

include reflective elements as a way of enhancing transformative learning. If HESA graduate programs desire to bridge the gap between "what students are called to do and what they are prepared to do" (Kelly & Gayles, 2011, p. 76), inventive instructional approaches to diversity education cannot continue to be the exception; they must be the rule. Viewing critical consciousness development through a transformative learning lens can help faculty create an immersive, self-reflective culture aimed at transforming "habits of the mind" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6).

Finally, this study's findings suggest that social justice centered conversations with assistantship and practicum supervisors can benefit the continued critical consciousness development of HESA graduate students. The data indicate that Ava's significant developmental gains can be attributed to a combination of coursework and dialogue with her supervisors and colleagues. This finding supports Jones Boss et al.'s (2018) recommendation that supervisors continue to support critical consciousness development through "candid conversations" about institutional climate and social justice practice (p. 383). Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory also highlights the importance of dialogue in nurturing perspective transformation. Supervisors and faculty may consider collaborating to determine how best to synergize knowledge acquisition and experiential learning. Faculty should share course syllabi, readings, and assignments to help supervisors connect course content to practical experience. Additionally, supervisors and faculty should incorporate opportunities for reflection to emphasize the importance of self-reflexivity in critical consciousness development.

Limitations

Like all research studies, limitations should be considered before interpreting findings and applying them to future research. First, the selected diversity course was taught remotely due to pandemic constraints. Additionally, the reduced availability of co-curricular activities during the pandemic may have limited action-taking opportunities. Future research should explore HESA graduate students' experiences within a traditional, in-person classroom environment. Second, the study only accounted for the experiences of first-year, first semester master's level students enrolled in a diversity course. Future research should include collection of data throughout their graduate program. Third, not all HESA graduate programs incorporate a diversity course requirement or create space for students to engage in critical dialogue around social justice issues. Finally, the study was conducted at one institution which limits the generalizability of findings. The study should be duplicated before considering the findings as comprehensively characteristic of HESA graduate student diversity course experiences.

Conclusion

This study explored how HESA graduate students' conceptions of critical consciousness change during a diversity course. The findings provide an illustrative roadmap, charting HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development from beginning to end. As previous scholars have asserted, HESA graduate programs can bolster critical consciousness development by emphasizing the intersection of curriculum and practice (Cuyjet et al., 2016; Hisrchy et al., 2015, Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008), incorporating critical reflection (Boss et al, 2018; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy &

Wheeler, 2018) and creating space for professional dialogic experiences (Boss et al., 2018; Hirschy et al., 2015; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Creative pedagogical approaches are needed to cultivate culturally responsive practitioners capable of enacting social justice work. Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory can provide a framework for nurturing transformational learning environments.

Chapter 4: Promoting HESA Graduate Students' Critical Consciousness Through Teaching Practices

In 2015, ACPA and NASPA introduced the social justice and inclusion competency, furthering the student affairs field's commitment to creating equitable and inclusive college communities (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). This declaration marked a shift away from diversity awareness to social action, thus heightening the call for "justice-cognizant" practitioners (Reason & Broido, 2005, p. 82). As the call has intensified, the extent to which HESA graduate students are sufficiently prepared to enact social justice work has received increased attention (Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019). Despite the integration of diversity content within the HESA graduate curricula, researchers posit early-career practitioners still feel underprepared to engage in social action (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). Many scholars assert that dynamic pedagogical approaches are needed to develop culturally responsive leaders (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018).

Current teaching practices familiarize students with core diversity concepts but struggle to cultivate reflective professionals who possess the awareness, knowledge, and skills required to engage in critical dialogue, implement equity-based practices, and create inclusive communities (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). Graduate programs should consider adopting transformative instructional practices embedded in social justice to guide students in

transitioning theory to practice (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). Teaching practices such as reflection, intergroup dialogue, and perspective-taking are tantamount to cultivating a culturally responsive praxis (Cuyjet et al., 2016).

Drawing from Mezirow's transformative learning theory, I explore the pedagogical approaches that promote critical consciousness development within a HESA graduate diversity course. Before engaging in social action, individuals must possess a solid sense of critical consciousness (Cadenas et al., 2018; Harris-Jones, 2019; Jones Boss et al., 2018; Landreman et al., 2007; Pena, 2012; Watts et al., 2011) which can be facilitated through the adoption of innovative instructional practices (Cuyjet et al., 2016; Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Landreman et al., 2007). While HESA graduate programs endeavor to develop multiculturally competent and critically conscious practitioners, numerous studies have questioned the efficacy of diversity courses in cultivating the transformative learning environments needed to engender social action (Edwards et al., 2014; Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Jones Boss et al., 2018; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018). This study addresses the following research question: What teaching practices promote HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development?

Literature Review

In 2010, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) collectively published *The Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* which highlighted ten core competencies for effective student affairs practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). Each

competency area is organized by foundational, intermediate, and advanced levels to highlight the progressive sophistication and proficiency practitioners should demonstrate through their professional development (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). Within each competency area exists short descriptions and thorough learning outcomes categorized by the aforementioned progressive levels. Since the first edition, the ACPA/NASPA competencies have been employed to inform professional development, job description language (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), and graduate curriculum planning (DiRamio, 2014). The establishment of a detailed competency model helped to legitimize the student affairs field by defining collective expectations, goals, and standards (Klegon, 1978; Rodriguez et al., 2002). In 2015, ACPA and NASPA amended the competencies to reflect the student affairs field's professional evolution. For example, Social Justice and Inclusion succeeded the initial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion competency to underscore the change from awareness to social action.

The aim of graduate preparation programs is to equip future practitioners with the competencies and skills essential for entry-level practice (Hoffman, 2012; Perez et al., 2019; Waple, 2006). Perez et al. (2019) asserted that "a graduate education is designed to cultivate scholars and scholarly practitioners who have expertise in their respective disciplines and fields" (p. 3). Many graduate programs use the educational standards created by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2015) as a guiding framework for maintaining consistent learning outcomes and curricular development across diverse programmatic structures. Even so, significant programmatic variances remain, culminating in vastly dissimilar graduate student

experiences (Herdlein et al., 2013; Waple, 2006). To summarize, though HESA graduate programs endeavor to produce culturally responsive practitioners, differentiations in educational experiences and curricular design result in disparate proficiencies and capabilities for engaging in social action.

Pervasive throughout the diversity course literature is the call for immediate curricular and pedagogical reform (Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019). Gayles and Kelly (2007) explored how diversity content is infused into the curriculum and how student affairs practitioners apply diversity knowledge to their practice. Participant interviews revealed three central themes: (a) one required diversity course is insufficient, (b) diversity topics should not be presented in isolation but within the context of intersectionality (c) instructors must cultivate discursive environments that link theory to practice. Similarly, researcher-participants, Edwards et al. (2014) investigated the classroom environments that are most conducive to developing critically conscious and engaged student affairs professionals. Data analysis produced three themes that were influential to their development: (a) faculty commitment, (b) an embedded social justice focus throughout the curriculum, and (c) safe and inclusive spaces. Additionally, Edwards et al. (2014) credited self-reflexivity as critical to expanding their capacity to actively engage in social change efforts. Space for self-reflection allowed them to better understand their personal biases, assumptions, and social identities.

Iverson and Seher (2017) investigated the development of graduate students' multicultural competence in two HESA graduate programs. Two master's cohorts were

surveyed at the beginning and end of their graduate study. University I's diversity course incorporated activities and assignments focused on "conceptual scaffolding," intergroup dialogue, reflection, consciousness-raising, and action-taking. University II's diversity course focused on understanding the relationship between multicultural education and counseling within educational contexts. University I students demonstrated substantial growth in 20 out of 34 inventory items, while University II students only demonstrated growth on four inventory items. The reason why University I graduate students exhibited increased growth was indeterminate but results suggest that purposeful curricular design and pedagogical approaches directly influence the degree to which students develop multicultural competence.

These studies mark a burgeoning attempt by researchers to identify the pedagogical approaches needed for developing critically conscious student affairs professionals. Despite the heightened call for re-envisioned instructional practices, the student affairs diversity literature still points to a substantial pedagogical gap (Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017). Diversity courses must incorporate dynamic pedagogical approaches that "assist [students] in translating multicultural awareness and knowledge to skills they can use as practitioners" (Gayles & Kelly, 2007, p. 23). One way diversity courses can strengthen students' capacity to engage in social change is through critical consciousness and transformative learning.

Theoretical Framework

Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory guides this qualitative study. Grounded in a constructivist worldview, transformative learning theory illuminates *how*

individuals attain personal transformation by resolving faulty preconceptions and interpretations with new assumptions and understandings (Mezirow, 1978). In an effort to maintain cognitive security, "we have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 92), instead considering conceptions that substantiate them. Mezirow (1990) posits that frames of reference can become immersed "habits of the mind" that are challenging to modify without the facilitation of a significant transformative event called a 'disorienting dilemma.' Transformative learning theory is a dynamic pedagogical practice that highlights how individuals assess and navigate limiting and outdated assumptions in order to create more befitting and operational sense-making filters (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

Taylor (1998) suggested Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory encompasses three central themes—the learner's experience, critical reflection, and dialogue. First, the learner's experience serves as the conduit for critical reflection and "perspective transformation" (Taylor, 1998, p.15). A 'disorienting dilemma' disturbs prior assumptions, preparing the learner's cognitive terrain for new perspective maturation. Second, critical reflection provokes us to evaluate and question our preconceptions, actions, beliefs, and habits so that we can become receptive to different ways of behaving and thinking. Critical reflection is vital for surveying constraining and incongruous frames of reference (Mezirow, 2003). Finally, dialogue is the medium through which "perspective transformation" is cultivated. Dialogue necessitates that individuals engage in active discourse, recognize the limitations of their own assumptions, and evaluate the validity of alternative perspectives (Taylor, 1998).

Summatively, transformative learning nurtures "perspective transformation" through experiencing a disorienting event, engaging in critical reflection, and partaking in dialogue.

Transformative learning theory offers a multifaceted lens for understanding the complexities of pedagogy and learning. Further, this framework support Edwards et al.'s (2014) recommendation that HESA graduate programs incorporate instructional practices and "educative spaces that best support the development of critically conscious student affairs practitioners" (p.1) Framed by Mezirow's transformative learning framework, I explored how pedagogical approaches promote HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development within the context of a diversity course.

Methods and Data

This qualitative case study explored teaching practices that foster HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. Qualitative research explores the significance behind a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p.3). This study's design examines how HESA graduate students make sense of, interpret, and assign meaning to pedagogical approaches. A case study design is most befitting when trying to answer "how" and "why" research questions aimed at exploring a "contemporary phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context" within bounds (Yin, 2017, p.153). The case study is narrowed in scope and bounded by studying a defined number of HESA graduate students within a particular semester-long diversity course.

The Case

A public university situated in the Midwestern U.S. served as the research site for this study. This diversity course was purposefully selected due to its concentration on diversity and social justice concepts within a higher education context. The diversity course invited students to engage in self-analysis through self-reflective activities, incorporating an uncomfortable reading assignment, a positionality exercise, an access story, and a counter-narrative. Course readings discussed social identities, such as sexual orientation, race, disability, and gender in relation to multifaceted concepts such as power, privilege, intersectionality, access, and oppression. In addition to consciousness-raising through self-reflection and critical readings, the instructors also fostered the development of multicultural skills through modeling and action-taking assignments. The civil discourse demonstration and diversity initiative analysis were intentionally constructed to improve students' confidence in and comfortability with engaging in social action. Finally, the instructors cultivated an educative space conducive for facilitated dialogic experiences. This course's design renders it an appropriate site for this study as it incorporates educative elements that Edwards et al. (2014) highlighted as essential for developing critically conscious student affairs professionals.

Participants

Twelve full-time HESA master's students enrolled in this course composed this study's sample. I solicited participation during the first week of class and notified people that participation was non-compulsory and that their decision would not influence their course grade. After the in-class presentation, I invited interested participants to fill out a

demographic survey. The demographic constitutions of the participants included two persons of color, six cisgender women, five cisgender men, and one gender non-conforming person. The racial demographics emulated the demographics of the HESA master's cohort as well as the campus where the study was conducted. To conceal their identity, each participant self-selected a pseudonym.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

Name	**Race**	**Gender**	**Social Class**
Alex	White	Cisgender Man	Upper-Middle Class
Ava	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Catherine	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Chris	White	Cisgender Man	Upper-Middle Class
Clover	White	Cisgender Man	Lower Class/Limited Income
Corey	White	Cisgender Man	Working Class
Douglas	Black or African American	Cisgender Man	Working Class
Grace	White	Gender Non-Conforming	Lower Class/Limited Income
Nia	Black or African American	Cisgender Woman	Working Class
Olive	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class
Ray	White	Cisgender Woman	Middle Class to Working Class
Vivian	White	Cisgender Woman	Working Class to Middle Class

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected from two interviews and three learning journals. I conducted semi-structured interviews at the beginning and end of the semester to compare what participants knew (1st Interview) against what participants learned (Journal prompts, 2nd Interview). To develop the interview protocol, I first aligned interview questions to theoretical frameworks. Second, I created "an inquiry based conversation" by using follow up prompts and a variety of questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016, p. 813). Third, I requested feedback from first-year, first-semester HESA graduate students to enhance the trustworthiness and reliability of the interview protocol as a research instrument (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Finally, I piloted the interview protocol to test its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments prior to commencing the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

The initial interview determined students' foundational conceptions of diversity and social justice concepts as well as their understandings of their own positionality. Sample interview questions included what kinds of undergraduate experiences have you had with diversity and social justice? How would you describe your understandings of oppression and privilege? The second interview explored how participants' knowledge changed during course enrollment. Sample interview questions included what course assignments and/or readings have been most meaningful to you this semester? How did learning about diversity in both classes influence your understandings of diversity and social justice?

Journal responses were collected during the fourth, ninth, and thirteenth weeks of the course. Collection intervals were determined by reviewing the syllabus and pinpointing common topical themes.

Table 4.2

Diversity Course Topics

Weeks	Themes	Topics
1-4	Fundamental Concepts	Oppression, Privilege, Bias, Intersectionality
5-9	Social Identities	Sexual Orientation, Race, Gender, Nationality, Disability
10-12	Action-Taking	Advocacy, Civil Discourse, and Activism

Sample journal prompts included what assignments and/or readings have been most meaningful to you? What new insights have you gained from engaging with the course materials and class discussions? During the reflection week, participants were emailed a distinctive reflection link. I encouraged students to write at least a five to seven sentence response for each prompt. A reminder email was sent 24 hours prior to link deactivation.

Data Analysis

Saldaña's (2016) recommendations for data analysis guided the process of identifying interview themes. First, I re-listened to each audio file to record noteworthy vocal features such as affect, tonality, and emphasis. These annotations supplied an illustrative backdrop to the text as I read through each transcript. Second, I read through

each transcript to develop a thorough understanding of the data. After the initial transcript review, I employed two first-cycle coding methods -- In Vivo and Open Coding (Saldaña, 2016). *In Vivo* coding portrays the participant's precise verbalizations to elicit substantial concepts (Saldaña, 2016). Open coding adds a layer of complexity as it "breaks down qualitative data into more discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences, thus providing an additional layer of depth (Saldaña, 2016, p. 242).

I utilized axial coding as the second cycle coding method. The purpose of axial coding is to "reassemble split or fractured" data from open coding in order to determine primary and secondary codes (Saldaña, 2016, p. 244). The data is then reconstructed with the most elucidatory codes (Saldaña, 2016). I adapted the initial coding list, merging comparable codes into a coding system. Using the coding system, I reviewed the data again and classified codes into central categories and themes. For this article, I focused on themes linked to participants' contemplations about effective consciousness-raising teaching practices.

Student journals were analyzed using thematic qualitative text analysis. Thematic qualitative analysis is comprised of six phases---1) initial work with the text, 2) develop main thematic categories, 3) first coding process, 4) compile text passages, 5) create sub-categories, and 6) code data using a category system (Kuckartz, 2014). Initial work with the text refers to careful reading by noting commentaries and reflections in the margins and writing memos. Next, I developed main categories stemming from the research questions and the data. After main categories were instituted, I reviewed each section and

line of the text to "assign text passages to categories" (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 72). After the first coding process, I compiled the text passages and predominate categories to create sub-categories. The combination of predominate categories and sub-categories served as my coding frame for data analysis (Schreier, 2012).

Qualitative Trustworthiness

To ensure qualitative trustworthiness, I employed several strategies. First, I connected interview protocol and journal prompts to the conceptual framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016), Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory. Second, I conducted member checks by sending transcripts to each participant for accuracy review. Third, I employed thick description by integrating direct quotes to illuminate the richness of participant responses. Fourth, I engaged in peer examination by asking critical readers to assess my journal prompts, interview protocol, coding, and findings. Finally, I engaged in self-reflexivity to attend to my positionality. Milner (2007) proposed that researchers engage in self-introspection by asking themselves "racially and culturally grounded" questions to unearth "seen, unseen, and unforeseen" bias and viewpoints (p.395). Accordingly, I strove to be mindful of how my identity as a Black, cisgender woman affected my research approach and participant exchanges. Prioritizing self-reflexivity mirrors Mezirow's and Freire's emphasis on reflection. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I kept extensive memos expressing my questions, reactions, and thoughts.

Findings

Researchers assert that diversity courses should incorporate dynamic, innovative teaching practices to foster transformative educative spaces (Edwards et al., 2014; Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Gayles & Kelly, 2007). In this study three pedagogical approaches cultivated a transformative educative environment: integrating diversity and theory, incorporating self-reflective assignments, and including critical readings. The diversity course selected for this study highlighted the centrality of consciousness-raising through the incorporation of scaffolded diversity concepts and the implementation of multimodal instructional approaches.

"It Kept Diversity at the Forefront of my Brain:" Integrating Diversity and Theory

Integrating diversity and theory helped participants translate theory-to-practice. Instead of viewing diversity and theory as exclusive and divorced from practice (Nguyen et al., 2019), participants noticed how different courses within the program's curriculum connected. Seven participants mentioned how weaving diversity highlighted a recurring focus in student affairs theory and research. This recognition prompted these participants to re-evaluate the applicability of certain theories and studies to the diverse student populations they serve. Recognizing this discourse in theory influenced their conceptions about working with students and recognizing the diverse, intersecting identities of their students influenced their conceptions about theory. Ray explained:

> The diversity class did a great job of setting up what a lot of the issues were. The development theory course gave a lot of really good ways to think about these things, especially the later theories because a lot of the early ones are very much

> focused on privileged groups, whereas a lot of the later theories are expanding to be like, hey those theories don't really apply to everybody. I appreciated having that theoretical background to be able to think about how different types of students might develop.

In this example, Ray highlights the limiting constraints of theory, pointing to its predominate focus on "privileged groups." Even though "later theories are expanding," she is cognizant that the seminal theories still operate from a privileged-centric orientation. Additionally, Ray credits the interrelatedness of the courses for helping her think critically about student development within broader educational, societal, and political structures.

Grace shared a similar perspective, explaining that the concurrent courses emphasized the majoritized underpinning of theories and cautioned against non-critical application to diverse student identities.

> Different theories interact with different identities differently so keeping in mind that a lot of the theories both in student development, and overall often use a white male lens. Keeping that criticism in my mind of, well, does this actually apply to these people? Does this actually apply to first gen students or low income students? Does this apply to people who are DACA status? How does it apply or does it? Does it apply differently? Keeping that in the back of my mind going forward that often [theories] have a history of being rich/middle class, white male, American citizenship status, and able bodied.

Alex underscored Grace's thoughts by highlighting the importance of questioning and critiquing theory before translating it to practice:

> [Our student development theory instructor said] I need you to consider that all of the theories are based on cisgender, heterosexual white males. So, you just need to keep that in mind that these might be wildly inaccurate…It was like, you need to question the foundation…and question it, even if the intentions are good.

Grace's and Alex's responses call specific attention to student development theory's cisgender, heterosexual, White male origins. Grace's questions showcase how she is thinking about theory with complexity and criticality in relation to diverse student identities. Similarly, Alex recognizes the potential "inaccuracies" of theory, emphasizing the importance of questioning the "foundation" before broad application in student affairs work. Merging diversity and theory prompted Grace and Alex to critique hegemony and contest the relevance of theoretical frameworks.

In addition to recognizing the dominant discourse in theory, Douglas talked about how infusing diversity and theory expanded his capacity to think more complexly and comprehensively about student support.

> We were covering topics that were similar in both classes. The literature that we read cross- referenced one another. [In diversity class], we read about transgender student identity concerns and [talked about] how we create an inclusive environment for those students. And then in [student development theory class], we talked about how students process their transgender identity and how they

> navigate social stigmas. Merging those two things together gave us, as practitioners, the language to [work] with those students.

Here Douglas conveys how integrating diversity and theory enhanced his critical praxis. The diversity course encouraged him to think critically about creating "inclusive environments" while the theory course provided "language" for conceptualizing how diverse student populations might experience identity development. Applying a diversity lens to theory and a theoretical lens to diversity helped Douglas grasp the reciprocal relationship between student support and student development.

Participants found value in adopting an integrative approach to diversity and theory as it allowed them to account for their students' unique identities and experiences. The concurrent integration of diversity contextualized and deepened their learning, allowing them to see the interconnectivity between theory and practice. Further, participants explained how this integrative approach helped them problematize the hegemony undergirding the basis of student affairs work. A key element of critical consciousness is the ability to engage in critical inquiry prior to enacting social change (Freire, 1970).

"It was Thought-Provoking and Meaningful:" Incorporating Self-Reflective Assignments

Critical reflection, the cornerstone of critical consciousness and transformative learning, provokes an intimate, honest understanding of self in relation to power, privilege, and oppression (Freire, 1970). Engaging in consistent reflective praxis is a pre-requisite to social action as individuals must develop a heightened awareness of self and

systematic inequalities before being able to adequately address them. Providing students with self-reflective opportunities is essential for expanding their capacity to engage in social justice work. Participants reported that the Access Story and Uncomfortable Reading assignments encouraged them to reflect on their own identities and structural barriers.

Access Story. Through the Access Story assignment, all participants examined their individual journeys to accessing higher education. Reflecting on how their K-12 experience influenced their collegiate trajectory provided participants with an opportunity to think critically about their own social identities in relation to educational systematic structures. Six participants highlighted its pedagogical utility. For Grace, engaging in this prompted self-reflection encouraged her to consider how aspects of her identity interacted with systems of oppression and privilege. She shared:

> I often forget my own privilege, as a white woman, as a US citizen, as someone who went to a wealthy and small public school, and as someone who is mostly able bodied. Being able to write out my journey to an undergraduate degree let me put into perspective in which ways I have experienced privilege and challenge systematically through education and society.

Grace's response demonstrates how self-reflective assignments can foster critical consciousness development. The Access Story asked her to use newly acquired diversity concepts like 'systematic oppression' to critically examine how her identity, K-12 experiences, and upbringing influenced her access to college. Grace is beginning to

understand her own positionality within systematic structures, especially within the context of education.

Vivian shared a similar perspective, noting that the Access Story prompted her exploration of social class's influence on her educational experience. She explained:

> I've learned more about my upbringing and how that has affected my college experience. I am now able to identify at which points in my life I identified as low-income and middle-class, how my K-12 school system prepared me for college and how the structure of my family life impacted the way I view myself and my education.

Corey echoed the message of self-reflection and the recognition of how barriers effected his educational trajectory by saying:

> It was especially meaningful to me because it allowed me to reflect deeply on my journey through K-12 education and how I got to and succeeded at [college]. My K-12 experience is a touchy subject for me because of the amount of trauma and problematic experiences I had in an all-male, Catholic environment with my queer identity in particular. The subject area and theory we covered allowed me to attach labels to the experiences I had.

Here Corey and Vivian convey how directed self-reflection can synthesize classroom learning with their identity development. Both participants applied newly acquired concepts (e.g. social class) to contextualize the intersections of social class, education, and identity. The Access Story supplied a contemplative space for Corey and Vivian to

identify how they have experienced benefits and challenges due to their minoritized and privileged identities.

Uncomfortable Reading Assignment. Perspective taking--the ability to consider perceptions and feelings from another person's perspective (Moskowitz, 2005)-- is essential to cultivating cultural sensitivity and stereotype reduction (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Aiming to expand students' capacity to engage in constructive discourse with individuals holding oppositional viewpoints, the instructors designed the Uncomfortable Reading Assignment. Through researching a topic or stance they would traditionally dismiss as baseless, half of the participants began to interrogate their own beliefs, assumptions, and defensive reactions. Additionally, participants began to recognize the importance of understanding divergent perspectives and experiences despite their disagreement.

For Corey, examination of contrasting opinions helped him embrace discomfort, cultivate empathy, and authentically evaluate the legitimacy of opposing viewpoints. Corey shared:

> Normally, I would've completely disregarded this article because of my frustrations, but I found that engaging with the information and analyzing it helped me to see where the author was coming from. I could see the logic behind some arguments, but moreover this experience allowed me to learn more about the topic and be able to give fact behind my opinions...

Corey's response highlights how the Uncomfortable Reading Assignment encouraged him to incorporate perspective-taking skills. Corey's usage of the words "engaging,"

"analyzing," and "logic" demonstrates perspective-taking in action. He considers and critiques opposing arguments while evaluating his own perspectives. For perspective transformation to transpire, individuals must have the ability to engage in self-reflection and dialogue (Mezirow, 1970). The Uncomfortable Reading Assignment foregrounded Corey's reflection on his "habits of the mind" while learning how to thoughtfully contemplate others' viewpoints.

Ava "focused on intersectionality and privilege bubbles" hoping to gain insight into the minds of President Trump supporters. In addition to reflecting and learning perspective-taking skills, she recognized that there is privilege in having access to diversity conversations and content. She explained:

> A lot of people's views were business related. I understood, the economy part of it, but [the article] didn't address all the real issues of voting for Trump like sexism, homophobia, and racism. But I took a step back, and I looked at their opinions as being all they know. They didn't have the semester of learning all different sides of people's lives and the history of why education is the way it is or why our country is the way it is. I'm very privileged that I got to learn all that this semester, and it helped open my eyes to why people think the way they do.

In this example, Ava discusses a shift in her perspective. She started the assignment with hostility towards Trump supporters based on her perceived understanding of their beliefs. While her thoughts regarding their viewpoints did not change, her disposition towards them did. Instead of maintaining a temperament of antipathy, she adopted a temperament of empathy. It is through critical reflection that she was able to acknowledge the

constraints of her perspective and the inherent privilege in having access to diversity education. The assignment's perspective-taking element emulated dialogue by asking her to interrogate previously held assumptions and consider alternative ways of thinking and acting.

Alex shared an alternative perspective. He reported that the Uncomfortable Reading assignment helped him interrogate his dismissive and protective reactions to divergent perspectives. He found that he would focus so intently on "critiquing the structure" and language of the opposition's argument that he would completely miss the content and intent. Ray also reported that assessing differing perspectives revealed an unanticipated layer of sophistication and depth in the opposition's argument. She explained, "I did my topic on an article called Rethinking Political Correctness. I expected to do an easy critique on people who are against PC culture but found that they actually had a more nuanced perspective on it."

Examining others' viewpoints led to a self-revelatory experience for participants. By engaging in perspective-taking, participants gained a deeper understanding of their own positionalities, opening them up to consider their own preconceived judgments and reactionary behavior. This type of critical reflection rooted in discomfort required a confrontation of core thought processes, thus providing a foundation for facilitating perspective transformation towards critically conscious identities.

"This Book was so Eye-Opening:" Including Critical Readings

The more students comprehend the "true causality" of systemic structures, the better they can dismantle them (Freire, 1973, p. 44). These readings served as

participants' first exposure to higher education's historical and contemporary involvement in maintaining systems of racism and oppression. Six participants credited *The Years that Matter Most* and *Tyranny of the Meritocracy* with helping them better understand ingrained, endemic institutional barriers.

For Vivian, *The Years that Matter Most* helped shift her conception of oppression. She explained:

> I would use the word systematic to really enforce it is out of someone's control…there's systematic oppression, systematic racism…[using] systematic shows that these organizations, governments, corporations, and education systems work together to create this system that doesn't work. There are people in power that would love to keep it the way it is, and they're the bad people. But, a lot of it is just so deeply rooted in history.

Similarly, Corey articulated how *The Years that Matter Most* transitioned his notions of privilege and oppression from dualistic understandings to more complex perspectives:

> Before if I thought of oppression and privilege, it was someone's being racist, or someone's being homophobic. That's being oppressive, but I didn't really stop to think how far those things penetrate into the systems that we have today. I think even thinking right back to how Higher Ed was formed on the backs of slaves and a bunch of those dynamics still very much are present today.

Vivian's and Corey's responses demonstrate how including critical readings can introduce students to building critical thinking and reflection skills towards action-taking.

Prior to reading the *Years that Matter Most,* neither participant had been exposed to the historical and systematic roots of oppression within higher education contexts. Engaging with critical texts allowed participants to situate themselves within the causality and reality that Freire (1973) mentioned. Critical consciousness aims to dismantle oppressive systems through the recognition of positionality, social inequalities, and historical contexts. Consciousness-raising transpires as individuals become increasingly *conscious* of how the aforementioned elements interact collectively. Understanding the *why* behind systemic injustice enables individuals to begin asking *how* they can meaningfully engage in social justice work. Specifically focusing on oppressive systems with a higher education context also supports calls for graduate preparation education to introduce students to the realities of student affairs work (Hirschy et al., 2015; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Ray credited *Tyranny of the Meritocracy* for helping her to examine higher education's hyper focus on testocratic merit and its disproportionately negative effects on minoritized student populations. She explained:

> I believe that changing our definition of merit is one of the first steps we need to take in order to tear down these oppressive systems currently in place in higher education. The way that we focus so much on testing, this skewed concept of merit, affects a lot of like minoritized groups.

Here Ray illustrates how critical reading can deepen student learning by asking them to engage in systematic critique. She names merit as a problematic practice that disproportionately affects minoritized populations. Recognizing and naming pervasive

systems is essential to comprehending "true causality." New professionals cannot take action against systems that they do not know exist.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore what pedagogical approaches promote HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. Participants highlight the effectiveness of teaching practices that integrate diversity and theory, engender self-reflection, and incorporate critical readings. These findings support assertions from previous researchers underscoring the importance of employing dynamic instructional practices in developing critical consciousness (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Cunliffe (2009) argued that "dialogue-with-self about our fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting" open us up to evaluating and reconstructing outdated frames of reference (p.88). The reflective assignments encouraged participants to think about their personal development (e.g., biases, assumptions, behaviors) in relation to course concepts (e.g. privilege, historical oppression, power) which allowed participants to situate themselves within the causality and reality that Freire (1973) mentioned. Participant responses also substantiate Mezirow's (1990) assertion that critical reflection is essential to provoking perspective transformation. Given that most participants credited the reflective assignments for helping them contend with their own social identities and engage in perspective-taking, this study's findings emphasize the need for more reflective opportunities in diversity courses. Edwards et al. (2014) posited that without re-envisioned pedagogical approaches that translate multicultural knowledge to

multicultural skills students can employ as practitioners, inclusive college communities will remain out of reach.

Findings from this study also support the need for centering theory to practice and critical inquiry through an integrative diversity approach and critical readings. Specifically, participant responses highlight prior recommendations calling for graduate preparation programs to underscore the intersection of practice and curriculum (Hirschy et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Weaving together diversity and theory allowed students to contend with theory's hegemonic roots and think critically about its role in guiding student support. The critical readings helped expand participants' thinking to account for the influence of systematic and historical factors. Focusing on higher education's complicated history with racism and oppression contextualized and enriched their understanding of current barriers to access (e.g., meritocracy, biased admissions, etc.). Consciousness-raising transpires as individuals experience perspective transformation by becoming increasingly conscious of how positionality, social inequalities, and historical factors interact collectively. Understanding the why behind systemic injustice enables individuals to begin asking how they can meaningfully engage in social justice work. While participants were unsure of how to influence systematic change, integrating theory and diversity and engaging with critical readings helped facilitate the development of a critical lens by allowing them to make sense of causality and reality as well as query individual and systematic responses to injustice.

Implications

These findings present several implications for HESA graduate education. HESA graduate programs can develop critically conscious practitioners with an enhanced aptitude for social action by integrating diversity throughout the graduate curriculum. By discussing diversity concepts within a traditional diversity course and a student development course, instructors were able to help students think critically about student identity development and student support. Rather than see theory and diversity as exclusionary, students began to see the inherent connectivity. This finding supports Gayles and Kelly (2007) conclusion that one diversity course is insufficient for exploring the complexities of social justice issues or translating theory to practice. Additionally, this finding answers Edwards et al.'s (2014) call for an embedded social justice focus throughout the curriculum. A cohesive approach can bolster students' continued commitment to social justice and aid in the development of critical consciousness. Flowers (2003) acknowledged that an integrative approach can have unintentional consequences if social justice concepts are presented haphazardly without robust opportunities for critical inquiry and reflection. To combat these potential barriers, Flowers (2003) recommended that HESA programs develop a "diversity integration plan" to maximize intentional content delivery (p.78).

Second, findings from this study emphasize the need for faculty to create self-reflective spaces. Critical reflection is tantamount to provoking transformative learning and critical consciousness development. Individuals who take the time to reflect critically on preconceived notions are more likely to be cognizant of beliefs and behaviors that

have become outdated (Matsuo, 2017). Similarly, Edwards et al. (2014) discovered that engaging in critical reflection helped them, as research-participants, articulate questions and confront bias. Without critical reflection, there can be no perspective transformation or engagement in social action. It is only through inventive pedagogical approaches that HESA graduate programs can address the disparity between "what students are called to do and what they are prepared to do" (Kelly & Gayles, 2011, p. 76). Applying a transformative lens to critical consciousness development can assist faculty in fostering reflective educative environments focused on altering "habits of the mind" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6).

Finally, this study's findings highlight the importance of incorporating critical readings that invite students to think critically about their social identities within oppressive systemic structures and introduce them to the historical contexts sustaining structural inequality. Before students can engage in critical reflection, the precursor to social action, they must be cognizant of both the historical and contemporary systems of privilege, power, and oppression (Freire, 1970, Mezirow, 1978). This finding supports Gayles and Kelly's (2007) recommendation that diversity course learning outcomes should include "the analysis of the role power and privilege play in oppression and the evaluation of one's role in perpetuating privilege and oppression" (p. 204). These critical readings confronted students with the systematic causalities of higher education, provoking them to name and contend with pervasive systems. For half of the participants exposure to the critical readings seemed to serve as a "disorienting dilemma," prompting them to contend with the broken system of the higher education for the first time. Faculty

may consider creating a "diversity integration plan" (Flowers, 2003, p. 78) that matches critical texts to corresponding learning outcomes focused on interrogating positionality in relation to power, privilege, and oppression (Gayles & Kelly, 2007).

Limitations

Before interpreting the findings and applying them to future research, there are several limitations that should be considered. First, conducting the study at one institution limits the transferability of the findings. The study should be replicated before deeming the results as illustrative of HESA graduate student diversity course experiences. Second, not all HESA graduate programs integrate a diversity course requisite or create educative opportunities for critical dialogues. Third, this study solely focused on experiences of first-year, first semester master's students enrolled in a diversity course. Future research should collect data from program entry through graduation. Finally, the selected diversity course was taught online due to pandemic limitations. Additionally, remote learning may have altered the efficacy of and students' receptivity to particular instructional practices. Future research should investigate HESA graduate students' experiences within an in-person diversity course.

Conclusion

This study explored what teaching practices promote HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. The findings highlight pedagogical approaches central to cultivating critically conscious identities. As previous researchers have posited, HESA graduate programs can enhance critical consciousness development by infusing social justice throughout the curriculum (Edwards et al., 2014), incorporating critical

reflection (Iverson & Seher, 2017; Jones Boss et al, 2018; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018), and centering critical inquiry (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). Dynamic pedagogical approaches are essential to fostering culturally responsive practitioners capable of creating inclusive environments and rendering equity-based decisions. Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning theory can provide a framework for cultivating transformational educative spaces.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Despite the incorporation of diversity coursework in the majority of HESA graduate programs (Kennedy et al., 2015), HESA graduate students report feeling underprepared to enact social justice work (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Perez et al., 2019). New professionals possess social justice knowledge but struggle to convert social justice knowledge to social action or position their identities in relation to institutional and societal forces. While research exploring the efficacy of diversity courses has received increased attention (Castellanos et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2014; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018; Perez et al., 2019), few studies investigate how HESA graduate students' conceptions of critical consciousness evolve and transform. Critical consciousness, a precursor to social action, requires an intimate understanding of self through reflection (Cadenas et al., 2018; Harris-Jones, 2019; Jones Boss et al., 2018; Landreman et al., 2007; Pena, 2012; Watts et al., 2011). Drawing from primarily reflective and cognitive centered frameworks (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1978; Watts et al., 1999; Watts et al., 2011), this study's findings fill this gap by providing insight into a) how HESA graduate students' conceptualizations of critical consciousness change during a diversity course and b) what pedagogical approaches promote critical consciousness development.

Findings across all three articles highlight important implications for theory, pedagogical practice, and future research. Article one explored how metacognitive practices, such as journaling, promote critical consciousness development. Findings

indicated that metacognitive journaling helped participants evaluate their learning by identifying the proficiency and constraints of their social justice knowledge and pre-existing preconceptions. This evaluation, in turn, supported consciousness-raising by prompting participants to create plans for engaging in continued development.

Article two investigated how HESA graduate students develop understandings of critical consciousness. Participants' critical consciousness development ranged from modest to significant developmental gains, with only one of the three participants engaging in action-taking. The data also supports previous research indicating one diversity course may not be sufficient enough to foster consciousness-raising towards social action (Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Robbins, 2016). While students may display gains in multicultural competence, multicultural competence is not indicative of their ability to enact social justice work (Robbins, 2016).

Article three examined teaching practices---integrating diversity and theory, including self-reflective assignments, and including critical readings---that promote critical consciousness development. Findings emphasized how incorporating reflective assignments and integrating theory and diversity can engender consciousness-raising. These findings confirm prior research touting the importance of including reflective elements (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2018; Kennedy & Wheeler, 2017) and tying curriculum to practice (Hirschy et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

In summary, the three articles illustrate the need for HESA diversity courses to incorporate increased opportunities for reflection, metacognitive practice, and diversity/theory integration.

The Case for Critical Reflection

This dissertation's findings are urgent, necessary, and relevant. In the wake of #BlackLivesMatter and the brutal slayings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbury, college campuses have been forced to renew conversations on racial dynamics in higher education. Now more than ever, it is crucial that universities boldly address systemic racism, cultivate inclusive environments, and foster belonging with critical consciousness and reflexivity. Ill-informed, well-intentioned DEI efforts only reinforce the emotional and psychological harm Black students, administrators, and faculty experience every day, further underscoring America's devaluation of Black lives. Tone deaf messaging, performative programming, and virtue signaling maintain the status quo but do nothing to move the needle of equity and justice forward. Espousing a commitment to social justice and inclusion means the student affairs field must move beyond window dressing towards dismantling pervasive oppressive systems, thus enacting true transformative social change.

When individuals hear transformative social change, they often think it is an undertaking reserved for executive leadership, but transformative change can transpire at all levels and within all functional areas. For an admissions counselor, culturally responsive practice might be advocating for a change in competitive admissions practices that disproportionately affect students of color. For a financial aid counselor, culturally

responsive practice might be identifying limited income students with unmet financial need and small remaining balances preventing graduation. For academic advisors, culturally responsive practice might be working with an academic department to help a student experiencing microaggressions in the classroom. For faculty members, culturally responsive practice might be incorporating minoritized authors instead of strictly utilizing works from a White, cisgender, male lens. These examples demonstrate how individuals can redress inequitable systems and cultivate inclusive communities within all professional roles. However, serving as advocates and allies who minimize undue harm requires practitioners to critically examine their own social identities within historical and existing systemic structures.

This work disrupts normative diversity education practices centered around awareness-raising by situating critical reflection as an essential, non-negotiable component of transformative social change. Before practitioners engage in critical social action, they must develop a heightened locus of critical consciousness based in critically reflective practice. Support for critical reflection does not negate action but rather proposes developing a social justice orientation that values both the cognitive process and the result (Desroches, 2016). If critical reflection is positioned as a pre-requisite to critical social action, graduate programs must acknowledge the complexities of consciousness raising and integrate opportunities for reflective activities.

Study Revelations

Following Yin's (2017) recommendations for case study research, I set out on this inquiry with two propositions. Propositions are predictive statements that guide and

narrow the scope of the study. My first proposition posited that metacognitive reflection would positively influence HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development. This preconception was based on previous research positioning reflection as a foundational component of consciousness-raising and metacognition as an integral component of active learning (Freire, 1970; McGuire, 2015; Watts et al., 2011). Findings from article one and article three support this presupposition.

The second proposition projected that engaging in reflection would engender increased engagement in social action. Findings from article two did not validate this presumption as only one participant engaged in liberation behavior. Instead, article two surprisingly underscored the influential role of graduate assistantships in cultivating a "justice-cognizant identity" (Reason & Broido, 2005, p. 82). Additionally, I did not expect the complexity of the findings in article two. The data required me to present it in a way that would both capture and reflect the intricacies of participant responses. I never considered the possibility that there could be stages of critical consciousness development, variations of developmental gains, or alternative ways of data presentation. Initially, I approached this study from a practitioner lens which led me to oversimplify the nuances of cognition. As the study progressed, I developed a researcher lens which led me to critically examine the data from different perspectives. Shifting my presentation approach and adopting an additional conceptual framework gave me language to contextualize participant experiences appropriately.

Implications for Theory

This study employed several frameworks to account for the complexities of participant experiences. Initially, I anticipated that Flavell's (1979) metacognition and Watts et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of critical consciousness would be sufficient enough to serve as the conceptual underpinnings across all three articles. As I examined the data, I realized that I needed to incorporate additional frameworks to adequately illustrate the findings. Metacognition and critical consciousness proved appropriate for the first article, providing language for describing how metacognitive reflection influences learning towards critical consciousness development. Applying a metacognitive lens offered context for understanding the learning process while critical consciousness offered context for understanding the integral components necessary for consciousness-raising.

The profile approach in article two required me to consider alternative frameworks to illustrate the critical consciousness development process and capture transformations in participants' thinking. Watts et al.'s (2011) outlines overarching elements of critical consciousness, but these elements were not granular enough to illustrate the nuances of participants' evolving understandings. Watts et al.'s (1999) stages of sociopolitical development resolved this problem by contextualizing the progression of critical consciousness development. I added Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning as a complementary framework to describe how participants' thinking shifted during the semester. The concepts of "perspective transformation" and "habits of the mind" proved particularly useful in comprehending how individuals

reconcile previous assumptions with new preconceptions. Additionally, critical reflection and dialogic components of transformative learning mirror foundational tenets of critical consciousness, thus strengthening the case for their co-application.

In the third article, I decided to apply Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning exclusively. The preceding articles necessitated multifaceted conceptual frameworks to illustrate the intricacies of learning, cognition, and development, whereas in article three, a singular theory proved sufficient to illustrate participant perceptions of effective teaching practices. Transformative learning helped explore how particular pedagogical approaches facilitated perspective transformation towards developing a heightened locus of critical consciousness.

Implications for Pedagogical Practice

Metacognition and critical reflection are instructional tools educators can employ to operationalize critical consciousness development and transformative learning. Implementing these practices situates learning and reflective processes at the core of instruction. Research shows that both metacognition and reflection lead to heightened awareness of cognition and improved academic performance (McGuire, 2015). These pedagogical approaches combined with a critical consciousness orientation point towards a promising new dominant logic in diversity education. A dominant logic that focuses on creating transformative educative experiences using metacognitive and reflective strategies. A dominant logic that cultivates a culture of cognition alongside a culture of action.

The first step to creating a critically reflective classroom environment is to incorporate periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning (Lin, 2001). Building a critically reflective muscle requires practice, so students need continuous exercises throughout the course to practice and receive feedback. In the first article, participants highlighted how the journal prompts served as recurring check-ins that prompted them to regularly reflect on their learning and critical consciousness development. Engaging in metacognitive journaling connected course material to self-reflection. In the third article, participants highlighted the significance of reflective assignments in fostering critical thinking and perspective-taking. The *Access Story* and *Uncomfortable Reading* assignments invited students to critically examine and evaluate their positionalities, structural barriers, and "habits of the mind."

Second, it is important to connect activities and assignments to metacognitive strategies (Tanner, 2012). Drawing these explicit connections provides context and allows students to evaluate their learning process while reflecting on their cognitive development. The journal prompts were developed in accordance with the syllabus which linked learning, cognition, and critical reflection. Participants discussed how being asked specific questions related to the course material helped them fill knowledge gaps and direct their social justice learning. Additionally, metacognitive journaling helped participants set independent goals toward consciousness-raising.

Finally, educators should model the reflective process by posing the kinds of questions students should ask themselves (Lin, 2001). Example questions might include What stood out most for you about yourself? What knowledge did you have about this

topic when you entered the class? Have your thoughts stayed the same or evolved during this course? (Tanner, 2012) Modeling questions like these helps students practice self-regulated critical reflection. Using the journal prompts as an example, participants developed their own metacognitive questions focused on assessing their critical consciousness development. Modeling promotes an active learning orientation, placing students at the helm of their own development and expanding their capacity to engage in critical reflection.

Centering learning during the reflective process is essential fostering content competency. Increased competency results in increased confidence and subsequent increased political efficacy (Reichert, 2016). Increased political efficacy then translates to an enhanced capacity to engage in social action (Reichert, 2016; Watts, 2011). Creating educative spaces that integrate reflection and metacognitive practice answers researchers' calls for re-envisioned, transformative pedagogical practices that translate social justice knowledge to social action (Edwards et al., 2014; Iverson & Seher, 2017; Kenney & Wheeler, 2018).

Implications for Future Research

This study presents several implications for future research. First, participants primarily completed their classes and assistantships online with limited opportunities for in-person interactions. If I conducted this study again, I would explore HESA graduate students' critical consciousness development during an in-person diversity course to compare and contrast findings. In-person courses, peer interactions, and assistantships may produce different results. Second, this study exclusively focused on the experiences

of first-semester HESA graduate students. Future research should collect longitudinal data from point of program entry to graduation. Third, this study solely concentrated on HESA graduate student experiences. Future research should follow-up with participants within the first three years of professional practice to determine how they are enacting social justice work while navigating professional realities. Finally, this study's findings highlight the value of integrating diversity and theory. Future research should collect comparative data between HESA graduate students enrolled in a singular diversity course versus students enrolled in an embedded curriculum.

Concluding Thoughts

Developing multiculturally competent social justice advocates requires HESA graduate programs to nurture an increased aptitude for metacognition and reflection which can in turn, generate an increased aptitude for action-taking. Positioned as a pre-requisite to social action, critical reflection is vital to challenging and reshaping pervasive systematic structures (Freire, 1970, Watts et al., 2011). Before HESA graduate students can act as agents of change, they must learn how to think critically about their identities in relation to the historical roots underpinning structural inequality. A heightened locus of critical consciousness can assist new professionals in making equity-based decisions, developing inclusive practices, and cultivating a sense of belonging. Additionally, critically conscious professionals can reduce the harm minoritized populations experience due to unreflective well-intentionality. As Freire (1970) posited, the more individuals understand the historical and contemporary realities of power, privilege, and oppression, the better equipped they are to redress them. This dissertation advocates for the

incorporation of metacognitive practice alongside reflection. Highlighting the reflective and learning processes means we value the cognitive journey as much as the behavioral outcome.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Title of Research: Using Metacognitive Practices to Transform HESA Graduate Students' Understandings of Critical Consciousness
Researcher: Antonique Flood, M.Ed
IRB number: 20-E-249

You are being asked by an Ohio University researcher to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks of the research project. It also explains how your personal information/biospecimens will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to participate in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Summary of Study

Higher education/student affairs (HESA) graduate programs have attempted to prepare aspiring student affairs administrators to answer the call for increased multicultural competency through diversity courses, yet research suggests that new professionals still feel ill-prepared to navigate conversations around power, privilege, and access (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Perez et al., 2019; Reason & Broido, 2005). Researchers have recommended that HESA graduate programs adopt innovative instructional practices to help HESA graduate understand their personal and social identities in relation to structural inequality (Kennedy & Wheeler, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to explore how metacognitive practices transform HESA graduate students' understandings of critical consciousness.

Definitions

Metacognition-thinking about your thinking while engaged in learning
Critical Consciousness- understanding your personal and social identities in relation to structural inequality

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to research how HESA graduate students construct critically conscious identities using metacognitive practices. The intent of this study is to understand their experiences and how HESA graduate programs and faculty can better serve this study population.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in two (2) audio-recorded interviews lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes during this academic year at a time and

location convenient for the participant. Additionally, you will be asked to respond to three (3) journal prompts during the fourth, ninth, and eleventh weeks of the semester.

Your participation in the study will last a duration of two interviews and three journal prompts.

Risks and Discomforts
No risks or discomforts are anticipated

Benefits
This study is important to science/society because little is known about how metacognitive practices can be applied to shape HESA graduate students' construction of critical consciousness.

You may not benefit, personally by participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Records
Your study information will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym selected by you. I will also de-identify all interview transcripts after each interview. The interview recordings will be destroyed around January 2021. Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, you could receive a total of $35 dollars for participating in one interview. You will receive $10 for the first interview, $10 for the second interview, and $15 for completing all journals ($5/per journal entry. Compensation will be distributed at the end of the semester and amounts will depend on completed components.

Future Use Statement
Data/samples collected as part of this research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used for future research studies.

Contact Information
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the investigator Antonique Flood, (af342317@ohio.edu or 614-915-2543)

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664 or

hayhow@ohio.edu.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;
- you are 18 years of age or older;
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary;
- you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Version Date: [7/28/2020]

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in this study exploring how metacognitive practices transform HESA graduate students' understandings of critical consciousness.

This survey should take less than 5 minutes of your time.

Click to write the question text

- ○ First Name (e.g., Preferred Name) _____
- ○ Last Name _____
- ○ Contact email address _____
- ○ Phone Number _____
- ○ Mailing Address _____

What is your preferred way for the researcher to contact you about participating in the study?

- ○ email
- ○ text
- ○ phone call

What is your birthdate? (MM/DD/YYYY)

_____

Does Ohio University consider you an international student?

- ○ Yes (which country) _____
- ○ No

Do you identify as a

- ○ Cisgender man
- ○ Cisgender woman
- ○ Gender nonconforming
- ○ Trans*man
- ○ Trans* woman
- ○ Preferred term _____
- ○ Do not wish to disclose

Which of the following best describes your Racial / Ethnic identification? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] White
- [ ] Asian or Asian American
- [ ] Black or African American
- [ ] Latino/a/x or Hispanic
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- [ ] Other (Please Specify) _____
- [ ] Do not wish to disclose

What is the highest level of education your parent or guardian has completed?

- ○ Some high school
- ○ High school degree
- ○ Some college
- ○ Associates degree
- ○ Bachelors degree
- ○ Masters degree
- ○ Doctoral degree (Ph.D.)
- ○ Terminal degree (J.D., M.D., D.O)

Growing up, what zip code did you most associate with?

_____

What was your undergraduate major?

_____

How many years of full-time work experience did you have prior to starting the CSP program?

_____

We all hold different social identities that vary in importance to our sense of self. Please read each statement and respond by using the following scale:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My race/ethnicity is important to my sense of self.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My gender is important to my sense of self.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My sexual orientation is important to my sense of self.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My social class is important to my sense of self.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My religion/spirituality is important to my sense of self.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My national origin is important to my sense of self.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My physical/mental ability is important to my sense of self.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Have you participated in diversity/social justice education or training prior to this course? Please explain.

_____

Have you engaged in diversity/social justice work (e.g., activism, organizations, community outreach, etc) prior to this course? Please explain.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol For Initial Interview

Interview Question	How it relates to theoretical perspective?	Justification for question (Student Population)
1.) Icebreaker Question—Why did you decide to apply to a higher education program?	N/A	N/A
2.) What kinds of experiences have you had outside of higher education with diversity and social justice (e.g. participating in community protests, community organizations, engaging in conversation with someone whose viewpoint counters yours)	Flavell (1979)—Identifying previous knowledge is essential to understanding the acquisition of new information.	Hoping to understand how HESA graduate students have been socialized to diversity and social justice issues outside of educational settings.
3.) What kinds of undergraduate experiences have you had within an educational context with diversity and social justice (e.g. protests, student organizations, diversity courses)?	Flavell (1979)—Identifying previous knowledge is essential to understanding the acquisition of new information.	Hoping to understand how HESA graduate students have been socialized to diversity and social justice issues within higher education settings.
4.) How did you experience diversity and social justice before higher education (K-12, at home)?	Flavell (1979)—Identifying previous knowledge is essential to understanding the acquisition of new information.	Aiming to determine if students were introduced to diversity and social justice before college.
5.) How do you define: Diversity? Social justice?	Flavell (1979)—Identifying previous knowledge is essential to understanding the acquisition of new information.	Trying to determine students' initial understandings of these broad concepts.
6.) What diversity and social justice issues interest you? How did you develop this interest?	Flavell (1979)—Person—Probing to discover if have an awareness of their learning processes.	Aiming to pinpoint if students already engage metacognitive behavior.

5.) What diversity and social justice concepts/issues are you looking forward to learning about in this course?	Flavell (1979)— Task—Probing to highlight whether or not students set cognitive goals.	Trying to uncover whether students set cognitive learning goals prior to the research study.
6.) What are you looking forward to learning about yourself?	Flavell (1979)— Task—Probing to highlight whether or not students set cognitive goals.	Trying to uncover whether students set cognitive learning goals prior to the research study.
7.) What strategies do you use to help you learn and understand diversity and social justice concepts?	Flavell (1979)—Strategy—Probing for specific strategies students employ to maximize the learning process.	Looking to determine if students have previous experience identifying and implementing strategies towards monitoring their learning processes and/or goal attainment.
8.) How do you identify gaps in your diversity and social justice knowledge? How do you make plans for filling those gaps?	Flavell (1979)---metacognitive experiences---understanding current progress is necessary for predicting future progress and goal completion.	Trying to elicit more information about how students identify knowledge gaps and engage in continued development within/outside the classroom.
9.) How would you describe your understanding of oppression and privilege? How did you develop those understandings? How has your understanding of these terms changed over time?	Flavell (1979)—Identifying previous knowledge is essential to understanding the acquisition of new information.	Trying to determine students' initial understandings of these broad concepts, how those understandings developed, and how those understandings have changed.
10.) Can you tell me how you first became aware of your own social identities	Watts (2011)---critical reflection---self-awareness is a pre-requisite to social action.	Looking to determine if participants engage in self-reflection prior to the study.

(e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)?		
11.) What role do you think diversity and social justice should play in student affairs work?	Flavell (1979)—Identifying previous knowledge is essential to understanding the acquisition of new information.	Hoping to understand how HESA graduate students have been socialized to diversity and social justice issues outside of educational settings.
12.) What makes someone a social justice advocate?	Flavell (1979) and Watts (2011)---prior knowledge and critical reflection---enacting social justice depends on one's initial understanding of what it means to be a social justice advocate.	Trying to determine how students define advocacy.
13.) How do your social identities influence how you engage in diversity/social justice work?	Watts (2011)---prior knowledge and critical reflection---enacting social justice depends on one's initial understanding of what it means to be a social justice advocate.	Hoping to determine if students understand their social identities in relation to social justice work.
15.) On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your preparedness to act a social justice advocate within a higher education context?	Watts (2011)---political efficacy--- a measurement of one's ability to engage in political/social action.	Aiming to determine participants' comfortability and confidence in engaging in social justice work.

Appendix D: Interview Protocol For Second Interview

Interview Question	How it relates to theoretical perspective?	Justification for question (Student Population)
Icebreaker Question— 1.) How would you describe your experience in the diversity course?	N/A	N/A
2.) How have your understandings of diversity and social justice changed over the course of the class?	Flavell (1979)—Person—Probing to discover if have an awareness of their learning processes.	Aiming to understand how students' initial understandings of these concepts have changed.
4.) How has your understanding of oppression and privilege changed over the course of the class?	Flavell (1979)—Person—Probing to discover if have an awareness of their learning processes.	Trying to understand how students' initial understandings of these have changed.
5.) What kinds of undergraduate experiences have you had with guided reflection?	Flavell (1979)—Identifying previous knowledge is essential to understanding the acquisition of new information.	Looking to determine if students have engaged in reflective experiences prior to the course.
6.) What did you think of the journal prompts (e.g., helpful/unhelpful)?	N/A	N/A
7.) How did intentionally thinking about lingering questions/confusions influence your development during the course?	Flavell (1979)---metacognitive experiences---understanding current progress is necessary for predicting future progress and goal completion.	Trying to determine if metacognition around knowledge gaps influences critical consciousness.
8.) How did intentionally thinking about how you would engage in development outside the classroom influence your development during the course?	Flavell (1979)—Strategy— Probing for specific strategies students employ to maximize the learning process.	Aiming to determine if metacognition around strategy influences critical consciousness.

9.How did intentionally thinking about your personal development influence understandings of yourself during the course?	Watts (2011)---critical reflection---is the pre-requisite to social action.	Hoping to understand how students understand themselves after engaging in metacognitive reflection.
10.)How did intentionally thinking about your preparedness to act as a social justice advocate influence your comfortability and/or confidence in engaging in social justice work?	Watts (2011)---political efficacy--- a measurement of one's ability to engage in political/social action.	Trying to determine how thinking about preparedness influences students' comfortability and confidence in engaging in social justice work.

Appendix E: Journal Prompts

Welcome to Journal Prompt #1. You may answer the following questions via writing or video. The deadline to submit *Journal Prompt #1* is **Wednesday, September 30th by 11:59pm**.

Written responses: Please answer all the questions by providing reflective responses. I would appreciate at least a solid paragraph (5-7 sentences) for each question. I welcome more if the spirit of prose moves you :)

Video responses: Please answer all the questions and upload your video at the end. It would be helpful if you would clearly state the question first and then provide your response. You can use your judgment to determine what constitutes a reflective video response.

Thank you in advance for your thoughts and experiences. I appreciate your participation.

First Name

_____

Last Name

_____

Considering your Diversity course, what course assignments and/or readings have been most meaningful to you in weeks 1-4? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Based on topics covered during weeks 1-4, what new insights have you gained from engaging with the course materials and class discussions in your Diversity course?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Based on topics covered during weeks 1-4, what new questions do you have from engaging with the course materials and class discussions in your Diversity course?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Based on the topics covered during weeks 1-4, what diversity/social justice issues or concepts do you still need to grow in? What are your intentions for continued development in these areas?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Within the context of diversity and social justice, what have you learned about yourself in weeks 1-4? In what ways have you grown? In what ways have you been challenged?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your preparedness to act as an agent of change for social justice within and outside of a higher education context?

	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Rate Your Preparedness	

Please upload your video

Welcome to Journal Prompt #2. You may answer the following questions via writing or video. I would appreciate it if you could submit Journal Prompt #2 by **11:59pm** on **Thursday, October 29th**. If you need additional time, please let me know.

Written responses: Please answer all the questions by providing reflective responses. I would appreciate at least a solid paragraph (5-7 sentences) for each question. I welcome more if the spirit of prose moves you :)

Video responses: Please answer all the questions and upload your video at the end. It would be helpful if you would clearly state the question first and then provide your response. You can use your judgment to determine what constitutes a reflective video response.

Thank you in advance for your thoughts and experiences. I appreciate your participation.

First Name

_____

Last Name

_____

Considering your Diversity course, what course assignments and/or readings have been most meaningful to you in weeks 5-9? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Based on topics covered during weeks 5-9, what new insights have you gained from engaging with the course materials and class discussions in your Diversity course?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Based on topics covered during weeks 5-9, what new questions do you have from engaging with the course materials and class discussions in your Diversity course?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Based on the topics covered during weeks 5-9, what diversity/social justice issues or concepts do you still need to grow in? What are your intentions for continued development in these areas?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Within the context of diversity and social justice, what have you learned about yourself in weeks 5-9? In what ways have you grown? In what ways have you been challenged?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your preparedness to act as an agent of change for social justice within and outside of a higher education context?

	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Rate Your Preparedness	

Please email your video to af342317@ohio.edu.

Welcome to Journal Prompt #3. You may answer the following questions via writing or video. I would appreciate it if you could submit Journal Prompt #3 by **11:59pm** on **Sunday, November 29th**. If you need additional time, please let me know.

Written responses: Please answer all the questions by providing reflective responses. I would appreciate at least a solid paragraph (5-7 sentences) for each question. I welcome more if the spirit of prose moves you :)

Video responses: Please answer all the questions and upload your video at the end. It would be helpful if you would clearly state the question first and then provide your response. You can use your judgment to determine what constitutes a reflective video response.

Thank you in advance for your thoughts and experiences. I appreciate your participation.

First Name

_____

Last Name

_____

Considering your Diversity course, what course assignments and/or readings have been most meaningful to you in weeks 10-13? Why?

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Considering your Student Development Theory course, what course assignments and/or readings have been most meaningful to you in weeks 10-13? Why?

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Based on topics covered during weeks 10-13, what new insights have you gained from engaging with the course materials and class discussions in your Diversity and Student Development Theory courses?

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Based on topics covered during weeks 10-13, what new questions do you have from engaging with the course materials and class discussions in your Diversity and Student Development Theory courses?

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Based on the topics covered in your Diversity and Student Development Theory courses during weeks 10-13, what diversity/social justice issues or concepts do you still need to grow in? What are your intentions for continued development in these areas?

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Within the context of diversity and social justice, what have you learned about yourself in weeks 10-13? In what ways have you grown? In what ways have you been challenged?

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On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your preparedness to act as an agent of change for social justice within and outside of a higher education context?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate Your Preparedness	

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