An Examination of Implicit Values in Cornerstone Student Affairs Textbooks

Nathan Slife
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, nathanslife@gmail.com

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AN EXAMINATION OF IMPLICIT VALUES IN CORNERSTONE STUDENT AFFAIRS TEXTBOOKS

by

Nathan M. Slife

Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2005

Master of Arts in College Student Personnel
University of Maryland, College Park
2007

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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Department of Educational Psychology and Higher Education
College of Education
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2014
We recommend the dissertation prepared under our supervision by

Nathan Matthew Slife

entitled

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**Doctor of Philosophy - Higher Education**
Department of Educational Psychology and Higher Education

Mario Martinez, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Vicki Rosser, Ph.D., Committee Member
Edwin Gantt, Ph.D., Committee Member
Cynthia Carruthers, Ph.D., Graduate College Representative
Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D., Interim Dean of the Graduate College

December 2014
ABSTRACT

An Examination of Implicit Values in Cornerstone Student Affairs Textbooks

by

Nathan M. Slife

Dr. Mario C. Martinez, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Higher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The field of student affairs is properly cautious about indoctrination. Indoctrination, after all, clearly contradicts the field’s ethical statements and standards. These cautions have led student affairs researchers to investigate explicit values in the field to prevent explicit forms of indoctrination. However, recent investigations of implicit values in the discipline of psychology have revealed a potential new source of indoctrination not currently studied in student affairs. Specifically, psychological researchers have identified a system of implicit values called liberal individualism that has been found to be pervasive throughout the psychological discipline. Given the widely acknowledged link between student affairs and psychology, it raises the question of whether a similar kind of indoctrination is occurring in student affairs. This study is an initial investigation into whether the system of values identified as dominant in psychology, liberal individualism, currently exists within the field of student affairs.

A hermeneutic analysis was conducted on the content of cornerstone textbooks to establish if such textbooks promote implicit values aligned with the ideology of liberal individualism. Hermeneutics was used because the implicit values involved were meanings and hermeneutics has been developed as a type of qualitative investigation into meanings. Part of the hermeneutic method that was used for this study was to maximize
the openness or objectivity of the investigator to either seeing or not seeing liberal individualism. Consequently, a contrasting set of implicit values called relationality was also investigated in these texts.

The findings of this investigation provided evidence for a fairly pervasive influence of liberal individualism throughout these texts and a very limited influence of relationality. In this sense, these findings evidenced much more of a general, as opposed to a narrow, adoption of liberal individualism in the explanations and theories of the texts. This widespread individualist influence also extended to each of the eight features of liberal individualism: atomism, separation from context, artificial relationships, liberation from authority, value-freeness, happiness, instrumentalism, and autonomy. These features appeared to embody many common-sense notions of the field, such as how research is critiqued, how students develop, and how relationships thrive. The findings of this initial study could foster a whole series of productive investigations to help prevent implicit forms of indoctrination in student affairs.
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I must also thank my wife, Dr. Emily Slife, for everything she has done to support me going back to school, not to mention her tireless efforts raising our two amazing sons – Watson and Flynn – while I wrote this dissertation. Emily, words cannot convey how much I appreciate everything you have sacrificed to make this possible. I love you very much.

Lastly, I want to thank a fellow doctoral student – now a Doctor of Higher Education – who has supported me over the years with this study. Dr. Ervin, thank you for your friendship, advice, and encouragement.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom and dad, Karen and Dr. Brent D. Slife. One of the tasks I had in this study was to write about virtuous relationships. What a joy it has been to better understand this concept through the lens of your relationship.

I also want to thank my dad specifically, who is in my mind the Lebron James of theoretical psychology. Dad, asking for your advice on this study felt similar to how I imagine Lebron James’s sons must feel when they ask for their dad’s advice on their jump shot – extremely grateful and fortunate. Thank you for everything.
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Chapter 1

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The field of student affairs has long been properly cautious about indoctrination (e.g., American Council on Education, 1937; American Council on Education, Committee on Student Personnel Work, 1949; Committee on the Student in Higher Education, 1968). Indoctrination, after all, is the teaching of students to accept a set of beliefs or values uncritically (indoctrination, n. d.). Such teaching clearly contradicts the respect for a diversity of beliefs and individual differences promoted in the field’s ethical statements and standards (e.g., ACPA, 2006; CAS, 2012; NASPA, 1990) as well as the development of critical thinking promoted in the field’s “educational foundation” of student development (e.g., Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; McEwen & Talbot, 1998, p. 133; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). Student affairs researchers have appropriately addressed these ethical and developmental concerns over indoctrination by investigating the values promoted within student affairs over the past thirty years (e.g., Brown & Krager, 1985; Dalton & Healy, 1984; Evans & Reason, 2001; Sandeen; 1985b; Tull & Medrano, 2008; Upcraft, 1988; Young, 2001). These investigations have resulted in protections against indoctrination through the identification of specific values practitioners can promote that will not indoctrinate students (e.g., Reason & Broido, 2010; Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993, 2003).

As thoughtful as the field has been to prevent indoctrination, there is growing evidence in psychological research that reveals a potential new source of indoctrination that is currently unaccounted for in student affairs (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Ennis,
1982; Fowers, 1998, 2005). Psychological researchers have shown evidence that some values are going unattended that could unintentionally indoctrinate students (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Richardson, 2005). These values have been called liberal individualism, or merely individualism, and have been pervasively found throughout the discipline of psychology (e.g., Cushman, 2002; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). This finding could be problematic because many theories and practices in student affairs have their roots in psychology (e.g., Evans et al., 2010; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011).

Consequently, research in psychology on the role of implicit, or unintentional, values in practice highlights the need to study whether implicit indoctrination in student affairs currently exists. Could student affairs practitioners be indoctrinating students with liberal individualism without knowing it? Might the graduate curriculum used to teach student affairs practitioners unintentionally promote a liberal individualist ideology?

**Problem Statement**

Researchers within the discipline of psychology have discovered implicit values that might cause a hidden form of indoctrination in practice. Specifically, psychological researchers have identified a particular system of values, or ideology, called liberal individualism that is so pervasive in American culture and psychology itself that it has become hidden and could raise issues of indoctrination despite intentions to the contrary. Given the widely acknowledged link between student affairs and psychology, it raises the question of whether a similar kind of implicit indoctrination is occurring in student affairs. While current research on explicit values in student affairs provides protections against explicit forms of indoctrination, the current lack of research on implicit values in
student affairs potentially raises the question as to whether implicit forms of indoctrination are occurring. Currently, there are no studies that investigate whether student affairs professionals who receive formal educational training in higher education master’s degree programs are unintentionally indoctrinated through their graduate curriculum with a liberal individualist ideology.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dissertation is to begin a program of investigation into whether the system of values identified as dominant in psychology, liberal individualism, currently exists within the field of student affairs. This dissertation starts this program of investigation with a hermeneutic analysis of the content of two cornerstone textbooks used in master’s preparation programs for student affairs professionals. This analysis seeks to establish if such textbooks promote implicit values aligned with the ideology of liberal individualism.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used to guide this study is the dialectic. While the dialectic concept has been defined differently throughout history, the particular dialectic of this study is a hermeneutic conception of meaning that includes not only relations of similarity but also relations of difference (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Brookfield, 1987; Richardson, 2004). This conception guides analysis by providing a contrast to help the investigator become aware of meanings that have previously been implicit or reified (e.g., Rychlak, 1976, 1981). This framework is specifically used in this study because of the
dialectic quality of interpretive meanings (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press). As Rychlak (1976) has shown, meanings are not just relations of similarity; they are also relations of difference. The meaning of turning to the “left,” in a dialectical sense, means not turning to the “right.” This relation of difference is also the reason dictionaries typically include antonyms as well as synonyms in their explication of meaning.

Just as dictionaries provide antonyms and synonyms to explicate the meaning of a word, so too does this study provide relations of difference as well as relations of similarity to explicate implicit values. In this particular study, psychological research has led to the hypothesis of liberal individualism as one of the systems of values that this study will attempt to explicate. Of the contrasting systems of values in psychology, relationality appears to be favored in the literature because of its thorough contrast with liberal individualism (e.g., Richardson, 2012). In fact, the ideology of relationality includes an almost feature by feature contrast to the ideology of liberal individualism. A review of implicit values literature in psychology has revealed eight contrasting features of liberal individualism and relationality that are shown in Table 2 below and examined in greater detail in Chapter 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal Individualism</th>
<th>Relationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identity as self-contained</td>
<td>1. Identity as co-constituted by the individual and the socio-historical context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Individuals studied and understood best when separated from their context</td>
<td>2. Individuals studied and understood best in relation to their context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Individuals as primary and relationship secondary</td>
<td>3. Relationship as primary and individuals viewed as nexuses of relations or parts of the greater whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A valuing of individual freedom and liberation from tradition and moral authority</td>
<td>4. Tradition and moral authority viewed as important but not uncritically examined sources of co-constituted identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Promotion of a neutrality toward all values to allow individuals the freedom to decide values</td>
<td>5. Recognition of morality being inescapable and contextually situated within a value laden socio-historical context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individual happiness as the primary end</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Instrumentalism as a way of thinking and relating</td>
<td>7. Value-based thinking that promotes the protecting and enhancing of healthy relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Self-sufficiency as ultimate maturity because dependence on others is understood to decrease individual control and autonomy</td>
<td>8. Dependence on others as an existential fact that must be embraced for the possibilities it provides human development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

There are two research questions for this study.

1) In what ways, if any, do the two cornerstone textbooks used in master’s preparation programs for student affairs professionals contain evidence of implicit values that promote liberal individualist values and/or relationist values?

2) What is the nature of the liberal individualistic or relational features in the texts, and how might they interact with specific topics/chapters of the texts?

The first research question will find if either set of implicit values is present and perhaps prominent by identifying both the quality and quantity of these meanings and ideas in these textbooks. In this sense, this question addresses both depth (i.e., the strength and decisiveness of particular quotes and concepts) and breadth (i.e., the extent that one ideology appears to influence the concepts presented in the textbooks). This question includes the explication of the contrasting system of relationist values because of the dialectical quality of interpretive meanings. This dual search for both liberal individualistic and relational values helps control for confirmation bias in this study and ensures a hermeneutic form of objectivity. An overview of this type of hermeneutic objectivity is provided in the “Overview of Methodology” section below and a more detailed explanation is provided in Chapter 3.

The second question is a follow-up question to the first as an examination of the quality of the features of each ideology involved, if any.
Significance of the Study

The field of student affairs does not promote indoctrination. In fact, student affairs researchers attempt to prevent indoctrination from occurring in both the education of student affairs practitioners and the education of undergraduate students by practitioners. Given the substantial evidence in psychology about the role of implicit values and the psychological ties to student affairs, it becomes important to investigate whether similar values are perhaps unknowingly promoted, and thus a form of indoctrination is occurring, in the educational training of student affairs practitioners. Such investigations, no matter how they turn out, allow practitioners and educators to continually gauge results of preparation and training against the ideals they hold and value. This study also importantly brings psychological resources and methods for investigating implicit values into student affairs values research to help protect against the potential for implicit forms of indoctrination in student affairs. This use of a hermeneutic method to investigate implicit ideologies is new to student affairs and thus could significantly contribute to the investigation of values in future research.

Overview of Methodology

A hermeneutic, or interpretive, qualitative method is proposed for this study. Hermeneutics, as a methodology, has a storied past going back to the interpretation of texts with specific reference to the Bible (Packer, 2011; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). This interpretive method has undergone fundamental changes, as evidenced in the important break between 18th Century Romantic hermeneutics and 21st Century ontological hermeneutics. The primary difference between these two approaches is that
Romantic hermeneutists believed it was possible to separate subjectivity from objectivity (e.g., separating out one’s subjective biases and interpretations of a text to get at the objective meaning of the text itself) while ontological hermeneutists believe this separation is impossible (e.g., Bernstein, 1976, 1983; Gadamer, 1993).

These contrasting views on separability are highlighted in their differing approaches to validity or the prevention of confirmation bias. Thus, ontological hermeneutics is not gauged by the elimination of subjective interpretation to prevent confirmation bias, such as Romantic hermeneutics, but is instead deliberately open to alternative interpretations in a dialectical sense. This deliberative kind of openness ensures interpretations are valid, or hermeneutically objective, because the investigator is intentionally seeking out both types of contrasting interpretations. This kind of openness has four themes including: (1) general awareness of researcher interpretation, 2) softening of this interpretation, 3) development of alternative interpretations, and 4) particularizing these alternatives to the specific context. All four themes are more fully explored and explained in Chapter 3.

This study employs these four themes to explicate not only implicit values of liberal individualism within the textbooks, but also implicit values of relationality. In order to carry out this study, I carefully and thoroughly perused these texts, making note of specific passages and overarching concepts – or the absence of specific passages and overarching concepts – that appeared to embody features of either set of contrasting values. I had regular meetings with my methodologist during this study to ensure a hermeneutic form of quality control as I moved forward in my study. After I gathered and categorized my data, I analyzed this information to address my main research questions. I
then presented my analysis in a hermeneutic narrative, which not only showed quantitative percentages of liberal individualism and relationality in the texts but also presented qualitative themes, with characteristic quotes representing the meanings of each ideology I found in the texts.

**Limitations**

The major limitations of the methodology are summarized in Chapter 5 and include the following: preciseness of the data, subjectivity of dealing with meanings, validity and reliability of the findings, context of exemplary quotes, representativeness of the textbooks, disconnection of theories and practices, and the dichotomy of the two ideologies.

**Assumptions**

Ontological hermeneutists view texts, people, and the world itself as interpreted meanings, not as uninterpreted objects. There is an implicit assumption in this view that a correct or valid interpretation of meaning does exist, given a specific context. In this sense, the interpretation of texts, for example, is not an “anything goes” proposition, but can instead be correct or incorrect, valid or invalid.

**Definition of Terms**

The following list defines some of the commonly used terms within this research study. This list provides summary definitions of these terms with more discussion to accompany these definitions in Chapters 2 and 3.
• **Dialectic** – While the dialectic concept has been defined differently throughout history, the particular dialectic of this study is a hermeneutic conception of meaning that includes not only relations of similarity but also relations of difference (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Brookfield, 1987; Rychlak, 1976, 1981; Yancher & Slife, 2004).

• **Indoctrination** – The teaching of students to accept a set of beliefs or values uncritically (indoctrination, n. d.; values, n. d.)

• **Hermeneutics** – A qualitative method of interpretation (e.g., Packer, 2011; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999).
  
  o **Romantic Hermeneutics** – A branch of hermeneutics in the 18th Century that believed it was possible to separate subjectivity from objectivity to explicate a correct or valid interpretation (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Richardson, in press).

  o **Ontological Hermeneutics** – A branch of hermeneutics in the 21st Century that believes it is not possible to separate subjectivity from objectivity to explicate a correct or valid interpretation (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Richardson, in press).

• **Liberal Individualism** - A relatively unimpeded pursuit of *liberally* chosen ends in the promotion of *individual* autonomy (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Bellah et al., 1985).

• **Relationality** – A system of values that assumes the shared being of persons and their context (Slife, 2004; 2009).
• **Values** – “A person’s principles or standards of behavior; one’s judgment of what is important in life” (values, n. d.).
  
  o **Explicit Values** – Values that practitioners knowingly promote both formally (e.g., value based statements) and informally (e.g., value based practices) in their practice (e.g., Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993).
  
  o **Implicit Values** – Values that practitioners unknowingly promote both formally (e.g., value based statements) and informally (e.g., value based practices) in their practice (e.g., Cushman, 1995; Fowers, 2005; Strange, 1994; Young, 2003).

**Organization of Study**

This study first reviews literature in student affairs on explicit and implicit values. Next, this study reviews literature on implicit values in psychology which has consistently shown the dominance of liberal individualism in the discipline. To examine whether liberal individualism is a part of the field of student affairs, a hermeneutic analysis of the content of widely used textbooks in the education of student affairs master’s students was conducted. The findings of this analysis are presented and discussed as an initial investigation into the role of implicit values in the field.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The field of student affairs has long had important cautions with respect to indoctrination in student affairs practices (e.g., American Council on Education, 1937; American Council on Education, Committee on Student Personnel Work, 1949; Committee on the Student in Higher Education, 1968). These cautions are the result of largely ethical and developmental concerns that become clear upon examination of the definition of indoctrination. As defined in the Oxford Dictionary, indoctrination is the “teach[ing of] a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically” (indoctrination, n. d.).

Ethically, student affairs professionals have largely followed profession wide ethical statements (e.g., ACPA, 2006; NASPA, 1990) and standards (e.g., CAS, 2012) that stress the importance of respecting the diversity of beliefs and individual differences of students. Therefore, the teaching of a student or group of students to accept any set of beliefs uncritically would likely be considered disrespectful to the diversity of student beliefs and differences and thus unethical within the context of these statements and standards. Similarly, from a developmental perspective, many theories of student development used within student affairs stress the importance of critical thinking (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). Thus, teaching students to uncritically accept a set of beliefs would be contrary to much student development theory, theory that has been considered by prominent student affairs
scholars as both a “hallmark” and the “educational foundation” of the student affairs profession (McEwen & Talbot, 1998, p. 133; Reason & Broido, 2010).

At root within any “set of beliefs,” and thus fundamental to an understanding of indoctrination, are values. The Oxford Dictionary defines values as “a person’s principles or standards of behavior; one’s judgment of what is important in life” (values, n. d.). In this sense, indoctrination occurs with teaching an uncritical acceptance of what is important, what matters or has worth, or simply stated, the teaching of an uncritical acceptance of any set of values.

The field of student affairs has historically changed its position on how practitioners should best work with values and how the field should prevent the indoctrination of values on students (e.g., Dalton, 1985; Slife, Smith, & Burchfield, 2003). The following section reviews two important positions the field has taken toward values and the resulting indoctrination prevention strategies. It should be noted that the field of study of student affairs contains only a select number of researchers examining values. Thus, while the following review will comprehensively examine values research in student affairs, this examination will primarily revolve around the investigations performed by John Dalton and Robert Young. These two scholars currently comprise the majority of values research performed in the field in relation to the prevention of indoctrination.

This literature review will first examine research on the prevention of indoctrination within student affairs including value neutral prevention efforts, challenges to these efforts, and the resulting explicit values investigations in the field. Psychological research on implicit values will follow with a description of the contrasting systems of
implicit values called liberal individualism and relationality as well as the theoretical framework for this study, the dialectic. The chapter will conclude with the problematic implications of liberal individualism for psychology.

**Preventing Indoctrination through Value Neutrality in Student Affairs**

The field of student affairs began to largely hold a position of value neutrality in the 1960s in which it was thought possible for practitioners to remain “neutral” to the diversity of values encountered in their practice (e.g., Dalton, 1985; Dalton, Barnett, & Healy, 1982; Smith & Peterson, 1977). Dalton (1985) went so far as to identify this “neutral” position toward values as later becoming the “dominating credo in student affairs practice” by the 1980s. This credo was described by Dalton as an “open, tolerating, non-judgmental approach [that included] the impression that values are entirely relative to individuals and situations” (p. 23). Such an approach was apparently thought to prevent indoctrination of any values by allowing practitioners to be neutral to, or “tolerate,” all values. In fact, according to Dalton (1985), one of the primary aims of a value neutral approach in student affairs was for practitioners to “avoid transmitting or endorsing any particular set of moral values or beliefs” to their students (p. 20).

A field of study such as student affairs that has been described as centered on the values of the university (e.g., Sandeen, 1985) as well as the development of student values and moral reasoning about those values (e.g., Dalton, 1985; Young, 1993), would logically appear to embrace the value neutral promise of being able to work with values while not promoting any specific set of values through this work, thus preventing even the potential for indoctrination. Student affairs researchers, in fact, appeared to not only
embrace value neutral practices for developing student values at this time (Dalton, Barnett, & Healy, 1982), but also value neutral, or objective, research methods for the examination of such practices. Perhaps not surprisingly, the position of value neutrality was empirically confirmed as the “dominant” approach used by practitioners in the field (Dalton, Barnett & Healy, 1982).

Dalton, Barnett, and Healy’s (1982) empirical examination of four broadly used educational approaches to values development in student affairs evidenced a strong connection for the preference of a value neutral approach by practitioners because of the belief that using such an approach would prevent indoctrination. These researchers surveyed over 1,000 chief student personal administrators at NASPA member institutions to identify the prevalence of four different educational approaches to values development including: values transmission, values clarification, moral development, and moral action (Dalton, 1985; Dalton, Barnett, & Healy, 1982). The research findings on the educational approaches of values transmission and values clarification are particularly relevant for this review because of these approaches’ contrasting aims in regard to value neutrality and indoctrination.

According to Dalton, Barnett, and Healy (1982), the purpose of value transmission was to “instill or inculcate in students certain values which are considered necessary or desirable” (p. 23). In this sense, practitioners using this approach were not seeking a stance of neutrality toward all values, but were instead promoting certain values to students deemed “vital to society.” (p. 23). The value clarification approach, in contrast, was examined by these researchers as “quite different from transmission since there is a conscious effort to avoid direct inculcation of values” (p. 23). Dalton et al.
(1982) further examined this contrast by describing the clarification approach as one that “has a value neutral orientation and does not seek to promote any values as preferable to others… [and is] especially useful in situations where there is concern about indoctrination of values” (p. 23).

The values clarification approach was rated the highest of all approaches regardless of institutional type and size in the study and was identified by the researchers as “clearly the most popular choice of the approaches” (p. 28). In contrast, the researchers identified the value transmission approach as the least popular choice for practitioners, “perhaps because [the value transmission approach] was perceived as implying the direct imposition of values on students” (Dalton et al., 1982, p. 28). The study suggests that a neutral position toward values in student affairs continued to be preferred by practitioners in the early 1980’s because of the belief that the use of such an approach, through value development activities such as values clarification, would prevent indoctrination.

**Challenging Value Neutral Prevention Efforts**

While the value neutral position was clearly popular in the field of student affairs in the 1980s, a select group of researchers began challenging both the tenability of the value neutral position and the indoctrination prevention strategies stemming from this position in the late 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Dalton, 1977, 1985; Martin, 1977; Morrill, 1981; Rogers, 1989). These scholars posed both practical and theoretical challenges against the position of value neutrality through their work in textbooks, handbooks, and monographs. This work was intended for both current and future practitioners in the form of master’s students as well as scholarly journals intended for researchers in the field.
(e.g., Evans et al., 2010; Komives & Woodard, 2003). Both practical and theoretical challenges are reviewed below.

**Practical Challenges**

Dalton’s (1985) monograph exemplifies the practical challenges posed by student affairs researchers in the late 1970s and 1980s. The practical purpose and challenge against value neutrality is apparent in Dalton’s opening remarks in which he described the monograph as practitioner oriented and written to potentially, “enable those who claim to be value-neutral to resolve the inexorable moral dilemmas confronted in college student personnel work” (p. i). As Dalton would later suggest, one way to apparently “enable” such value neutral practitioners to resolve the “inexorable moral dilemmas” of student affairs work was to both directly challenge the practicality of a value neutral position to such dilemmas as well as provide a practical alternative in its place. Dalton subsequently provided two practical challenges in the monograph as well as one general alternative to value neutrality.

The first general practical challenge dealt with the practical impossibility of practitioners being neutral about “important value issues” of student conduct, cheating, or even birth control decisions. As Dalton stated, “One may start off with a neutral position on the values implicit in the situation, but eventually one gets to the unavoidable point of helping students to struggle with issues of responsibility, consideration, and fairness” which, according to Dalton, are issues of values. Dalton went onto practically state that, “Even though one might like to remain neutral, circumstances seldom permit that luxury” (p. 21).
Dalton challenged the possibility that practitioners can remain neutral to values by referencing common value dilemmas encountered in student affairs practice. Thus, when a practitioner is asked by a student for advice about the dilemma of “deciding on birth control and abortion services,” that practitioner, according to Dalton, will unavoidably promote some set of values over another based on their “considerations and decisions” about the dilemma that would inform any answer they would provide the student. Value neutrality appears to be both impractical and logically impossible in such a scenario.

The second general practical challenge was Dalton’s (1985) critique of the popular practitioner approach of values clarification, often used by practitioners when faced with such value dilemmas in an effort to avoid promoting any specific values and to instead help students clarify their own values (e.g., Dalton, Barnett, & Healy, 1982). Such an approach would presumably allow practitioners to achieve a degree of neutrality in regard to the value issues presented by students. Thus, practitioners would effectively avoid giving any value-laden advice to students by focusing on value-neutral clarification activities.

Dalton (1985) went on to challenge the presumed neutrality of these values clarification activities when he stated that, “[i]n practice the “hidden agenda” of values always comes through and students are quick to pick up the implicit hypocrisy of such double messages” (p. 55). Dalton appeared to suggest that even when practitioners are not formally stating values to students through direct advice, rules, or regulations, these practitioners are still informally promoting a “hidden agenda” of values through the clarification activities themselves. Students are “quick” to see the double hypocritical message from practitioners about values when these practitioners seek to avoid formally
promoting values to students by using clarification activities while still informally promoting specific values through such activities. As student affairs researchers have speculated (e.g., Dalton, Barnet, & Healy, 1982; Dalton, 1985), the use of such clarification activities in practice informally promotes the values of tolerance, openness, and an individual relativity of values.

The practical challenges raised by Dalton (1985) against value neutrality and value neutral clarification activities suggested the possibility that values were always being promoted by practitioners either formally or informally. It thus appeared impractical and logically impossible for practitioners to ever be neutral to values in student affairs. This led to Dalton’s alternative call for the general formalization of values in student affairs when he stated, “[i]n view of the increasing urgency of ethical issues and problems which confront students, it is important that student affairs staff take a more formal and active role in promoting values education as part of their student development efforts” (p. 26). Such a formalized role of values development would allow practitioners and the larger field to formally examine the values practitioners should promote in their practice instead of allowing for the potentially wide ranging informal promotion of values in the field.

**Theoretical Challenges**

Researchers would later put forward theoretical challenges against the position of value neutrality in student affairs that would result in an increase of the types of values student affairs practitioners might promote in practice to include not only explicit values, but implicit values as well (e.g., Dalton, 1993; Rogers, 1989; Strange, 1994). As Rogers (1989) stated, “[v]alues may often be articulated explicitly, but in a more important sense
they function *implicitly* as operating principles” (emphasis added, p. 5). In this sense, Dalton’s (1985) prior assertion that practitioners formally and informally promoted values in their practice would be categorized as explicit, knowingly promoted values. In contrast, the additional values practitioners unknowingly promote to students would be categorized as implicit values.

This theoretical challenge, put forward by multiple researchers (e.g., Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006; Dalton, 1993; Strange, 1994), appeared to assert that a neutral position toward values in student affairs was even more untenable than Dalton (1985) suggested because practitioners were inescapably promoting values in their practice, both explicitly and implicitly. Student affairs researchers subsequently questioned how practitioners might promote values to students without knowing when such promotion was occurring (e.g., Glasser, 1999; Strange, 1994; Young, 2003). Strange’s (1994) review and examination of student development theory is examined below in regard to how practitioners might implicitly promote values in practice.

Strange’s (1994) examination of student development theory included an analysis of the value dimensions of American higher education generally and student development specifically. As Strange (1994) stated, “[e]ducation by its very nature is both a purveyor and process of culture. In that sense, all educational systems embrace certain values and assumptions (to the exclusion of others) thought to be important in a particular culture...” (p. 409). While many values are explicitly embraced by educational systems, Strange (1994) appeared to suggest that certain values (i.e., implicit values) can become so pervasive that they can appear commonsensical and subsequently be promoted both unquestioningly and unknowingly by practitioners within a specific system.
Strange (1994) put forward the “Western” cultural values of independence and autonomy as examples of potential implicit values in American higher education generally and student developmental theory specifically. As Strange (1994) examined, “[i]n American culture, definitions of growth and maturity, key constructs in any student development model, are also embedded in a premium placed on independence and autonomy as signs of having reached an advanced level of development.” While, according to Strange (1994), such “definitions of growth and maturity” might be “superseded” by contrasting values in an “Eastern” culture, there still existed the possibility that the Western values undergirding such definitions might become so pervasively held and unchallenged in American higher education that they ceased being mere debatable values of development and instead became developmental truisms. Such truisms would likely be unknowingly promoted by practitioners, making a truly value-neutral stance appear even more untenable in the field.

**Implications of Practical and Theoretical Challenges**

The implications that arise from practical and theoretical challenges against the position of value neutrality appear to be twofold. The first implication appears to be both a practical and theoretical awareness that the promotion of values by practitioners in student affairs is inescapable. As Dalton (1993) stated, “there is no escaping the communication of values no matter how much one tries to espouse a value-neutral position. All we have to do is inspect our choices and decisions to discover how inescapable values are” (p. 88).

Student affairs researchers sought to broaden the awareness of promoted values within the field to include explicit and implicit values. According to these researchers,
practitioners not only knowingly promote values in both formal and informal student interactions, but also unknowingly promote values in these same interactions (e.g., Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006; Strange, 1994, Young, 2003). In this sense, explicit values are values held consciously by practitioners and are promoted either formally or informally while implicit values are often implicitly promoted as axiomatic developmental concepts instead of as contestable values. Such implicit values would remain outside of the conscious awareness of practitioners as values as long as such values were instead viewed as uncontestable or unquestionable developmental concepts (e.g., Strange, 1994).

The second implication is the promotion of an alternative conception for how indoctrination occurs in student affairs. This conception is an alternative to previous value neutral conceptions (e.g., Dalton, 1985; Dalton, Barnett, & Healy, 1982; Smith & Peterson, 1977) that primarily appeared to view indoctrination as occurring when an active value promoter (e.g., a student affairs practitioner) promoted a set of values to a passive value receiver (e.g., a student in higher education). Students were often assumed to have a passive, uncritically accepting role and thus the task of preventing indoctrination was placed on practitioners through their attempts to “avoid” promoting values to students in their practice (e.g., Dalton, 1985; Dalton, Barnett, & Healy, 1982).

From such a value neutral conception of indoctrination, the practical and theoretical realizations that practitioners inescapably promote values would appear to be paired with the logical realization that practitioners inescapably indoctrinate. Dalton (1993) noted the popularity of this value neutral conception of indoctrination in student affairs when he stated, “[u]nfortunately, student affairs staff too often conclude that any
advocacy of values in leadership roles entails moralization or indoctrination (emphasis added, p. 89). However, as Dalton (1993) and other student affairs researchers (e.g., Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006; Young, 1997, 2003) would contend, the alternative conception of how indoctrination occurs in student affairs recognized the necessity of practitioners inescapably promoting values while still allowing for indoctrination to be prevented in the field.

The alternative conception of how indoctrination occurs in the field places the task of preventing indoctrination on both practitioners (i.e., value promoters) and students (i.e., value receivers) (e.g., Dalton, 1985, 1993; Moore & Hamilton, 1993; Young, 1993, 2003). Under this conception, both value promoters and receivers are tasked to identify and critically evaluate values. Dalton (1985, 1993) evidenced this alternative approach by calling for practitioners to identify and evaluate the values they were promoting by formalizing such values in higher education. Dalton also recognized the active role played by students in their own value development when he pointed out to practitioners how “quick” students were to identify value neutral practices actually promoting values. Further evidence of this alternative approach is seen in the rise of practitioners teaching critical thinking concepts to students through student development theory in order to help students better critically evaluate values in higher education (e.g., Evans et al., 2010; Moore & Hamilton, 1993; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). These new tasks of indoctrination prevention for both practitioners and students lead to the consideration of an alternative approach to help guide research to prevent indoctrination in student affairs.
An Alternative Approach to Prevent Indoctrination

The alternative approach to prevent indoctrination focused research efforts to support the active roles that both practitioners (i.e., value promoters) and students (i.e., value receivers) play in preventing indoctrination in student affairs. Thus, practitioners have been supported through values research focusing on (1) identifying values promoted by practitioners and (2) evaluating the appropriateness of such values within student affairs and higher education in regard to indoctrination. Similarly, students have been supported through values research largely focusing on promoting student awareness and critical thinking about values in higher education. Evidence of this alternative approach to prevent indoctrination is apparent in much explicit values research in student affairs and the review below is structured accordingly.

Explicit Values Research in Student Affairs

Values research on explicit values in student affairs involves an awareness of both formal and informal explicit values. Formal explicit values are generally identified in the literature as values that (1) have been formally examined in the field, (2) have a formal structure for being promoted by practitioners, and (3) are values practitioners are aware of and formally promote to students (e.g., Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993). Informal explicit values are generally identified in the literature as values that (1) have not been formally examined in the field, (2) do not have a formal structure for being promoted by practitioners, and (3) are values practitioners are aware of and informally promote to students (e.g., Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993). Thus, while practitioners are aware of both formal and informal explicit values, students are often only aware of formal explicit values.
In this way, much values research has sought to identify and examine informal explicit values held by practitioners for the purpose of formalizing their promotion to students (e.g., Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993). Such research has often resulted in the identification of a variety of value priorities for the field to consider formally promoting (e.g., Barr, 1987; Brown & Krager, 1985; Dalton & Healy, 1984; Evans & Reason, 2001; Sandeen; 1985b; Upcraft, 1988), including value priorities from other fields such as biomedical ethics (e.g., Kitchner, 1984, 1985). Research on explicit values has also assessed practitioner agreement with formalized value priorities from the field of nursing (e.g., Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993) as an additional way to identify informal explicit values held by practitioners.

While the many types of explicit values research have been beneficial for the field of student affairs, the explicit values research that began as a study of practitioner agreement with the value priorities of nursing has been unparalleled in student affairs because of its over 20 year line of inquiry and overall impact on student affairs researchers and practitioners (e.g., Reason & Broido, 2010; Tull & Medrano, 2008; Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2003). This line of explicit values research, later called “essential values” research, sought to identify and formally promote the values most important, or essential, to the field of student affairs (Young & Elfrink, 1991a). Such research was highly promoted because of the benefits of formalizing the promotion of essential values of the field instead of informally promoting a potentially wide variety of values which might contribute to the indoctrination of students in higher education. Not only would students likely not be aware of such informal values, limiting their own critical thinking and analysis, but the field as a whole
would also not be able to critically examine the appropriateness of such values and would instead have to rely on what Young and Elfrink (1991b) described as the “good intentions” of value promoters (p. 115). Such informal “good intentions” might be found as problematic when formally examined within the field (Young & Elfrink, 1991b). Thus, the next section reviews research conducted on the “essential values” of student affairs as an exemplar of explicit values research in the field.

**Identifying explicit values.** The essential values research of the field began when Young and Elfrink (1991a) surveyed a systematically selected sample of 90 student affairs professionals about their perceptions of seven value priorities identified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN]. These values included altruism, equality, aesthetics, freedom, human dignity, justice, and truth. While these values were not identified from student affairs documents or practices, Young and Elfrink (1991) “saw similarities between nursing and student affairs work that justified the use of the AACN values in an initial investigation of the essential values of student affairs work” (p. 48). These similarities were largely based on Young and Elfrink’s (1991) observation that both fields were similarly “helping professions.”

Young and Elfrink (1991) found that 97% of participants answered that all seven values were essential for student affairs. Furthermore, while results of the open-ended questions indicated that participants considered the list of seven values as “comprehensive,” the semantic domain analysis suggested an additional value of community (Young & Elfrink, 1991). Thus, the findings from Young and Elfrink’s (1991) study identified eight essential values of student affairs work. One limitation of this study was that “[e]ven though the respondents were able to modify, add, or delete
values [when taking the survey]...one cannot assume that the respondents would have produced an identical list on their own” (Ibid, p. 50). In this way, while the eight values identified were empirically tested, it is not clear if these values would have been identified from a completely open examination of purely espoused statements of informal values held by student affairs practitioners.

Young and Elfrink (1991) concluded with a “plea for further study” of essential student affairs values because of the non-stability of values in the changing culture (p. 54). In this way, Young and Elfrink (1991) stated that the list of values identified in the study was tied to a specific cultural time and place that, “…is a product of this social era. An earlier list would not have been exactly the same. Future social priorities will alter the list again” (p. 54). Thus, the importance of culture and “social priorities” to shape the essential values identified in this study required additional research to continually update the list for practitioners.

Young (1993a) produced the first empirical examination to critically examine Young and Elfrink’s (1991) list of “essential” values. Young (1993) coordinated a group of student affairs researchers to examine the essential values identified by Young and Elfrink’s (1991) study in a coordinated journal issue of “New Directions for Student Services” in regard to the current interpretations of the values “within the profession and the rest of the academy” (p. 2). These investigators empirically and theoretically affirmed the validity of these eight values for the field and provided suggestions for formally promoting these values for practitioners “through personal decision making, in teaching, and through leadership in our institutions” (Young, 1993, p. 2). Dalton (1993) would go on to examine the validity of these values for all of higher education when he stated:
“the essential values are so grounded in the core values of higher education that it is difficult to imagine a modern college or university in which there was serious debate about the worth of such essential values as truthfulness, freedom, justice, and community.” P. 90

While Young’s (1993) empirical affirmation of the essential values identified by Young and Elfrink (1991) was performed 20 year ago, the essential values this study affirmed have remained remarkably stable over time in findings from additional studies examining these essential values specifically (e.g., Reason & Broido, 2010; Tull & Medrano, 2008; Young, 1997, 2001, 2003) and studies examining the values of higher education and student affairs generally (e.g., Evans & Reason, 2001; Upcraft, 1998).

However, in the recent conceptual work of Reason and Broido (2010) on values in student affairs, they not only affirmed these eight essential values, but also proposed an additional ninth value of social justice. This proposal for an additional value, while not empirically confirmed, lends support for the changeableness initially suggested by Young and Elfrink (1991a), even if such changeableness appears to be much slower than initially suggested.

The extensive research on “essential” values in student affairs over the past 20 years has produced an empirically confirmed list of explicit values for student affairs practitioners to formally promote that in turn has largely reduced the variance, or “play,” of informal values promoted by practitioners. This logical reduction has occurred from the identification of values essential for both the teaching of student affairs practitioners in their graduate education (e.g., Young and Elfrink, 1991; Young, 2003) as well as the expected use of these values by practitioners in their subsequent practice with students.
(Dalton, 1993; Reason & Broido, 2010; Young, 1993, 2003). In addition to empirically confirming a list of “essential” explicit values, student affairs researchers have rigorously examined the promotion of such values by practitioners to help prevent indoctrination from occurring in the field.

**Examining the promotion of explicit values.** Student affairs investigators have appeared to concurrently identify and examine the potential promotion of “essential values” in practice before formally suggesting for practitioners to promote such values to students (e.g., Dalton, 1993; Young, 1993, 2001, 2003). These examinations largely used a type of values classification promoted in the discipline of psychology by Rokeach (1968). Rokeach (1968) suggested that values can be classified as either “terminal” or “instrumental,” with terminal values focusing on moral ends and instrumental values focusing on moral means. Dalton (1993) characterized each set of values for student affairs practitioners when he stated that terminal values were, “…highly personal and subjective…the stuff of religions, social and political ideologies, and individual dreams and desires” while instrumental values dealt with, “[how] individuals manage their professional conduct, especially how they treat other people” (p. 89). Thus, Dalton appeared to suggest that terminal values were highly subjective and likely dogmatically promoted while instrumental values were more objective and open to discussion.

The differences between instrumental and terminal values led student affairs researchers (e.g., Dalton, 1993; Young, 2001, 2003) to suggest that the promotion of terminal values would likely lead to indoctrination while instrumental values would not. In this way, it appeared that the promotion of subjectively held terminal values would likely hinder the active role of critical thinking by the value receiver (i.e., students) while
the promotion of more objectively asserted instrumental values would likely not hinder this same active role. Dalton examined this difference in promoting instrumental and terminal values when he stated, “[i]t is one thing to advocate that people be treated fairly, equally, truthfully, justly, and so on [with instrumental values]; it is quite another matter to proscribe the content of their beliefs, visions and ultimate convictions [with terminal values]” (emphasis added, p. 89-90). Practitioners advocating for instrumental values appeared to necessarily assume and promote the active and critical thinking role of the students they are advocating to, while practitioners proscribing terminal values appeared to assume and promote a passive and uncritically accepting role of students.

While there has been some variance in student affairs studies examining if all eight “essential values” should be characterized as terminal or instrumental (e.g., Tull & Medrano, 2008), the overall consensus appears to be that every “essential value” should be classified as instrumental (e.g., Dalton, 1993; Young, 1993, 2001, 2003). Young (2001) contributed to this theoretical consensus when he stated, “[h]igher education, student affairs, and scholarship are instruments more than ends. Their value is not sanctified even though it can be expressed in sanctimonious terms. The academy, all its people, and all its functions involve middle-sized moral values, means more than ends, lowercase virtues instead of Virtue with a capital V.” (p. 321).

This theoretical consensus about the appropriateness of promoting “essential values” has spurred on the promotion of these values to current and future student affairs professionals through their publication in such resources as widely referenced student affairs handbooks (e.g., Komives & Woodard, 2003; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011) that, according to researchers (e.g., Reason & Kimball, 2012), are the most frequently used.
texts to train student affairs professionals in best practices. The concurrent promotion of “essential values” and critical thinking strategies for examining such values to undergraduate students that student affairs professionals work with in higher education has similarly appeared to focus on graduate education and resources used in this education of student affairs professionals.

**Promoting student awareness and critical thinking.** The research to both identify and examine the “essential values” has ultimately led to the promotion of these values as well as critical thinking strategies in student affairs graduate programs (e.g., Evans et al., 2010; Moore & Hamilton, 1993; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). This focus on the graduate education of future student affairs practitioners appears largely based on the perceived future influence such practitioners will likely have on students (e.g., Evans et al., 2010; Moore & Hamilton, 1993; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011; Young & Elfrink, 1991a). As Young and Elfrink (1991a) explained, “[i]f student affairs workers are to be values leaders on campus, then their master’s degree education should support their performance of this function. They should receive values education as graduate students if they are to provide values education to undergraduate students” (p.109).

This focusing on the education of future practitioners to ultimately reach their future undergraduate students appears to be one of the main ways student affairs researchers have promoted undergraduate student awareness and critical thinking about explicit values in general and the “essential values” specifically. It was in this sense that Moore and Hamilton (1993) suggested for future student affairs master’s curricula to “[t]each critical thinking skills. Then, teach our graduate students how to teach undergraduates those skills through cocurriculum” (p. 83). Similarly, these same
researchers also called for future master’s curricula to formally promote the essential values as the “core values” and “culture” of the student affairs profession (Moore & Hamilton, 1993).

**The Important Role of Textbooks in Student Affairs Master’s Programs**

The use of foundational textbooks (i.e., Evans et al., 2010; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011) in support of the student affairs master’s curricula over the years has become increasingly important because of (1) the lack of accreditation of such curricula (e.g., Arminio, 2009; Arminio & Gochenauer, 2012; McEwen & Talbot, 1998) and (2) the important “gatekeeper” role such textbooks currently serve for student development theory in the field (e.g., Reason & Kimball, 2012). Thus, while a recent unpublished study conducted by Kuk and Cuyjet (2009) found that 33.3% of the student affairs master’s programs in the ACPA Preparation Program Directory in 2007 voluntarily followed the CAS professional preparation standards, it is still difficult to accurately ascertain potential shared traits of student affairs master’s curricula in the different master’s programs across the nation. However, potentially differing student affairs graduate programs have increasingly become known for widely using specific handbooks and textbooks (i.e., Evans et al., 2010; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011) to focus on the multiple theories of student development (e.g., Love, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012) as well as practical theories of student affairs administration (e.g., Reason & Kimball, 2012) that are being taught to master’s students.

The widespread use of Schuh, Jones and Harper’s (2011) “Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession” and Evans et al.’s (2010) “Student Development in College” in student affairs graduate programs appears to be in direct relation to the
important gatekeeper role these textbooks serve for theory in the field. For example, Reason & Kimball (2012) suggested that the publication of theory into such “student development or student affairs textbooks (e.g., Evans et al., 2010; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011)” is an acknowledgment of the theory’s “acceptance in student affairs” (p. 365). Furthermore, researchers such as Love (2012) have identified Evans et al’s (2010) textbook as “the student development text used in a vast majority of master’s programs” (p. 185) while Reason and Kimball (2012) identified Schuh, Jones, and Harper’s (2011) textbook as “used most frequently to train student affairs practitioners…in professional best practices” (p. 360).

It appears that using Schuh, Jones and Harper’s (2011) and Evans et al.’s (2010) textbooks in master’s programs has become vital for both the education of master’s students that will be future practitioners and the future education of undergraduates served by these practitioners. In this sense, these textbooks lie at the important crossroads of values research supporting both practitioners (i.e., value promoters) and their future undergraduate students (i.e., value receivers) for the prevention of indoctrination in student affairs. In fact, for the past three editions of “Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession”, the “essential values” of student affairs have been prominently displayed for master’s students to formally learn and subsequently promote to undergraduate students (Komives, Woodard & Associates, 1996; Komives & Woodard, 2003; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). Similarly, theories of critical thinking and moral reasoning have been prominently displayed and updated in both textbooks with Evans et al’s (2010) textbook displaying student developmental theories in depth for future and current student affairs practitioners.
In comparison, Schuh, Jones and Harper’s (2011) text broadly covers professional best practices in the field while Evans et al.’s (2010) text specifically focuses on student development theory. In this sense, many of the theories covered in depth by Evans et al. are only briefly covered by Schuh, Jones and Harper. However, Schuh, Jones and Harper’s text additionally covers such professional topics as: the historical and contemporary context, professional foundations and principles, organizing and managing programs and services, and essential competencies for student affairs professionals. Lastly, Schuh, Jones and Harper’s text is edited with different authors per chapter while Evans et al’s text not edited.

The explicit values research of the “essential values” of student affairs has thus formalized the promotion of such values for researchers, practitioners, and undergraduate students resulting in multiple critical examinations of such values by value promoters and receivers. The promotion of these values in cornerstone textbooks (e.g., Evans et al., 2010; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011) is a testament to their importance in the field as well as the importance of explicit values researchers investigating such values within student affairs.

Implicit Values Research in Student Affairs

Student affairs researchers have long evidenced an awareness of implicit values in the field (e.g., Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Dalton, 1993; Rogers, 1989; Strange, 1994; Young, 2003). However, there is a conspicuous absence of research on implicit values in student affairs in regard to the prevention of indoctrination of such values. Thus, unlike the extensive investigations of explicit values that have served to support practitioners, researchers have neither conducted investigations identifying potential
implicit values in the field nor examined how such values might currently be promoted by practitioners.

The absence of implicit values research in student affairs has been made even more conspicuous by recent examinations of the potential effects of such values when allowed to proceed potentially unchecked within the field. For example, Young (2003) appeared to suggest that the actions of practitioners in the field might “subconsciously” be guided by such values. As Young stated, “some values are recognized consciously; they serve as personal mission statements, but many values lie beneath the surface of knowing, guiding activities such as teaching, counseling, and administration through a subconscious ideology” (p. 97). Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm (2006) similarly raised concern about potentially unrecognized and unarticulated “gaps” between implicit and explicit values that might lead to unchecked indoctrination in the field. In this sense, the “subconscious ideology” potentially guiding practitioner actions might not only differ from the “essential values” of the field, but may completely contrast with these explicit values in unknown ways.

The significance of implicit values in regard to indoctrination in student affairs cannot be understated. Not only can such values apparently lead to indoctrination in the same way as explicit values, but their implicit status, as examined by Young (2003) and Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm (2006), makes them potentially even more dangerous in regard to indoctrination and potential problematic practices because implicit values are not readily acknowledged within the field. It was in this sense that student affairs theorists Moore and Hamilton (1993) called for student affairs master’s curricula to not only explicitly promote the “essential values,” but to also “[t]each students how to
recognize implied values in the words and behaviors of others” (p. 83). However, in regard to the general absence of implicit values research in the field, this call has gone unanswered, leaving important support for both student affairs master’s students and their future undergraduate students lacking.

The general absence of implicit values research in student affairs has led some researchers to look to other fields and disciplines for guidance on such values research (e.g., Bensimon, 2007). Bensimon (2007) notably “drew heavily” on the discipline of psychology for guidance in her study of the potential impact of implicit values on student affairs practitioners helping students succeed in college. While this study does not identify implicit values or examine how such values might be promoted in student affairs, it does point to the discipline of psychology as a potential untapped source of information for not only how to possibly investigate implicit values in student affairs, but also which implicit values should be investigated in relation to preventing their indoctrination. The section below follows Bensimon’s (2007) lead to review implicit values research in psychology to fill in the absence of such research in student affairs.

**Psychological Research on Implicit Values**

The discipline of psychology has been at the forefront of implicit values research within the social sciences for over thirty years (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Ennis, 1982; Fowers, 1998, 2005; Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Frank, 1978; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Slife, Reber, & Richardson, 2004; Slife & Williams, 1995). In fact, the American Psychological Association has a specific division (i.e., the Division of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology) that has been devoted to such research (e.g.,
Cushman, 2002; Richardson, 2012). Members of this division have often acted as implicit value “watchdogs” for the larger discipline by explicating and critically evaluating the implicit values and assumptions of much mainstream psychological theory, research, and practice (e.g., Cushman, 1990; Freeman, 2012). This section reviews such research within psychology in order to fill current gaps of implicit values research in student affairs.

Investigations of implicit values in psychology have been wide ranging. Such investigations include examinations of psychological theories such as psychoanalysis and positive psychology (e.g., Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Slife & Richardson, 2008), examinations of psychological practices, such as psychotherapy in general and marital therapy specifically (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Fowers, 1998, 2005), and even examinations of qualitative and quantitative research methods themselves (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Packer, 2011). While these investigations reflect the diverse and broad discipline of psychology, the implicit values explicated by these investigations have remained remarkably consistent.

According to multiple psychological researchers, one set of implicit values has emerged repeatedly from these investigations, liberal individualism (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Fowers, 1998, 2004; Frank, 1978; Richardson, 2004; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Slife, Reber, & Richardson, 2004). As Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) stated in their review and examination of psychological theory and practice, “Some set of social and moral commitments, usually unacknowledged, underpin all psychological theories and interpretations of research findings. Most of these theories and interpretations appear to be decisively colored by a
variant of liberal individualism” (p. 48). This prominent set of values is ultimately important to this study because liberal individualism is possibly a significant implicit set of values in the field of student affairs. Consequently, it is important to seek conceptual clarity about the nature of this implicit value system, at least as understood by psychological researchers.

**Liberal Individualism**

In its simplest form, liberal individualism has been defined as a relatively unimpeded pursuit of *liberally* chosen ends in the promotion of *individual* autonomy (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Bellah et al., 1985). Individuals, viewed from the liberal individualist mindset, are generally considered to be free, or liberated, to do what they want, as long as they do not impinge on the inherent rights and dignity of other “liberated” individuals (e.g., Sandel, 1996, 1998). This position may sound not only familiar but also positive and perhaps even axiomatic. Indeed, there is surely no doubt about the positive side of liberal individualism (e.g., Reber & Osbeck, 2005; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Upon closer examination, however, this ideology or set of implicit values has its more problematic and perhaps even negative side as well. In this sense, it is deceptively complex, with many different interacting, and seemingly conflicting, values. Thus, this section first separately examines the “individualist” and “liberal” aspects of this ideology for clarity before describing eight features of liberal individualism that have been gleaned from a review of the implicit values literature in psychology.

**Individualism.** The focus on the individual, in liberal individualism, reflects the modern notion of the *individual* person as the basic unit of human reality (e.g.,
Richardson, 2004, 2012). This uncompromising focus on the individual, also referred to as “ontological individualism” by Belah et al, (1985), stresses certain aspects of human reality and the social sciences over others. For example, when examining individuals and their relationships, the individual is considered as primary with the relationship secondary (e.g., Fowers, 1998, 2005). Individual identity, in this sense, is thought to be independent of any secondary relational context, and is thus considered “self-contained” (e.g., Cushman, 1995; Reber & Osbeck, 2005). Such self-contained individuals are best understood when separated from their secondary relational contexts, as evidenced in the “laboratory” tradition of much modern science (e.g., Fowers, 2005).

Even relationships are best understood individualistically when viewed from the ideology of liberal individualism. Research on marital counseling, for example, exemplifies a focus on the individual by often defining a “good marriage” through measures of individual happiness (e.g., Fowers, 1998; Ostenson, 2009). Such an individualistic understanding of relationships often leads to another aspect of individualism, namely its instrumental mindset (e.g., Fowers, 1998, 2005; Richardson, 2012). As Fowers (1998) has shown, a primary focus on individual happiness in marital counseling can lead to a view of the marital relationship itself as an instrument of such happiness. Such an instrument can then be discarded for another relational instrument if necessary. This uncompromising focus on the individual and individual happiness in the ideology of liberal individualism has been examined as “counterbalanced” by an equally uncompromising focus on individual dignity and human rights, the “liberal” side of liberal individualism (e.g., Reber & Osbeck, 2005; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999).
**Liberalism.** The focus on individual dignity and human rights for all persons in liberal individualism is largely based on the liberation of individuals from potential abuses of power and moral authority (e.g., Richardson & Zeddies, 1999). Such liberated individuals are ultimately viewed as free from traditional values, external expectations, and forms of oppression, making such practices as self-realization and self-actualization possible (e.g., Belah et al., 1985; Richardson, 2005). This liberation of the self from moral authority and tradition can be extended beyond the merely oppressive to all moral systems, except, of course, individualism itself. In this way, if individuals are to hold authority over themselves to engage in self-actualization, then external moral systems and religious traditions cannot usurp that authority.

Part of this authority entails the freedom of the individual to choose which values he or she subscribes to in life (e.g., Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Sandel, 1996, 1998). This freedom to decide one's values for one's self is part of the reason external value systems are downplayed. In fact, this kind of value liberation, or freedom, implies that no set of values is any more compelling than any other set of values; otherwise, the individual would not be able to uncompellingly choose the ones that are right for her or him. This position is often identified as value-neutrality or open-mindedness in psychological practice and has served to support the individual’s right to choose the values subscribed to in life (e.g., Richardson, 2004; Richardson & Zeddies, 1999).

**Features of Liberal Individualism.** These two more general conceptions, liberalism and individualism, can be broken out into at least eight specific features, as reflected in the psychological literature (e.g., Belah et al, 1985; Cushman, 1995; Fowers, 1998, 2005; Reber & Osbeck, 2005; Richardson, 2004; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon,
1999; Richardson & Zeddies, 1999, Sandel, 1996) (see Table 1). Each feature is further described in turn.

### Table 1

**Features of Liberal Individualism**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Identity as self-contained</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Individuals studied and understood best when separated from their context</td>
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<td>Individuals as primary and relationship secondary</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Promotion of a neutrality toward all values to allow individuals the freedom to decide values</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Individual happiness as the primary end</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Instrumentalism as a way of thinking and relating</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency as ultimate maturity because dependence on others is understood to decrease individual control and autonomy</td>
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</table>

1. The first feature of liberal individualism is that identity is self-contained (e.g., Richardson, 2005; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). In this sense, individuals are thought to retain their basic identity regardless of context. Context does not change individuals essentially (e.g., Richardson, 2004). For example, a hammer is still a hammer if it is on a desk or in a toolbox. Similarly, an individual’s personality (e.g., honesty) is thought to reside, essentially unchanging, within that individual despite a possibly changing outside context. An honest student, for example, might adapt his or her honesty to changing contexts in some nonessential ways, ways that do not fundamentally corrupt his honesty. However, this student is still honest both in and outside of class, with a
change in basic honesty in either context understood negatively because of such a change reflecting a dependence on context.

2. Much as the individualist perceives dependence on context negatively (feature 1), the second feature of liberal individualism is that individuals are best studied or understood when they are separated from their context. As mentioned above, this separation of "identity" from its context is one of the conceptual foundations of the laboratory tradition in social science. Because a person's self or identity is self-contained, any potential effect of context on an individual is viewed as a distortion of the otherwise self-contained being (e.g., Fowers, 2005; Reber & Osbeck, 2005). In this regard, psychological researchers have pointed to the practice of having therapy clients come to the practitioners’ office (e.g., Richardson, 2004). These clients are thought to bring their problems, assumed to be contained within the “self,” with them, and thus such clients are best understood when separated from the context in which their problems occur.

3. A similar, but often considered as a third, feature is that individuals are primary and their relationships are secondary. In this sense, social systems are understood as merely artificial aggregates of individuals, "artificial" in the sense that the individuals are more real than their aggregate relations (e.g., Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). While individuals can be influenced by such artificial social systems, such social factors only occur secondarily to the individual, and even then they have to be incorporated inside the self-contained individual to be truly influential (e.g., Fowers, 1998). A marriage relationship, for example, is understood as an artificial aggregate of two self-contained individuals. Each individual within this small aggregate is the primary concern, and one
spouse can only influence the other if the other incorporates such an influence inside their self-contained identity.

4. The fourth feature of liberal individualism is a valuing of individual freedom and liberation from tradition and moral authority. This feature has importantly led to the championing of human rights such as dignity for all persons and liberation from oppression (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985; Richardson & Zeddies, 1999). In psychology, this freedom and liberation has often resulted in the promotion of self-expression, where the self needs to express itself regardless of the constraints of moral or religious traditions. In this liberal individualist sense, the primary aim is self-expression, not community- or other-expression. For example, individuals are encouraged to “be themselves” in respect to their sexual orientation, even if such “being” might be considered outside of tradition or moral authority. Communities, in this sense, are meant to serve the individuals, e.g., to help them self-express.

5. Much as the community is meant to serve the individual (as the basic unit of society), values themselves have a similar function--they are also intended to serve the individual. However, as described above, to serve each individual potentially uniquely, values must not be compelling in and of themselves. They must be essentially equal in moral "weight" so that individuals can choose the values they need at the time they need them (e.g., Richardson, 2005; Sandel, 1996, 1998). Values, in this sense, are considered as fundamentally neutral to one another, with no set of values having greater inherent significance than any other set of values, at least until individuals have decided for themselves which values they embrace. For this reason, psychological researchers who discuss this feature of liberal individualism call it value-neutrality, where societies and
organizations best serve individuals when they consider values “neutral” until they have been incorporated by individuals (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Richardson & Zeddies, 2001). In another sense, this is "valuing value-freeness" because these societies and organizations want to maximize the freeness that individuals have in choosing what happens to be right for them. This feature has complemented other values of psychology, such as open-mindedness and objectivity (e.g., Packer, 2011; Slife, Smith & Burchfield, 2003).

6. The sixth feature of liberal individualism is the view that individual happiness, well-being, or satisfaction is considered the primary end (e.g., Richardson, 2005; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). In this sense, a focus on self-interest is often understood, most notably by economists (e.g., Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2006), as rational thinking. Even within a relationship, such as marriage, the self-interest of the individual (i.e., individual happiness) is viewed as primary with the quality of the relationship secondary (e.g., Fowers, 1998). Thus, if the relationship is not serving its individualist function, as a means to the end of individual happiness, then the relationship should be discarded for another relationship. If Jane, for example, does not believe that she is receiving enough individual happiness from her marital relationship with Bill, then she could be viewed as irrational if she did not do something to maximize her individual satisfaction with the marriage, such as potentially divorcing Bill.

7. The seventh feature of liberal individualism, instrumentalism, follows directly from the sixth because individual happiness, or well-being, is the end with everything else, including people, the means or instruments of that end (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985; Fowers, 2005; Richardson, 2005). As examined above, Jane’s use of instrumental thinking, or
means-ends calculations, in her marriage with Bill is considered rational or even natural from the liberal individualist mindset (e.g., Fowers, 1998). Means-ends thinking and relating is considered rational behavior because the specific means to one's individual happiness are only known to the individual, thus each individual must make her or his own decisions without too much dependence on the relational context. Such decisions underscore the importance of individual control and autonomy over one's life, especially one's relationships.

8. The eighth feature of liberal individualism is self-sufficiency as the ultimate end of maturity because dependence on others is understood to decrease individual control and autonomy (e.g., Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Sampson, 1981, 1985). In this sense, the individualist views immaturity (e.g., infants, college freshman) as initially poorly functioning, self-contained individuals who seek, with help from parents and professionals, to shed their dependence as they progress through life and become independent individuals. Indeed, the very end of development, e.g., retirement, is often viewed as ideal when it is completely free of obligations and constraints and filled with independence and autonomy, presumably from wealth and power (e.g., Richardson, 2004).

These eight features of liberal individualism are frequently so endemic to Western society in general and American culture specifically that it is tempting to consider them as “just the way things are.” As Richardson (2004) stated, “It is quite striking how these [liberal individualist] assumptions and values shape psychology and psychotherapy at their very core at the same time that they go largely unnoticed by most of us” (p. 18). How then have psychological researchers made these implicit values explicit? How have
these researchers examined what has been so taken for granted? Historically, something called the dialectic has helped to explicate these implicit values. To fully understand the psychological literature on this issue as well as the possibility of investigating liberal individualism in the field of student affairs, the nature of the dialectic is explored in the next section.

**Dialectic**

The dialectic, simply stated, works by providing a sufficient contrast so as to help the investigator become aware of meanings that have previously been implicit or reified (e.g., Rychlak, 1976). Consider the common adjustment of “contrast controls” on one’s television as a visual example of this concept. If this adjustment is not adequately made to sufficiently distinguish between black and white shades of color when watching a black-and-white movie (i.e., the black colors are not dark enough and the white colors are not bright enough), it is potentially impossible to actually view the images on the screen as images. However, as the television contrast is adjusted to make the black colors darker and white colors brighter, the image slowly materializes until it is finally presented in bold relief. In a sense, the image on the screen is seen for the first time as an image because of this contrast.

The use of a dialectic to explicate implicit values and assumptions essentially works the same way as turning up the “contrast” on one’s television. Increasing the contrast between black and white images on one’s television brings the image into focus, just as contrasting implicit values with alternative values brings the implicit values into focus as values, instead of as interpretations reified as “reality” (e.g., Slife & Williams, 1995). Similarly, the more such contrasting assumptions or values are in direct contrast or
opposition to the implicit assumptions and values, the clearer the picture ultimately becomes of the otherwise implicit assumptions and values. Thus, one way to understand why implicit values remain implicit is because of the absence of contrasting values to bring them into focus. Perhaps the most prominent example of this lack of contrast is when a value system is so prevalent in a culture that few within the culture know they are embracing it.

Historically, the use of a dialectic to explicate implicit values goes back at least to the ancient Greeks, with Socrates’ use of dialectical dialogues to explicate his philosophy. Plato used the dialectic in his writings to help the reader arrive at, or explicate, the truth of the questions under examination by using multiple voices to express alternative or oppositional points of view. In this sense, each voice in Plato’s dialogues served the purpose of fine tuning the dialectical contrast to ultimately bring the main idea into bold relief. Modern philosophers such as Hegel and Marx used the dialectic to make sense out of history and economic reality, respectively. While these modern philosophers used the dialectic differently, they both relied on dialectical contrasts to reach an understanding of, or to explicate, that which they were investigating.

The use of the dialectic in psychology can be traced through Rychlak (1976), in his use of the dialectic to explicate conceptual assumptions in personality theory and Riegal (1979), in his use of the dialectic to understand human development. Similarly, Slife (1995, 2005, 2009) has developed multiple textbooks in psychology that use the dialectic to reveal implicit ideas within psychological theory and practice for the promotion of critical thinking. Multiple researchers conducting investigations of implicit values and assumptions in psychology have also used the dialectic, whether as a formal
methodology in their investigation, or as an informal mode of inquiry in conjunction with a hermeneutic qualitative method for such implicit research (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Fowers, 1998, 2005; Held 2007; Jenkins, 2013; Kirschner & Martin, 2010; Martin, Sugarman & Hickinbottom, 2009; Osbeck, 2011; Richardson, 2002; Frank, 1978; Richardson, 2004; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999).

The dialectic has also been a prominent mode of explicating the implicit value system of liberal individualism in psychology (e.g., Fowers, 1998; Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Several contrasting systems of values have been used to form the contrasting meanings needed, including communitarianism (e.g., Etzioni, 1996; Richardson & Zeddies, 1999), holism (e.g., Yancher, 2005) and relationality (e.g., Slife & Wiggins, 2009; Freeman, 2012). Each of these systems of values places a greater emphasis on the community or the whole instead of the individual, and thus serves as a contrast. Of these contrasting systems of values, relationality appears to be favored in the literature because of its thorough contrast with liberal individualism (e.g., Slife, 2004). In fact, the ideology of relationality includes an almost feature by feature contrast to the ideology of liberal individualism, and thus is frequently perceived to provide a more effective contrast than communitarianism or holism (e.g., Richardson, 2012). These contrasting features are described in the next section both to illustrate their use in the implicit values literature of psychology and to explore the possibility of investigating liberal individualism in this dissertation.

**Contrasting Liberal Individualism and Relationality**

To describe these contrasting relations (i.e., the dialectic of these opposing features), the value system or philosophy of relationality is first described generally.
Sometimes labeled "ontological relationality" (e.g., Slife & Wiggins, 2008) or "strong relationality" (e.g., Richardson, 2012), this value system is then broken into features that match, at least in their contrasting meanings, the features of liberal individualism just presented in Table 1. Psychological researchers have used this dialectical relationship not only to bring about a full awareness of liberal individualism but also to open up the possibility for the critique of both philosophies (e.g., Slife, 2004). However, the focus of this section is not on the validity of either system of values (or their critique) but rather on the differences between liberal individualism and relationality, so as to effect an investigative dialectic.

**Relationality.** As a philosophy or system of values, relationality seems to oppose many of the assumptions of individualism (e.g., Gergen, 2009; Gunton, 1993; Richardson, 2012; Slife & Richardson, 2008; Slife & Wiggins, 2009; Freeman, 2012). Instead of considering the individual as primary and the relationship as secondary, relationality assumes the reverse—relationship as primary and individuals as secondary (e.g., Macmurray, 1991). In fact, individuals are themselves viewed as nexuses of relations, or parts of the greater relational whole themselves (e.g., Slife, 2004). For example, the identity of a man could be viewed as a father, son, husband, cousin, brother, student, teacher, citizen, etc., all of which cannot exist or be understood without relationships. Of course, this "greater whole" also encompasses the man’s wider community, culture, environment, and history, from the perspective of a relationist.

This view of individual identity implies that one’s socio-historical context partly constitutes one's identity, that no person can be understood or even studied adequately apart from the context of which they are part (e.g., Slife & Christensen, 2013). The
person and context have a shared being (e.g., Gergen, 2009). For example, many high school students are considered to have an identity akin to "smart" or "brainy" until they get to college. The students' intelligence itself has not changed; their context has changed, changing part of their identity. In this sense, our dependence on context is an existential fact (e.g., Fowers, Richardson & Slife, in press), and the individualist notion that independence or self-sufficiency is developmental progress or psychological maturity is a myth.

This relational view also assumes that quality relationships are the primary ends of life and flourishing (e.g., Richardson, 2012). Unlike individualism, which promotes individual satisfaction or happiness as the primary end, relationality aspires toward healthy relationships whether or not one is happy (e.g., Nelson, 2007). This frankly moral position means that the value-freedom or moral neutrality of individualism is not tenable, because relationality promotes the care, protection, and nurturance of healthy or virtuous relationships (e.g., Slife, 2004). Moreover, the contexts of our moral traditions and external authorities can never be ignored, from this perspective, because they contain much of what "healthy" or "virtuous" might mean.

**Contrasting Features.** The contrasting features of liberal individualism and relationality are shown in Table 2. Where possible, the dimension or issue on which the two philosophies differ is first stated, followed by a description of this difference, along with an example or two.
### Table 2

**Dialectical Relationships between Liberal Individualism and Relationality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal Individualism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identity as self-contained</td>
<td>1. Identity as co-constituted by the individual and the socio-historical context</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Individuals studied and understood best when separated from their context</td>
<td>2. Individuals studied and understood best in relation to their context</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Individuals as primary and relationship secondary</td>
<td>3. Relationship as primary and individuals viewed as nexuses of relations or parts of the greater whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A valuing of individual freedom and liberation from tradition and moral authority</td>
<td>4. Tradition and moral authority viewed as important but not uncritically examined sources of co-constituted identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Promotion of a neutrality toward all values to allow individuals the freedom to decide values</td>
<td>5. Recognition of morality being inescapable and contextually situated within a value laden socio-historical context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individual happiness as the primary end</td>
<td>6. Virtuous relationship as the primary end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Instrumentalism as a way of thinking and relating</td>
<td>7. Value-based thinking that promotes the protecting and enhancing of healthy relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Self-sufficiency as ultimate maturity because dependence on others is understood to decrease individual control and autonomy</td>
<td>8. Dependence on others as an existential fact that must be embraced for the possibilities it provides human development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The first contrasting relationship between relationality and liberal individualism pertains to identity. Rather than view identity as essentially self-contained, a relationist views identity as co-constituted by both the individual and their socio-historical context (Slife, 2004). Identity from a relational perspective can never be fully contained within
oneself because one’s surrounding or outside context (e.g., historical, social, environmental) partly constitutes one’s identity (e.g., Nelson, 2007). As described above, a man’s identity of husband reflects not only his relationship to his wife, but also his relationship to the cultural meaning and governmental structure partly constituting his husband status. Such an identity can never be completely contained within a self and is thus always understood as a nexus or node of relations. This relational quality of individual identity does not mean that it cannot be unique, but it is the particular relationships forged in the individual’s context that are unique, not (solely) the inherent properties of the person per se.

2. The second contrasting relationship between relationality and liberal individualism highlights the role of context in understanding individuals. From an individualist perspective, persons are understood as self-contained objects that essentially retain their basic properties despite potentially changing contexts. Removing an individual, or object, from their natural context for study, such as in a laboratory, is viewed as necessary to diminish any potential contextual distortion the situation might create. In contrast, from a relationist perspective, persons are understood more like meanings than objects, with such meanings only understood and studied in relation to the context in which they occur (e.g., Slife & Christensen, 2013). The meaning of a word in a sentence, for example, can only be understood in relation to the other words in the sentence and the larger paragraph and section, etc, just as the meaning of an individual’s actions can only be understood in relation to the broader community and culture of that action.

3. The third contrasting relationship between relationality and liberal individualism pertains to what is viewed as primary and secondary, or more and less fundamental, in
respect to individuals and relationship. From an individualist perspective, organizations such as governments, communities, and churches are perceived to be less fundamental or real and in the service of the more fundamental or real--individuals. In contrast, a relationist would necessarily interpret such a system or community as a vital organization of relationships, which are more fundamental and thus require protection and nurturance (e.g., Slife & Wiggins, 2008). Social systems, in this sense, are just as important as individuals, with individuals themselves viewed as nexuses of relations or parts of the greater living system (e.g., Gergen, 2009). Even the marital relationship is viewed from a relational perspective as just as fundamental as the spouses who make up that relationship.

4. The fourth contrasting relationship between liberal individualism and relationality highlights their differing understandings of tradition and moral authority. Unlike the individualistic perspective, which advocates the complete liberation of individuals from tradition and moral authority, the relationist perspective acknowledges the important dependence upon, but not uncritical acceptance of, such tradition and moral authority (e.g., Fowers, Richardson & Slife, in press). In this sense, the relationist views such authority as partly constitutive of the individual and the rights afforded that individual as opposed to the individualistic view that such authority is external to and primarily oppressive of the self-contained individual and their individual rights and choices (Macmurry, 1991). Thus, a relationist acknowledges human rights but sees them as a result of moral and cultural traditions (e.g., the liberal individualism tradition) rather than as a denial (e.g., contextless universal) of these traditions.
5. The fifth contrasting relationship between liberal individualism and relationality emphasizes their divergent stances toward values. While the individualist promotes neutrality toward all values to allow individuals the freedom to decide values, the relationist recognizes morality as inescapable and contextually situated. Thus, instead of promoting an individualistic freedom from value obligations, the relationist promotes a freedom to engage in the inescapable value obligations of a contextually situated life (e.g., Richardson, 2004; Richardson & Bishop, 2014). In this sense, the relationist disputes that it is ever possible to be neutral to values and points, rather, to the individualist's valuing of value-neutrality as an implicit promotion of individualistic values (e.g., autonomy and freedom from forms of moral authority) (e.g., Richardson, 2012).

6. The sixth contrasting relationship between liberal individualism and relationality highlights their different understandings of human flourishing. While the individualist views individual happiness or well-being as the primary end (e.g., Seligman, 2002), the relationist views a virtuous relationship as the primary end (e.g., Slife & Richardson, 2008). This difference flows from the other contrasting relationships (above): if the individual is the most fundamental for the individualist, then the primary aspiration of life is necessarily focused on the quality of the individual life, whereas if the relationship is most real for the relationist, then the primary end of life is necessarily focused on the quality of the relationship (e.g., Slife, 2004). The relationist readily acknowledges that individual benefits, such as happiness, often ensue from quality relationships, but such happiness does not have to ensue (e.g., one spouse caring for a chronically ill spouse) for it to be the right goal. The main issue for the relationist, in contrast to the individualist, is
that individual happiness should not be pursued; otherwise, the individual happiness is the ultimate priority, not the relationship.

7. The seventh contrasting relationship between liberal individualism and relationality highlights the divergent ways of thinking and behaving that result from the individualistic or relational ends of life and flourishing (contrast #6). For the individualist, a means-end or instrumental way of thinking is viewed as the rational way to think and behave because only the individual can know the ends being sought, and virtually everything other than the individual is a means or an instrument of those ends (Fowers, 1998, 2005). For the relationist, however, such instrumental or means-end thinking and behaving would be viewed as more cultural than inherently or universally logical (e.g., Slife & Christensen, 2013). Activities, for example, should be valued less, according to the relationist, for their individual outcomes and valued more for the connectedness of the persons who are enacting the activity. The meaning of team sports, in this sense, comes less from the "win" or individual accolades than from the camaraderie occurring within the activity itself.

8. The eighth contrasting relationship between liberal individualism and relationality emphasizes opposing answers to the question, ‘What is human maturity or developmental progress?’ Unlike the individualist answer, which is greater independence or self-sufficiency, the relationist views greater maturity as a movement from irresponsible dependence to responsible dependence (e.g., Fowers, Richardson & Slife, in press). From this latter perspective, infants are not poorly functioning, self-contained individuals who will hopefully shed their dependencies on others (e.g., relying on others to feed them) and become what they were meant to be – independent individuals (e.g., capable of
independently feeding themselves). Humans are, instead, originally and continuously relational and existentially dependent in their development (e.g., Macmurray, 1991).

Even the act of independently feeding oneself, for example, is viewed from the relationist as a responsible dependence on others to grow one's food, package it, etc.

The presentation of these eight dialectical relationships between liberal individualism and relationality has served to explicate the values of each ideology as values instead of as reified interpretations of reality. In this sense, each value system has been presented in bold relief by contrasting features of one system with the oppositional features of the other. Such a presentation allows for potentially endemic and implicit liberal individualistic values of Western society not only to be noticed as values, but also to be critically evaluated in light of their practical implications for psychological theory, research, and practice.

**Problematic Implications of Liberal Individualism for Psychology**

Although liberal individualism stands for and has helped create many praiseworthy conceptions in Western culture, such as freedom from oppression, human rights, and individual dignity (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985; Richardson & Zeddies, 1999), many investigators in psychology have questioned whether the ideology of liberal individualism is wholly good (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Fowers, 2005). The implicit and explicit use of the dialectic by psychological researchers has allowed them to begin to critically examine psychological theory, research, and practice for potentially negative implications of liberal individualism (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). The purpose of this section is not to summarize this large body of literature, but instead to illustrate or exemplify some relevant practical
implications for the purposes of this dissertation. Fortunately, there have been authoritative reviews and examinations of this literature, as put forward in separate writings by Fowers (1998, 2005) and Cushman (1990, 1995), that summarize the more detailed and general implications.

Fowers and Cushman’s reviews and investigations have described three primary findings of liberal individualism that are relevant to this study—problems attaining the promises of individualism, the consequences of an individualist lifestyle, and the compounding of these problems with an individualist psychology.

The first finding is that liberal individualist values appear to be the overwhelming reason that so many people seek therapy—they feel they are not attaining the promises of individualism, such as happiness and independence. Fowers (1998, 2005), for example, focuses on how psychological researchers have shown that married couples overwhelmingly experience an underlying sense that they should be individually happy within their marriages. When marriages fail to provide such individual happiness, the spouses seek counseling to help their marriages perform its individualist function. Cushman (1990, 1995) similarly focuses on how many individuals overwhelmingly experience an underlying sense that they should be generally independent and self-reliant persons in society. However, when such individuals find themselves continuously dependent, even though they strive for independence (e.g., through attaining wealth), they feel a sense of disappointment or depression because the promise of an individualist independence has not been fulfilled, leading them to seek out psychotherapy. In both cases, individuals are seeking what individualism promises without fulfillment.
The second primary finding of Fowers (1998, 2005) and Cushman (1990, 1995) is that individualism itself creates psychological problems. Fowers, for example, shows how the degree to which a spouse uses the marriage relationship as a means to attain individual happiness is the degree to which they experience greater problems in marriage. This instrumental, or means-end, view of marriage ultimately weakens the marriage relationship because the marriage is considered an instrument rather than an end in itself. Likewise, Cushman shows how the degree to which persons attain the individualistic promise of independence is the degree to which they experience problems of emotional isolation. Thus, individuals that attain a greater amount of freedom from having to depend on others (e.g., avoiding relational ties or obligations) also attain a greater amount of emotional isolation from those persons that would have otherwise supported those individuals.

The third major finding of Cushman (1990, 1995) and Fowers’ (1998, 2005) work is that a large portion of the psychological theory, research, and practice informing and treating such individualistic problems is also based on the values of liberal individualism. In marriage therapy, for instance, Fowers describes how therapists often unknowingly promote instrumental notions of “care” for the marriage relationship in order for the spouses to be happy (see contrasts above). Spouses implicitly and explicitly learn through marriage counseling that the primary importance should be placed on their own individual happiness, with secondary importance placed on their marital relationship as a means to that happiness. In other words, many therapists, without always realizing their individualist foundations, teach, and thus often reinforce, their clients’ instrumentalism, resulting in forms of individualist indoctrination. Similarly, Cushman notes that when
many psychotherapists treat emotionally isolated individuals, knowingly or unknowingly, they implicitly reinforce the isolation by facilitating sophisticated versions of such isolation under the guises of autonomy and independence. This type of individualistic therapy strategy can ultimately lead to greater emotional and relational isolation along with the fragmenting of supportive communities.

The net effect of these three findings, according to Cushman (1990, 1995) and Fowers (1998, 2005), is that many psychotherapists are compounding the individualist problems brought to them in their practices. The implicit individualist reinforcement of the values of instrumentalism as well as independence and autonomy leads to the unintentional promotion of divorce by therapists who may be attempting to prevent divorce and the unintentional increased emotional isolation by therapists attempting to prevent such isolation. Cushman (1990) referred to this situation when he stated that, “through the act of helping, psychology’s discourse and practices perpetuate the causes of the very problems it is trying to treat” (p. 3). Fowers (1998) similarly noted this problematic effect for psychology when he metaphorically commented that such individualistic solutions for individualistic marital problems had the effect of “pouring gasoline on fire” (p. 521).

**Individualist Values Perceived as Non-Values**

Part of the reason that psychotherapists have so often unintentionally compounded individualist problems, according to Fowers (1998, 2005) and Cushman (1990, 1995), is that most individualist values are not considered as values. Fowers and Cushman describe how many practitioners of individualism presume they are completely value neutral. Either these therapists are unaware they promote such values because of their
acceptance and pervasiveness in Western culture, or these practitioners are aware they promote such values but assume they are axiomatic or unchallengeable. As Fowers (1998) states, “The instrumental cast of contemporary society makes it easy for researchers and therapists to maintain the illusion that they employ value-neutral techniques that are not organically linked to one or another view of the good life” (p. 522).

In a review of over 50 years of values in psychotherapy research, Slife, Smith, and Burchfield (2003, see also Tjeltveit, 1999) describes how therapists take part in this “illusion” of value-neutrality as “crypto missionaries.” The latter phrase comes from Paul Meehl (1959) who himself contemplated the relevant studies on values and therapy and realized that therapists were inevitably "missionaries" of their own values—i.e., they valued their own values—even when they specifically attempted to avoid this valuing. In this sense, Slife, Smith, and Burchfield (2003) not only find that values are inescapable but also that therapists cannot escape valuing their values, and thus attempting to persuade clients to adopt their values.

Even open-minded therapists, a mindset often considered part of value-neutrality, are shown to be close-minded when they treat “close-minded” clients (e.g., devoutly religious clients). These therapists value their own value-neutrality or openness when they insist that their clients adopt this openness value in their relationships with others, even to the point of considering their clients’ lack of openness as abnormality. In this sense, openness is a hidden value that could be seen as a type of indoctrination of clients, despite the therapists’ stated desire to do otherwise. According to Slife, Smith, and Burchfield (2003), therapists thus need to carefully identify their own implicit and
explicit values to allow a type of informed consent, giving clients an opportunity to at least become aware of the therapist’s values.

**Summary of Literature**

Student affairs researchers have importantly sought to protect against indoctrination occurring in the field by thorough investigations of values (e.g., Dalton, 1985, 1993; Moore & Hamilton, 1993; Young, 1993, 2003). Although these scholars have extensively examined explicit values in the field (e.g., Reason & Broido, 2010; Tull & Medrano, 2008; Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1997, 2001), there is a missing set of information on implicit values and the potential role they might play in indoctrination. To date there has been no research in the field explicating such values for critical examination. Researchers, such as Bensimon (e.g., 2007), have notably begun looking outside of educational literature to disciplines such as psychology for direction in regard to investigating implicit values in student affairs.

The present chapter follows Bensimon’s (2007) lead by reviewing implicit values research in psychology. This review evidenced several converging lines of research, all arriving at essentially the same conclusion—that the implicit values of liberal individualism are pervasive in psychology specifically and Western culture more generally. Eight main features of liberal individualistic values were explicated by contrasting them with opposing values of relationality, forming a methodological dialectic and exposing several potentially problematic practical implications of individualism. One such implication was the finding of psychological practitioners unknowingly indoctrinating clients with liberal individualistic values that harm the
client’s psychological health. The question now is: Are these values implicit in the textbooks used to train student affairs professionals?
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The foundation for the methodology started in chapter 2. The description of the dialectic between liberal individualism and relationality is a conceptual requirement for the identification of these ideologies in the discipline of student affairs. The purpose of this methods section is to describe more formally how this dialectic helps identify potential disguised ideologies in the student affairs literature, specifically, in two of the most prominent texts of the discipline.

The identification of ideologies has typically not been a quantitative pursuit (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Fowers & Richardson, 1993). Virtually all of the investigation of implicit values in psychology uses qualitative methods because it concerns meanings and ideas which are difficult to quantify and possibly misleading as numbers (e.g., Gantt, Lindstrom & Williams, 2007; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Consequently, a qualitative method was proposed for this particular study.

This chapter first provides a brief historical background of hermeneutics to contextualize this method before distinguishing between two differing hermeneutic approaches, Romantic and ontological. It is important to understand the differences between these approaches because of their differing stances on validity or the prevention of confirmation bias. The second ontological approach is discussed specifically in regard to how hermeneutists have formalized it into themes to guide implicit values research. I conclude this chapter by addressing the specific method that falls under ontological hermeneutics, from data collection to analysis of specific texts.
A Hermeneutical Qualitative Method

Researchers investigating implicit values generally (e.g., Slife, Reber, & Richardson, 2005) and liberal individualism specifically (e.g., Cushman, 1990, 1995; Fowers, 1998, 2004; Fowers & Richardson, 1993) largely use a hermeneutic qualitative method which includes the dialectic. The term *hermeneutics* comes from the Greek word for interpretation (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999, p. 199). Hermeneutists such as Packer (2011) have gone further into these Greek origins by stating that hermeneutics is “…named for Hermes, messenger of the Greek gods and interpreter of their messages for confused mortals” (p. 83). This is conceptually helpful because without Hermes to do our interpreting for us, we must rely solely on ourselves (Packer & Addison, 1989). The need for Hermes-like guidance ultimately spawned the method of interpretation called hermeneutics.

While hermeneutics has been traced back to the writings of the Stoics and early Christian Church fathers (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999), it became known as a specific field of study as a result of events in the Protestant Reformation. Prior to the reformation, Christian believers were asked to put their faith in the authority and tradition of the church to provide a correct interpretation of messages from their God through the Bible. In this sense, the church played a role much like Hermes did for early Greeks because individual Christians were not considered capable of interpreting such messages from their God correctly. The protestant reformer Martin Luther directly challenged this “Hermes-like” status of the church, and its subsequent bias against individual interpretation of the Bible, with his doctrine of *sola scriptura*. This doctrine held that
“Christian faith should be based solely on the individual’s own readings of the Bible…” as opposed to the authoritative “reading” or interpretation put forward by the church (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999, p. 200).

The subsequent popularity of Luther’s doctrine of sola scriptura created a need for individual guidance for interpreting scripture that resulted in the formalized field of study of hermeneutics in the 17th Century (Richardson, in press; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). The consistent need of such “guidance” for interpretation – whether from Hermes, church authority, or the hermeneutic method itself – exemplifies the idea that meanings of texts, such as the Bible, can in some sense be correctly or incorrectly interpreted. Thus, while hermeneutics would later be expanded to include “all texts and utterances, and eventually to symbolic structures of any kind, including history itself” (Slife & Richardson, 2012, p. 4), a vital question for hermeneutics has remained how one interprets correctly or validly the meanings of texts. This question is answered in two ways historically, an early version called Romantic hermeneutics and the more accepted and revised version called ontological hermeneutics.

**Romantic Hermeneutics: The Possibility of Separability**

Romantic hermeneutics are so called because of the “Romantic” separation between perceived reality and the world as it is “in-itself” (e.g., Packer, 2011; Richardson, in press, Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). This separation led to the possibility of an *inner* true meaning of a text, often considered as the author’s real intentions for the meaning of the text, and an *outer* perceived meaning of the text, often considered as the reader’s perception of the author’s intended meaning. This inner-outer “Romantic” separation basically called for the reduction or elimination of the outer
perceived meaning of the reader in order to explicate the inner true meaning of the
author’s text as it is “in-itself.”

The hermeneutist Packer (2011) has labeled this “romantic” separation of inner
and outer meaning as the “objective study of subjectivity” (p. 8). In this sense, the proper
reduction or elimination of the reader’s outer perception of the meaning of a text would
allow for the “objective” explication of the author’s intended “subjective” inner meaning
of the text under examination. The 19th century philosophers Schleiermacher and Dilthey
exemplify this Romantic hermeneutic approach for interpreting the meaning of a text
validly and are described briefly.

Schleiermacher’s Romantic approach to interpretation is apparent in his
interpretive goal to “reconstruct the author’s inner creative process” (Packer, 2011, p.
84). He undertook this reconstruction by both becoming familiar with the complete body
of work written by the author, a process he referred to as grammatical interpretation, and
by empathizing with the author in order to accurately reconstruct the author’s subjective
intended meaning of the text under examination, a process he referred to as psychological
interpretation. According to Schleiermacher (1820/1990), “one seeks to understand the
writer intimately to the point that one transforms oneself into the other,” thus
understanding the text and the author better than the author did him or herself (p. 58 as

Dilthey extended Schleiermacher’s Romantic reconstruction of the “author’s inner
creative process” to the reconstruction of the historical life process underlying the inner
creative process of the author. In this sense, although Dilthey importantly extended
Schleiermacher’s work beyond the individual author’s inner process, this extension still
relied on the Romantic separation between the reader’s interpretation of a text and the historical life process underlying the author’s intended meaning of that text (e.g., Packer, 2011). In a true Romantic interpretive sense, this separation allowed for an “objective” understanding of the historical life process underlying the author’s inner “subjective” meaning of the text.

Dilthey and Schleiermacher’s insistence on the removal of reader bias in order to get at an “objective” interpretation of the meaning of a text largely paralleled the removal of researcher bias in positivist science in order to get at an “objective” account of scientific laws of nature (e.g., Packer, 2011; Slife & Richardson, 2012). This agreement about how to advance knowledge would eventually be challenged by not only philosophers (e.g., Taylor, 1989, Wittgenstein, 1958), but also philosophers of science (e.g., Bernstein, 1976, 1983) and scientists themselves (e.g., Bridgeman, 1954; Einstein, 1916; Goldstein, 2013; Packer, 2011). Such a Romantic separation would ultimately be found by all of the above to be “deeply problematic not only because such an approach is impossible but also because the meanings sought are ultimately undermined” (Slife & Richardson, 2012, p. 3).

This review of Romantic hermeneutics is important for this study because of the current widespread use of Romantic notions of separability to attain validity or prevent confirmation bias in qualitative research (Packer, 2011), notions not used in this study. Before learning about ontological hermeneutics, it is important to examine why Romantic notions of separability have been widely recognized as impossible. This impossibility of separability provides grounding for the ontological approach to hermeneutics used in this
study and is frequently presented by ontological hermeneutists to provide a rationale for their methods (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Packer, 2011; Slife, 2013; Slife & Williams, 1995).

**The Impossibility of Separability**

The Romantic separation between inner and outer, the objective and subjective, is highly criticized by recent philosophers (e.g., Jones, 2009; Taylor, 1989; Wittgenstein, 1958). The issue at stake for these philosophers was the problematic dualistic nature of such a separation that presupposed two distinct realities to deal with in order to understand meaning (Slife, Reber, & Faulconer, 2012). As these philosophers have shown, dealing with such separated realities becomes deeply problematic, especially when questions arise concerning their interaction. For example, how is it possible to ever truly escape one’s own subjectivity in order to achieve an objective understanding of meaning? Furthermore, if it is not possible to ever truly escape one’s subjectivity, how is it possible to truly prevent issues such as confirmation bias in science? Questions such as these gave rise to the widespread contention that separability was impossible (e.g., Bernstein, 1976, 1983; Gadamer, 1993; Packer, 2011; Slife, Reber, & Faulconer, 2012).

Hermeneutic philosophers such as Bernstein (1976, 1983) and Gadamer (1993) would directly challenge the notion that one can ever “objectively” understand the meaning of a text by separating out one's “subjective” biases. As Bernstein (1976) would note, the meaning of a text is only made possible by one’s selective attention to certain interesting or informative ideas, passages, and overarching concepts. Such selective attention is in turn necessarily guided by one’s own biases or prejudices about what is interesting and informative. Even the attempt to limit one’s selective attention in order to achieve a degree of “objectivity” is itself based on biases and prejudices about what
should or should not be limited. It was in this sense that Gadamer (1993) declared such biased Romantic attempts at objectivity as more of a “prejudice against prejudice” than an actual attainment of objectivity or successful separation of subjective biases (p. 273).

While many practitioners might agree that the impossibility of separability might be true for philosophy and examinations of meaning, they might also contend that science has accomplished this separation, both in its process or method and in its content or findings. However, the process of science, the scientific method, has been shown to be necessarily value-laden or even biased in the same way that all understanding is selectively biased (e.g., Kuhn, 1970; Slife & Williams, 1995; Slife, 2008). For instance, the common approach in quantitative methods to study only what is observable is a kind of bias against the unobservable (e.g., Slife & Slife, 2013). Even the move to operationalize unobservable variables is still a bias in favor of the observable. As Slife (2008) stated, “[t]hose who invented and continuously evaluate the scientific method – philosophers of science – are quite clear that this method is filled with values about what knowledge is and how it should be gathered” (p. 9). These values become highlighted when it is pointed out how the logic of the scientific method cannot itself be proven (or even observed), but instead must rely on the underlying values and biases of its philosophy of science “inventors.” Thus, even the seemingly objective process of science, as exemplified in the scientific method, cannot ever be separated from its own subjective values.

The impossibility of separability is also heavily acknowledged in the content of science. For example, physicists such as Albert Einstein and David Bohm long argued that it is not possible to separate the observer from the observed. Einstein’s theory of
relativity, for example, points to the relative nature of all observation in order to take into account the frame of reference for any observation in physics. Similarly, Bohm’s quantum theory acknowledges the necessary relation between the observer and observed to understand the realm of the very small. Bohm (1980) is specifically critical of a worldview in which “the one who thinks is in principle completely separate from and independent of the reality he thinks about” (p. xi). These are just two examples of the now widespread recognition that the Romantic separability is impossible, stemming not only from the humanities, such as philosophy, but also the process and content of the natural sciences (see also Bernstein, 1983; Packer, 2011; Slife, 2013; Slife & Williams, 1995).

**Ontological Hermeneutics**

Twenty-first century hermeneutics has embraced the conclusion shared by philosophers (e.g., Taylor, 1989, Wittgenstein, 1958), historians of science (e.g., Kuhn, 1996, Feyerabend, 1993), and scientists themselves (e.g., Bohm, 1980; Bridgman, 1954; Einstein, 1916) about the impossibility of removing or separating all biases from one’s observations. It is in this sense that 21st Century hermeneutics has taken on the “Ontological” qualifier that reflects the impossibility of the 19th century Romantic separation as the reality of the world. In other words, the impossibility of this separability is now considered the state of reality.

This state of reality begs an important question for the ontological hermeneutist: how do we solve the problem of the original project – explicating the correct or valid meaning of a text when subjectivity is inevitably mixed with objectivity? One way of discussing this potential problem is the notion of confirmation bias. Framed in this
manner, the question becomes: are we now hopelessly so biased with an inseparable state of reality that we can only confirm our biases and never see what is really going on or really meant within a text? Acknowledging the parallel between 21st century hermeneutics and 21st century physics leads one to note that if this question were unanswerable, physics would have halted its project many years ago. However, it is obvious that physics has continued quite successfully and science in general is proceeding unabated, seemingly in spite of this new understanding of reality. Somehow they are able to discern correct and valid interpretations of their data, but how?

**Surprisability.** In answering this question, hermeneutists have moved from seeking to eliminate all subjectivity, now considered an impossibility, to a radical openness to alternative (possibly non-confirmation-biased) interpretations of the data. This openness is what some hermeneutists have called surprisability or hermeneutic objectivity (e.g., Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press; Richardson, in press). Such a hermeneutic objectivity attempts a purposeful suprisability or openness to alternative interpretations rather than attempting to reduce or eliminate interpretations in the Romantic sense. It should be noted that this type of openness to alternative interpretations is important not only for meanings, but for science in general. Just as hermeneutists need to maximize their surprisability to be open to the correct meaning of a text, so too physicists and other “hard” scientists need to maximize their surprisability to be open to what is correctly happening in their experiment to combat confirmation bias. Indeed, historians of science, such as Feyerabend (1993) and Kuhn (1996), have noted the importance of “serendipitous findings” for the natural sciences. Such findings were only possible because scientists were truly open to seeing their data in potentially new ways.
For these reasons, the ontological hermeneutic response to confirmation bias has been the maximization of what is sometimes termed “surprisability.” This concept has been defined as “the openness to our interpretations being unexpectedly transformed or ruptured” (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press, p. 1). Such an openness not only aids scientists in discovering new findings that might be challenging of old understandings (e.g., Feyerabend, 1993; Kuhn, 1996), but also aids scientists in discovering findings that might be challenging to their own biases, thus helping prevent scientists from unknowingly confirming their biases. Ontological hermeneutists have formalized the optimization of this radical openness into a methodology consisting of several main themes (c.f. Packer, 2011; Richardson, in press; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). As rendered most recently, Slife, Johnson and Jennings (in press) describe four main themes of surprisability: 1) general awareness of researcher interpretation, 2) softening of this interpretation, 3) development of alternative interpretations, and 4) particularizing these alternatives to the specific context.

Before describing each theme, it is important to note the implicit dialectic among the themes. As Slife, Johnson and Jennings (in press) describe, the researcher not only should have an awareness of his interpretation (Theme 1), but also should be developing concurrently a set of alternative interpretations (Theme 3). From a hermeneutic perspective, the researcher cannot be aware of his own interpretation until at least some development of alternative interpretations has occurred (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Richardson, in press; Packer, 2011). Hermeneutists also consider this kind of dialectic development necessary for even the second theme, the softening of one's interpretation,
because one is likely to reify one’s interpretation, or make it real or harden it, without the development of a viable alternative interpretation.

A useful parallel can also be drawn between the dialectic of these themes and Chapter 2’s discussion of Plato’s dialogues. Just as Plato used the Socratic dialectic among multiple voices in his dialogues to bring the main idea into bold relief, so too hermeneutists use the dialectic among Themes 1-4 in this “surprisability” method to explicate interpretation and thus prevent confirmation bias. This dialectical relation also highlights another feature of these four themes – that the four themes are holistically connected and thus should not necessarily be followed in any rigid order. With this quality of the themes in mind, each is described sequentially below. Each theme is summarized in the first paragraph (below), and generally applied to this dissertation study in the second paragraph. I provide additional specifics about how these themes are used in this study in the “The Specific Method” section following.

**Awareness.** The first theme of surprisability is the awareness that part of one’s experience is due to one’s own interpretation. In other words, one should take care not to underestimate the interpretive contribution co-constituting not only one’s experience of “subjective” artwork, but also one’s experience of “objective” scientific findings. As Slife, Johnson and Jennings (in press) describe, this underestimation is largely evidenced in the way researchers “frequently reify our interpretations of experience as if our interpretations are the objective state of reality,” as if the data tell us how to interpret them (p. 5). As described above, the rise of hermeneutics in response to Luther’s doctrine of *sola scriptura* was in part a reaction to individuals potentially reifying their interpretations of the Bible as “objective truth.” They should instead acknowledge and
realize their interpretive contribution. A lack of awareness of one’s interpretive contribution has been shown to hide or disguise the implicit values underlying ones interpretation of not only texts (e.g., Packer, 2011), but also “objective” scientific findings (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999).

As applied to this dissertation, this first theme of surprisability was already dealt with to some degree with the review of literature. This review provided an awareness of the role of implicit values or "interpretations" that largely guide researcher and practitioner activities in psychology. This awareness is helpful because even though student affairs researchers are aware of explicit and implicit values in their field, there is currently no research, and thus little disciplinary awareness, of the implicit values that might be guiding researcher and practitioner interpretations. Awareness is also important for student affairs personnel so that they are appropriately sensitive to these values and interpretations potentially contributing to student indoctrination.

**Softening.** The second theme of surprisability is the purposeful softening of one’s interpretation, which entails researchers questioning their investment in their values or interpretive frameworks. Even if researchers are aware of their interpretations (theme 1), they can still be hardened or dogmatic about these beliefs. For this reason, theme 2 asks them not only to identify their own personal investment in the interpretation but also to realize the inherent changeableness and underdetermination of this interpretation (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press). For example, a religious believer can know precisely how she interprets a religious text, but she could also be too invested to entertain alternatives. Without a purposeful softening of her dogmatic interpretation, she would not be open to perhaps a better interpretation and would thus confirm her own biases or implicit values.
In regard to this dissertation, the first “softening” became apparent to me as I delved into literature on liberal individualism. Through the experience of this literature, I realized my own personal investment in many of the features of liberal individualism that had helped me predict and work with students in a university setting as a practitioner. I probably was and still am a liberal individualist in many respects, but at least now I am more aware of this investment. A second “softening” occurred when I realized how the data of any study “underdetermine” the interpretation made of the data (e.g., Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press; Slife & Williams, 1995). This became apparent to me as I read the literature on the contrasting interpretation of relationality. As I reviewed this literature, I realized that at least some of the data that led me to form my liberal individualistic interpretation could equally be used to support relationality. For example, the common roommate issues I dealt with as a student affairs administrator could not only be interpreted as issues of individual happiness, but also as issues of quality relations, with very different implications for my subsequent work with the students.

Alternatives. The third theme of surprisability is the active development of alternative interpretations. This theme specifically uses the dialectic because it recognizes the dialectic quality of interpretive meanings (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press). As Rychlak (1976) has shown, meanings are not just relations of similarity; they are also relations of difference. The meaning of turning to the “left,” in a dialectical sense, means not turning to the “right.” This relation of difference is also the reason dictionaries typically include antonyms as well as synonyms in their explication of meaning. "Without some awareness of interpretive alternatives," according to Slife, Johnson, and
Jennings (in press), "the interpretation itself may not be experienced as interpretive" (p. 13), leading again to the "hardening" of the interpretation.

With respect to this dissertation, alternative interpretations have already been developed with the use of relationality in Chapter 2, which both helped to “soften” my interpretation and aided in the identification of a suitable alternative. In fact, this third theme was specifically pursued in Chapter 2 by developing a dialectical relationship between liberal individualism and relationality (see Table 2). This development allowed me to experience liberal individualistic interpretations as interpretations, instead of as reified versions of reality. For example, it was through this development of dialectical relations that I was able to realize, or be more open to being surprised about, how many of my previous practitioner actions were interpreted through both liberal individualistic and relational values.

**Particularizing.** The fourth theme of surprisability is the particularizing of the alternatives, which means the tailoring of at least the alternatives to the specific research context. As Slife, Johnson, and Jennings (in press) state, “interpretive alternatives must be specifically related to the context of inquiry for them to be taken seriously or considered as true alternatives” (p. 15). In this sense, the researcher must understand and tailor the alternative interpretation to the uniqueness of the specific investigative context, and in some studies investigators may even need to particularize both types of ideology.

In the context of this study, this fourth theme would seem to involve the tailoring of each of the Chapter 2 features of liberal individualism and relationality to the specific field of student affairs. The specific focus of this particularization would include questions such as: How might the softened features of and alternatives to liberal
individualism be manifested specifically in student affairs? What types of student affairs statements might each feature of implicit values logically imply? (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press). A first approach to this particularization is developed in the “Preliminary Particularization” section below.

We have just learned about ontological hermeneutics and the themes formalized from this hermeneutic methodology. Now we are going to get into the specific method stemming from these themes for this study.

**The Specific Method**

The previous section resolves how hermeneutists deal with the validity question – through surprisability rather than the elimination of bias – making it possible to now delineate the specific method that follows from this hermeneutic methodology. First I provide a general summary of the study. Then, with succeeding sections, I describe how I went about the study, including: research questions, specifying the texts to study, data collection, quality control, preliminary particularization, and data analysis.

**Study Summary**

In this study I attempted to identify two potentially disguised ideologies in prominent texts of the field of student affairs. I tried to avoid confirming my own biases in this task by purposefully following the surprisability themes and seeking out both ideologies in these texts so that I achieved a “hermeneutic objectivity” toward my findings. I carefully and thoroughly perused these texts, making note of specific passages and overarching concepts – or the absence of specific passages and overarching concepts – that appeared to manifest features of either ideology. I had regular meetings with my
methodologist during this study to ensure quality control as I moved forward in my study. After I gathered and categorized my data into the features of either ideology, I analyze this information to address my main research questions. I then presented my analysis in a hermeneutic narrative (see Chapter 4), which not only shows quantitative percentages of liberal individualism and relationality in the texts but also presents qualitative themes, with characteristic quotes representing the meanings of each ideology I found in the texts.

**Research Questions**

I have two research questions for this study.

1. In what ways, if any, do the two cornerstone textbooks used in master’s preparation programs for student affairs professionals contain evidence of implicit values that promote liberal individualist values and/or relationist values?

I will know if either set of implicit values is present and perhaps prominent by identifying both the quality and quantity of these meanings and ideas in these textbooks. In this sense, this question addresses both depth (i.e., the strength and decisiveness of particular quotes and concepts) and breadth (i.e., the extent that one ideology appears to influence the concepts presented in the textbooks).

2. What is the nature of the liberal individualistic or relational features in the texts, and how might they interact with specific topics/chapters of the texts?

The second question is a follow-up question to the first as an examination of the quality of features of each ideology involved, if any.
Specific Texts

The use of a hermeneutic methodology justified the selection of textbooks that are the most representative of the field and can provide the richest data for this study (e.g., Richardson, in press; Packer, 2011). In this sense, text selection was focused on quality instead of quantity, following directly from the original project of hermeneutics to qualitatively analyze one book, the Bible. The review of student affairs literature in Chapter 2 identified two primary textbooks that appear to meet both criteria (i.e., Evans et al., 2010; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). The quality of these textbooks is evidenced in the important “gatekeeper” role each serves for the larger field because publication of content into either text is acknowledgement of that content’s “acceptance in student affairs” (Reason & Kimball, 2012, p. 365). Furthermore, these two textbooks appear to be the most representative of textbooks used in the field, with scholars (e.g., Love, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012) specifically citing both Evans et al’s (2010) text and Schuh, Jones, and Harper’s (2011) text as the texts used in the vast majority of student affairs master’s programs.

Data Collection

I collected data for this study by reading through the texts from start to finish. I created a list of any value statement (i.e., verbatim text) or concept (i.e., a general connection that can be made across sections or paragraphs that may not have a direct statement involved) that was relevant to the features of liberal individualism and relationality. This list of relevant value statements or concepts constituted the data for this study. I concurrently categorize these statements and concepts under the appropriate features of liberal individualism and relationality while creating this list. Like many
qualitative methods, this collection process was also part of my analysis process because I needed to be sensitized to the features of liberal individualism and relationality so that I knew what value statements and concepts were relevant. The way I was initially sensitized for this data collection process is discussed in the Preliminary Particularization section below.

**Quality Control**

I ensured quality control for this study by (1) meeting regularly with my methodologist and incorporating his input, (2) keeping a researcher journal, and (3) presenting my final analysis in my completed study.

Unlike the quantitative tradition of positivism or logical empiricism that suggests methods and procedures to be set in advance to protect against subjectivism and confirmation bias – and thus ensure a form of quality control – the hermeneutic tradition is the opposite. From a hermeneutic perspective, too much specificity before data analysis is considered harmful to the quality of the study because the researcher must remain flexible and surprisable to interpret data, within bounds (e.g., Slife, Johnson, & Jennings; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). For example, while surprisability themes and a dialectical relationship between liberal individualism and relationality are set in advance to ensure an openness or hermeneutic objectivity, I had to also remain open to learning throughout data collection and analysis so that my understanding of the data and the dialectical relationship between liberal individualism and relationality could be changed as I move from interpretation to reinterpretation. This flexible movement from understanding a part of my data in relation to its whole (interpretation) and vice versa
(reinterpretation) has been labeled as a “hermeneutic circle” and must be protected to ensure a quality hermeneutic study (e.g., Packer, 2011; Richardson, in press).

I met regularly with my methodologist throughout data collection and analysis to discuss my interpretation and reinterpretation of the data. In this sense, while I carried out the study within the bounds of surprisability themes and the dialectic, my methodologist provided additional supportive boundaries necessary to help guide this study while maintaining a hermeneutic flexibility. My methodologist also served as an additional check on the reliability of my data collection to make sure the value statements and concepts I collected were relevant for this study.

I also kept a researcher journal throughout the study to help me be self-reflective about the interpretive process. Keeping a researcher journal is a fairly standard approach in many qualitative methods (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Packer & Addison, 1989). This journal focused more on the process of my study than the content because I used it to keep track of the process of my data collection and analysis. By keeping this running journal, I kept track of my own interpretive perspective and acknowledge that I am not an objective interpreter, thus ensuring an additional quality check on the potential for rampant subjectivism.

The presentation of my final analysis is the final form of quality control for this study. In this sense, because a hermeneutic analysis is a co-constituted process (i.e., I cannot remove myself from the analysis by fixing procedures in advance), the final analysis embodies the support and guidance of my methodologist, my use of a researcher journal, and my own interpretive contribution. This presentation is an important form of
quality control because it provides another form of necessary boundaries on the otherwise flexible hermeneutic method.

**Preliminary Particularization**

Table 3 (see Appendix A) was my preliminary particularization of the features of liberal individualism and relationality to student affairs (see surprisability theme #4 above). This particularization is labeled as preliminary instead of final because there was no way to specify relevant value statements and concepts in advance of actually getting into my data. However, it was important to note that I needed to be sensitized to this process going in, which is why a preliminary particularization is important.

Table 3 incorporates the contrasting features presented in Table 2. These contrasting features are similarly numbered in Table 3 with the liberal individualist features on the left side and the relational features on the right. The bolded and centered words (e.g., Identity, Community) are general particularizations of these contrasting features. The bulleted and italicized phrases underneath each contrasting feature are potential manifestations of each general particularization in student affairs.

As described in the quality control section above, it was important this table not be overly particular because I needed to have some flexibility to particularize as I saw the data and engaged in the interpretive process. As a result, the following table can be easily misinterpreted. This table was not meant to fix or solidify any student affairs concept with a specific feature of liberal individualism or relationality. For example, while “Identity” was selected as a general particularization of the first contrasting feature of liberal individualism and relationality, this concept could also be a general particularization of the remaining seven contrasting features, and vice versa for the
additional general particularizations. Similarly, the bulleted and italicized potential manifestations of each general particularization were not meant to be comprehensive or subsuming and might appear overly general and vague as a result.

Table 3 is not a fixing of definitions or operationalizations in the conventional sense. This table instead represents my very tentative, first attempt at how these contrasting features might be applied in a non-comprehensive way to student affairs. In this sense, the bulleted potential manifestations are a tentative and general application of the contrasting features to practitioner assumptions and actions under these general particularizations. This table was meant as a starting point for data collection and it was used to help preliminarily sensitize me to potentially relevant data. In some sense, the creation of the table commenced data analysis, because the analysis was an increasing particularization of my experience of these features in the student affairs profession. In this way, the final results of this study can be viewed as the final workings out of the particularization of these contrasting features for the textbooks under examination.

**Data Analysis**

I analyzed the categorized lists of value statements and concepts to specifically answer my research questions. In this sense, while I already performed a preliminary analysis of the data to gather and categorize statements and concepts, I formalized this analysis by identifying the quality and quantity of these statements and concepts within the selected textbooks. This involved analyzing the depth (i.e., the strength and decisiveness of particular quotes and concepts) and breadth (i.e., the extent that one ideology appears to influence the concepts presented in the textbooks) of these statements and concepts in relation to the greater whole of the textbooks. Once I determined that one
or both ideologies were present in the textbooks, I then examined the nature of the liberal individualistic or relational features in the texts and which features, if any, tended to correlate with specific topics or text chapters. The following sections explain my presentation of this analysis.

**Data Presentation**

I present my analysis (See Chapter 4) by telling the story of how I arrived at my findings, often called a narrative account (Cresswell, 1994). The majority of data was presented through a descriptive narrative with an intertwining of exemplar quotes. The use of a narrative account is typical of ontological hermeneutics because of the non-seperability of researcher subjectivity to findings (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). In this sense, narratively describing my analysis helped present the findings as objectively as possible, in a hermeneutic sense, by being up front with any biases throughout the entire research process.

**Descriptive statistics.** I also presented descriptive statistics of relevant value statements and concepts for the texts I analyzed. Examples of statistics I provided include the percentages of relevant value statements from both books that appeared to promote liberal individualistic or relational values. Each percentage was presented with the number of total value statements in the texts. While such statistical information is considered secondary to the narrative account to address the research questions for this study, it still informed the final hermeneutic analysis and narrative. Additionally, the inclusion of such descriptive statistics was useful to show that I did not handpick one or two quotes to represent data themes, evidencing fairness for the results and helping
prevent an interpretation that merely confirms my own biases (E. Gantt, personal communication, March 14, 2014).

**Data themes.** Although I provided quantitative statistics in the narrative account, the data analysis to answer my research questions rest primarily on the quality of the narrative account itself. This makes sense from a hermeneutic perspective because hermeneutists clearly do not think numbers provide enough information to answer qualitative research questions (Gantt, Lindstrom & Williams, 2007; Slife & Richardson, 2012). In order to answer my research questions, I displayed themes of the data I analyzed by presenting striking quotations that are prototypical examples of features of liberal individualism and relationality in the texts, or the lack thereof. For example, I presented a number of quotes that were unmistakably feature #1 of liberal individualism to support this theme.

**IRB Exclusion of Review**

The UNLV Institutional Review Board approved my request for “Exclusion of Review” on July 3, 2014. Please see Appendix B for this notice from the review board.

**Summary of Methodology**

This chapter has described the hermeneutic methodology guiding this study and delineated the specific method that follows from this methodology. This method was used to identify two potentially disguised ideologies in cornerstone student affairs textbooks.
Chapter 4
ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the analysis and findings of the study. First, I describe the theoretical rationale as well as practical analytical processes to search for implicit values in the texts. Second, I present general and specific findings, first in relation to the texts as a whole and second in relation to the specific features of liberal individualism and select relational findings.

Theoretical Rationale and Process of Analysis

This section explains the process of analysis and the theoretical rationale for this process. First, I describe the rationale and practical procedures followed to explicate implicit values using the hermeneutic circle. Second, I describe the rational and practical procedures that ensure hermeneutic objectivity. Lastly, I describe my general categorization of findings as a necessary precursor to the “Findings” section to follow.

Explicating Implicit Values Using the Hermeneutic Circle

I began my search for implicit values with an awareness of where such values might be found within the texts. According to multiple hermeneutists (e.g., Packer, 2011, Richardson, in press), implicit values are found in the relations between statements instead of individual statements themselves. When any statement is taken out of context (i.e., not understood in relation to other statements), the implied values of that statement are underdetermined (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press; Slife & Williams, 1995). For example, the hypothetical statement “We care about relationships” is underdetermined
until it is placed in relation to other author statements and the context of the text as a whole. As an isolated statement, it might appear to be relational. However, once placed in relation to additional statements, the implied values of that statement might be explicated as instrumental values – not relational values – if such relational care is promoted as a means to individualist ends. Thus, the search for implicit values within these texts necessarily focuses on the relation between a part of the text and its whole, and vice versa, otherwise known as the hermeneutic circle.

As mentioned in chapter 3, the hermeneutic circle is a framework to understand how understanding takes place. Understanding is co-constituting from this perspective, because an understanding of a part (e.g., a particular sentence) informs one's understanding of the whole (e.g., a section of a text); and an understanding of the whole informs one's understanding of the part. This interplay between part and whole co-constitutes not only one's understanding of the text under study, but also one's understanding of the implicit values of that text (Packer, 2011; Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press).

I practically engaged the hermeneutic circle in the analysis in several ways. First, a careful review of the relevant literatures in Chapters 2 and 3 provided a sense of the broader context. Regarding the specific text analysis, I began with the Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice [SDC] text, reading this text in the sequence in which it was written. Second, to help my understanding of the potential relationships between textual parts and wholes, I purposefully broadened my concurrent outside reading, in consultation with committee members, to include books and articles
on topics including hermeneutics (e.g., Bernstein, 1983), liberal individualism (e.g., Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999), and relationality (e.g., Slife, 2004).

As I conducted my analysis and outside reading, I kept track of any markings I made in the texts by writing the date besides each marking (e.g., 7/10/14). In my hermeneutic analysis of SDC and Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession [SS], I marked the passages I found in the texts that appeared to be undergirded by features of liberal individualism or relationality as “LI” or “R” with the specific feature (e.g., LI #1, R #1). The specific features are those described in Table 2, Chapter 2. For passages that exemplified specific features, I marked these with an additional star, two stars, or three stars in order of importance of the passages (e.g., LI #1*, R #1**, LI #2***).

I analyzed and marked the SS text in a similar fashion as SDC. Instead of reading SS from beginning to end, I selected specific sections of the text to read from start to finish in order of relevance for my study, finishing the entire text in this way. As I read through each text I periodically referred back to my understanding of passages and marked features of either ideology, liberal individualism or relationality, and revised – and sometimes deleted – my prior markings as I understood the passages more clearly both in relation to the chapter and the book.

My analytical process and engagement in the hermeneutic circle continued after finishing an analysis of each text as I conceptualized and wrote the findings for this analysis chapter itself. This conceptualization began after I finished a first reading of SDC. Thus, I was able to view a snapshot of current possible findings in relation to the larger dissertation chapter I was writing as a whole. This back and forth between part and
whole in relation to the creation of this analysis chapter continued during and after my analysis of SS, thus incorporating the hermeneutic circle of both texts.

**Ensuring Hermeneutic Objectivity**

Hermeneutic objectivity involves another aspect of the hermeneutic circle, the circle or cycle of engagement and reflection. This cycle was apparent each time I engaged in specific parts of the study (e.g., intense analysis of specific sections of a chapter in SDC) and then reflected on the whole and then re-engaged the text again. It is vital that my engagement in and reflection on these texts was valid, or hermeneutically objective, otherwise, my interpretation, which is partly constituted by my engagement and reflection, might merely confirm my own biases.

I ensured hermeneutic objectivity by incorporating the four aspects of surprise (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press) into the analysis: 1) general awareness of researcher interpretation, 2) softening of this interpretation, 3) development of alternative interpretations, and 4) particularizing these alternatives to the specific context. This incorporation minimizes possible confirmation bias during analysis by ensuring I am genuinely open, and thus surprisable, in terms of what the text actually means.

I ensured openness in many ways. First, I kept track of any ruptures I experienced during my analysis in a research journal. A rupture is considered a mini surprise, where my biases or expectations of what I think the meaning is are violated (Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press). A rupture ensures that I am genuinely open to what the text actually means as opposed to imbuing the text with my own values and expectations. The journal on which I recorded these ruptures was an excel spreadsheet with multiple sections. Under the “Rupture” section, I carefully described my ruptures. These were in turn
cataloged in chronological order in the spreadsheet, at times cataloging multiple ruptures per day of analysis. This specific concept is discussed fully in the “Specific Findings Section” below. I experienced more ruptures than I formally recorded, but did record 31 ruptures total (examples in Appendix C).

I also used the research journal to keep a running commentary of my analysis in chronological order in a “Running Commentary” section. This section provided a place to keep track of my reflections on parts in relation to the whole as well as connections I was making in relation to the text during my analysis. This section further supported my hermeneutic objectivity by bolstering my hermeneutic cycle of engagement and reflection. I recorded 119 running commentary notes in this section (examples in Appendix D).

Next, I used a section in my research journal called “Features” to keep a chronologically ordered description of the evolution of my understanding of the dialectical relationship between features of liberal individualism and relationality. My understanding of these features evolved during my analysis and outside reading not only in complexity, but also in their particularity (i.e., in the particular ways these features might manifest in these particular texts). I recorded 23 notes on the evolution of my understanding of these features (examples in Appendix E). Thus, while the table of features was not altered (see Table 2, Chapter 2), my understanding of the dialectical relationship between these features grew in complexity, bolstering the hermeneutic objectivity of this study.

I used one final section in my researcher journal to ensure hermeneutic objectivity during analysis called “Carefulness.” This section demonstrated how I sought to take care
and do everything possible to ensure that the meanings I discerned from the text were valid. For example, if a statement used individualistic wording when presenting a relationist concept, I was purposefully careful to not immediately assume that the statement was consistent with a liberal individualist ideology and vice versa for relational statements. In this sense, I was careful to keep track of the effort or care I put into my interpretation throughout the analysis. I formally recorded 15 notes in this carefulness section (Appendix F).

Levels of Clarity

There were different levels of clarity among the findings. From a hermeneutic standpoint, the implicit values within these texts are never absolutely clear. Instead, such values are more or less clearly one ideology or the other, based on the strength of relationship between one part of a text and its whole (i.e., the hermeneutic circle). I found it useful to begin to think about the findings from this study in terms of two levels of clarity.

First Level of Clarity: Basically Clear. The first level of findings in this study – basically clear – includes statements (i.e., direct quotes) and concepts (i.e., the overarching meaning of sections of a text) that are fairly clear manifestations of implicit values of either ideology based on their relationship to other parts and whole of the text. Examples of this level of findings are presented in the “Specific Findings” section below.

Second Level of Clarity: Ambiguous. The second level of findings in this study – ambiguous – includes value laden statements or concepts that can be interpreted as consistent with either a liberal individualist or relational ideology. In this sense, one can understand the entire statement as consistent with an individualist or a relational
framework. One reason for this ambiguity is a lack of contextual information in the text. In this sense, the relations between these statements and others were not rich or strong enough to clearly identify the statement as consistent with one ideology and not the other. Ambiguous statements were marked in the text and counted for inclusion in the general findings below. An example of an ambiguous statement from the text with my analysis of this statement is provided in Appendix G.

Findings

The first main section is dedicated to the more general findings of the ideologies in relation to the texts as a whole, with the second main section devoted to the findings of the specific features of liberal individualism and select relational findings. The ideology of liberal individualism is pervasive throughout these two texts. There are important glimpses of relationality, in many intriguing places, but there is strong evidence that liberal individualism is influential as a relatively unrecognized ideology of the authors of these texts.

General Findings

The general findings are described in two ways. First, I present percentages of relevant value statements from the texts in three categories: liberal individualistic, relational, or ambiguous. Second, I indicate the influence of liberal individualism throughout the texts by presenting the number of chapters of both texts that prominently feature liberal individualism and/or relationality. Given the prominence of liberal individualism in this general findings section, I then analyze its main features in the next
section. The more specific analysis is itself supportive of the general conclusion—that liberal individualism is a highly influential factor in these two texts.

Unless otherwise stated, the quotes presented for the general and specific findings are taken from the textbook authors themselves, not the authors of the theories. Exceptions include when the textbook authors also author the theories under discussion as well as when the textbook authors directly quote and expand on a theory. In this sense, these findings are in relation to the textbook authors' interpretations of theories, not the theories themselves.

**Percentages of Relevant Value Statements.** Relevant value statements were defined as a sentence or group of sentences that involved some form of relative worth, utility, or importance to the general ideology of student affairs. Statements considered non-relevant in these texts were sentences that did not appear to involve, directly or indirectly, a form of a relative worth regarding the ideology of the field. Relevant statements fell into three categories: liberal individualistic, relational, or ambiguous. The ambiguous category was needed when a sentence or group of sentences was a relevant value statement but could be interpreted from either ideology (see above definition of this ambiguous level of findings). The statements overall were totaled from both texts and then the percentage derived from the total for each category: 67% (1366/2034) liberal individualistic, 8% (159/2034) relational, and 25% (509/2034) ambiguous.

**Prominence of Liberal Individualism.** While these percentages indicate a fairly strong liberal individualistic influence within these texts, care should be taken about inferring the distribution of this influence. For example, all the relevant value statements could be clustered within only a few chapters, and thus only strongly influential for a
relatively small portion of the texts. For this reason, it was necessary to do a second general analysis to answer the question: how pervasive or widespread is this liberal individualistic influence throughout these textbooks? To answer this question, I identified the chapters of both texts in which liberal individualism was prominently featured. Specifically, I examined the relevant value statements to see whether substantive information in each chapter involved one or more of the liberal individualistic values or relational values. From this analysis, liberal individualism was prominently featured in 43 out of the total 51 chapters of both texts, with relationality prominently featured in 3 out of the total of 51. Thus, 84% of the chapters of these textbooks prominently featured this liberal individualistic ideology, evidencing the involvement of a relatively large portion of the chapters and topics of each text.

Given the predominance of liberal individualism in these texts, these general findings now provide the warrant to discern more specific information about the features of these relatively widespread liberal individualist influences. The following section of liberal individualist features will necessarily be lengthy because of the dominance of this ideology in these texts. The reader should note that I provide no quantitative information about the specific distributions of liberal individualistic findings per feature below. The central reason for this decision is because the exemplary quotes presented for each feature often imply other features. This is due to the holistic connection between features (i.e., each feature overlaps with the other features) and thus the value statements for each feature often reflect several features. This holistic connection between features makes the presentation of a specific distribution of value statements per feature next to meaningless. With this holistic quality of the features in mind, each is presented sequentially below.
Where appropriate, I point out connections between features for the reader to highlight their holistic relationship.

**Specific Findings**

The specific findings are described in two ways. First, I present findings of the specific features of liberal individualism in the texts. Each feature is described, the findings for that feature are summarized, and then evidenced with exemplary quotes taken from both texts. Second, I present select relational findings. These two sets of specific findings complement and even reinforce the general findings.

Two cautions will improve understanding of the findings. First, the exemplary quotes selected and discussed below sometimes involve quotations from and descriptions about the work of other authors and theorists (e.g., Kegan, Jones). Yet, invariably, these quotes and descriptions are used by the textbook authors to make their own points and emphasize their own meanings, and thus do not necessarily reflect the implicit values of the theorists referred to. For example, the textbook authors might interpret Kegan’s work in a manner consistent with liberal individualism, when Kegan’s work itself might be better understood as relational. Even when the textbook authors interpret their own theoretical work, the focus of this study is on the implicit values of the textbook authors’ interpretations and meanings, not the work to which they are referring. Second, because of space limitations, I only present exemplary quotes that are most representative of a larger pool of quotes that are themselves representative of the texts.

Each feature section begins with a summary of the dialectical relationship between that specific feature of liberal individualism and relationality (see Table 2, Chapter 2). Next, the findings of that feature are summarized, and exemplary quotes
presented and discussed as evidence for the specific findings of that feature. Finally, important phrases and words are italicized in these quotes to draw the reader’s attention to key phrases and concepts discussed.

**Feature 1: Atomism.** The first feature of liberal individualism pertains to its atomistic quality. Like atoms, individuals are viewed as essentially self-contained beings, with one’s individual identity ultimately contained within oneself. This self-containment or atomistic feature of liberal individualism is highlighted when compared to its relational alternative. From a relational perspective, individuals are never self-contained or separated from their socio-historical context. In fact, individuals share their very being with this context, meaning that one’s individual identity is shared or co-constituted instead of self-contained.

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced in the texts in multiple ways. Like atoms, or billiard balls, individuals are largely viewed within the texts as ultimately housing their identities within. Hallmarks of this self-contained quality in the texts include *interactions* with *outside* forces, such as other persons and cultural influences. Such interactions, as typified in the texts, are only possible if the individual and its context are first separated before the interaction occurs (e.g., separate billiard balls hitting against one another). These interactions in turn are largely understood within the texts as influential to the degree that they are incorporated *inside* of the self-contained individual, often described as *internally* incorporated from *external* sources.

The following quotes from the author’s discussion of individual differences and learning stages provides an example:

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"...human behavior does not vary by chance but rather is caused by innate differences such as how individuals take in and process information, how they learn best, or the types of activities that interest them are apparent" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 33).

"CE and AC [learning stages] compose a prehending or grasping dimension - how one takes in information" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 139).

In these quotes, the authors present the notion that individuals “take in” information. This separation between the individual and information is characteristic of a self-contained individual. For example, it is necessary for an individual that is self-contained to either “take in” or not “take in” outside information and context, almost as if information and context are viewed as objects or commodities (See Feature 2). In contrast, from a relational standpoint, information is not interpreted as an object “taken in” but instead as an activity people continually engage in which is always contextual and social. Such activities (e.g., informing one another) occupy relational space and occur in a socio-historical context. By contrast, the next quote assumes that some kind of “taking in” is necessary for student learning.

"Kegan described his third order, or socializing meaning making as orienting to others’ perspectives, bringing them inside to the point that our perspective is co-constructed with others" (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 210).

Even activities of “co-constructing” one’s perspective “with others” can evidence an assumption of the self-contained individual with the need to “bring...them inside” of the self for this co-construction to occur. From a relational standpoint, there is no “inside” to “bring” others into because one’s identity is shared, not self-contained (See Feature 3).
In this sense, the need to “bring them inside” of oneself is understood by assuming a self-contained individual that is separated from others to the extent that “bringing them inside” is a possibility. This individualistic notion of a self-contained separation from others is further evidenced in the following quotes about basic developmental aspects of meaning making.

"By the time infants are eighteen months old, they begin to recognize the existence of objects outside themselves, propelling them into the next stage. Parents must remain steadfast as the child pushes against them to determine where the boundaries are between its self and the environment" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 178).

"Children develop order 1 meaning making at about age two, when they realize that they have control over their reflexes (Kegan, 1982) and become aware of objects in their environment as independent from themselves … (Evans et al., 2010, p. 178).

In both of these quotes, the authors appear to stress the assumption of a self-contained individual by placing the most basic level of meaning making (i.e., infants and two-year olds) as “recognizing the existence of objects outside themselves” and “becom[ing] aware of objects in their environment as independent from themselves.” In this sense, understanding the world as a self-contained individual is so commonsensical that even infants are viewed as recognizing this individualistic separation. Such recognition is only possible from an assumption of a self-contained self. For example, an infant that shares its being and very existence with “outside objects” would not have the possibility of viewing such objects as “outside” or “independent from themselves.”
Instead, those objects would partly constitute that infant, making “boundaries…between its self and the environment” an individualist interpretation of the otherwise shared being of the infant and its socio-historical context. The next quote might appear to be relational, but the same assumption of a self-contained separation between the self and environment still occurs with “interactions.”

"Piaget (1952) stressed the importance of neurological maturation in cognitive development but also noted the significant role played by the environment in providing experiences to which the individual must react. Social interaction with peers, parents, and other adults is especially influential in cognitive development” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 43).

Note how to authors appear to interpret “social interaction” as more of an interaction than an actual interaction. This is evident in the individualistic notion that the “individual must react” to “experiences” provided by the “environment.” In this sense, the authors assume a sequence of the individual existing before the environmental “experiences” are presented so that the individual can then “react” to them (See Feature 7). This sequence connotes a separation between the individual and the environment. A relational interpretation of “interaction,” in contrast, would not allow for inter-reactions because individuals are partly constituted by their environments. Thus, an individual’s “reaction” to their environment would already be partly constituted by that environment, and thus would not be understood as one self-contained variable reacting to another. The following quote also evidences this individualistic interpretation of interactions.

"According to Erickson (1959/1980), each new stage occurs when internal psychological and biological changes interact with external social demands to
create a developmental crisis, or turning point, in a person's life” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 169).

Note the way the authors have interpreted “interaction” in terms of “internal” and “external” factors. This internal-external dualism connotes a separation between the “internal” changes that interact with “external” demands. In fact, it would appear that when such internal-external interactions are not occurring, the “internal” changes and “external” demands would be separated. A relationist, in contrast, would question this internal-external dualism by noting that psychological and biological changes are only understood in relation to a socio-historical context, which includes social demands. In this sense, each factor is relationally viewed as co-constitutive of the other – as in a shared being – as opposed to an individualist view of two “internal” and “external” factors that appear to exist separately until they “interact,” much like billiard balls or atoms. The following quote also evidences this internal-external individualist split in regard to student development.

"Each stage is distinguished by a psychosocial crisis, or "turning point" that must be resolved by balancing the internal self and the external environment…"

(Evans et al., 2010, p. 48-49).

This quote emphasizes a separation between the “self” and the “environment” by considering the self as “internal” and the environment as “external.” This internal-external distinction necessarily separates that which is internal (i.e., the self) from that which is external (i.e., the environment). The image of a student with a billiard ball type bubble around them comes to mind to distinguish between the internal student and its external surrounding environment. In contrast, a student with a shared being does not
have a point at which internal becomes external because there is no separation within a shared or co-constituted being.

**Feature 2: Context.** The second feature of liberal individualism focuses on the role of context in studying and understanding not only individuals but all beings. From an individualist perspective, *everything* is studied and best understood as self-contained beings; beings that retain their essential selves despite changing contexts. For example, groups, nations, even classrooms, are studied and best understood when separated from their socio-historical context. It is in this sense that researchers refer to liberal individualism as ontological (e.g., Belah et al., 1985; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). In contrast, from a relational perspective, individuals, groups, etc., are studied and best understood as parts of greater wholes, parts that are best and only truly understood within the context they share and are partly constituted by. Parts get their qualities, their meanings, from the relation to the whole.

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced in the texts in many ways, but most prevalently in discussions about research. Research studies are often presented with an assumption that a specific sample of students possesses self-contained, context-independent traits or characteristics. Thus, such a sample is only immediately generalizable to other students sharing these self-contained characteristics (e.g., male students) as opposed to students making up the context from which the sample was taken but not sharing these self-contained characteristics (e.g., female students). Consequently, research studies are critiqued in the texts in terms of how representative they are of different self-contained student traits (e.g., race and sex). Furthermore, students
themselves are viewed as gaining complexity in their self-contained identity by resisting the influence of context on that identity.

Consider, for example, the following quote from the author’s discussion of research:

"If you seek to determine best practices for a particular subpopulation of students - such as first-generation students, underrepresented minority students, or male students - you might question whether the findings reported in previous research are relevant to the population you are trying to serve" (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 500).

In this first quote, the authors suggest that the reader “might question whether the findings reported in previous research are relevant to the population you are trying to serve.” This relevance question assumes that “findings reported in previous research” are based on populations of students that are self-contained and independent from their context (see Feature 1). In this sense, even if individuals are partly constituted by their “subpopulation” or group, that group is still individualistically studied and understood as separate from its socio-historical context. In contrast, a relationist views research on subpopulations of students not as self-contained individuals, but instead as shared beings that are partly constituted by their socio-historical context, a context inclusive of other subpopulations of students. Findings reported from research on such shared beings necessarily include socio-historical contextual factors that partly constitute these beings. For example, findings on one “particular subpopulation of students” from a relationist perspective necessarily include knowledge about the socio-historical context of other subpopulations, including even contrasting subpopulations. The following quote on research also assumes this self-contained independence from context.
"...scholars have long argued for more research that considers how different types of students might be affected in unique ways by their experiences, or the conditional effects of college. There is, in fact, a growing body of literature demonstrating what we can learn by examining the impact of college separated for different student populations... Research that disaggregates students on the basis of race and ethnicity is particularly common... " (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 501).

Even in this quote, the authors assume that student populations are made of up individuals that are self-contained and context-independent. Thus, the “growing body of literature” that examines “the impact of college separately for different student populations” assumes that such populations are not meaningfully related to other populations. In this sense, the “disaggregation” of “students on the basis of race and ethnicity” is emphasized because of the self-contained nature of the student characteristics of “race and ethnicity” (See Feature 1). A relationist would not object to examining “the impact of college” for “different student populations.” However, one such examination would be viewed as necessarily including the factors co-constituting that particular student population (e.g., Packer, 2011). The following quotes, referring to a visualization of conditional college effects, evidence the almost limitless number of potential self-contained factors to be researched in order for practitioners to “make informed decisions about students.”

“The possibilities are endless, given variations among students based on race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, or any number of characteristics…Certainly, as the number of subgroups increases, so do the number of arrows between boxes
[showing the potential combination of student characteristics]; *at some point this may become unwieldy* from a visual perspective. However, from a practical standpoint, *it is important to be mindful of the variety of student traits - and combinations of traits - that may shape the dynamics of college impact.* This mind-set may be intuitive for many campus personnel, but unfortunately the research community has not responded quickly enough to the need for information on the extent and nature of conditional college effects. *Thus student affairs educators and administrators are limited in their ability to make informed decisions about which students will benefit most from which programs and services*" (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 503-504).

The assumption that student traits (e.g., race, gender) are self-contained and context independent, necessarily leads to a whole host of other potentially self-contained sub-traits. It is in this sense that the authors suggest that “[t]he possibilities are endless, given the variations among students based on race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, or any number of characteristics.” The result of these “endless” “possibilities” of self-contained student traits is the need for practitioners to “be mindful of the variety of student traits – and combinations of traits – that may shape the dynamics of college impact.” Because students are self-contained, their unique “combination” of traits “shap[es] the dynamics of college impact” on those students. This self-contained, context-independent assumption, taken to its logical end, implies that only research conducted on a particular combination of student traits is then generalizable and useful for practitioners. From a relational standpoint, this generalizability assumption is only possible from the assumption of context-independence. The following quotes continue
this self-contained, context-independent assumption when discussing how to determine a theory’s value.

"When determining a theory's value, it is also important to ask upon what population that theory is based. For example, does the theory apply only to individuals with those characteristics or more generally to other individuals (Knefelkamp et al., 1978)? This past point is especially important for considering how theories apply to diverse students and learning contexts” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 152).

"Knefelkamp (1978) suggested several questions for evaluating the utility of theory that remain helpful: 1. On what population is the theory based? It is important to determine the population on which the theory was based and whether the theory has been tested with individuals who have different characteristics. Some aspects of the theory may be specific to the original population, while other concepts may apply to people more generally” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 24).

Both of these quotes stress the importance of determining the “population” on which the theory was based. This stressed importance assumes that such a population is self-contained and context-independent. It is in this sense that the authors also stress the need for the theory to be “tested with individuals who have different characteristics.” That is to say, the theory would need to be tested with another assumed self-contained, context independent population. This testing would identify if the self-contained, context independent traits the theory was originally based on are generalizable to different context-independent student traits. As discussed above, “the possibilities are endless” for such testing. It is these “endless” possibilities that evidence that determining a theory’s
value is still based on individualistic assumptions of a self-contained, context-independent population. In contrast, determining a theory’s value from a relational standpoint would likely focus on the extent that the theory took into account the co-constituted nature of the population under study. The following quote evidences a critique of a theory’s value in the texts that is based on self-contained, context-independent assumptions.

"The primary weakness of Baxter Magolda's work has been the narrowness of the population on which it is based - white, mostly privileged individuals who were all undergraduate students at Miami University. Recognizing this limitation, Baxter Magolda (2004a) has called for additional studies of self-authorship based on diverse populations of students in different types of settings. Pizzolato and Tores are pursuing this line of research with high-risk students and Latino/a students, respectively. More work is needed to examine the experiences of diverse student populations, particularly those who come from more communally oriented cultures" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 193).

This quote evidences the devaluing of a theory because of the “narrowness of the population on which it is based.” Such a devaluing assumes that the “narrowness” issue is problematic because the “population on which [the theory] is based” is self-contained and context-independent. Suggestions to improve the value of the theory also assume this individualist interpretation as evidenced in the calls for “additional studies of self-authorship based on diverse populations of students in different types of settings.” Such “additional calls” for studies on different populations imply a separation and context-
independence between the population that the theory is based in comparison to the more “diverse populations” that the theory will be tested against.

From a relational perspective, the theory would likely be valued as weak or strong based on the extent that the theory studied the constitution or nexuses of relations that made up the “white, mostly privileged individuals who were all undergraduate students at Miami University.” This constitution would necessarily contain the students’ relationships to other races and privileged and non-privileged statuses, not to mention a whole host of other socio-historical relationships that partly constitute the students under study (See Feature 3). It would be this depth or narrowness of constitution that would be critiqued for the theory’s value, not the self-contained, context-independent population on which the theory is based. The following quote bridges this discussion of context-independent individualist assumptions undergirding research to student development, with specific focus on the role of context in developing identity.

"As more complex understandings of self occur, the meaning-making filter becomes less porous, and the influence of contextual elements on the self-perception of identity decreases. The more porous the filter, the more influence context will have on identity, resulting in modifications that reflect the context rather than the person's inner self. This model assists in both understanding the interconnections between different domains of development and comprehending how the lack of development of an internal voice to guide decisions can influence every aspect of a student's identity” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 201).

This quote stresses the “development of an internal voice” that is separate from “contextual influences” and thus “guide[s] decisions” influential for the “student’s
identity.” This developmental concept is based on individualist assumptions of a self-contained student that “filters” out contextual influences that might otherwise “modify” the student’s “inner self.” As the authors describe, “[a]s more complex understandings of self occur, the meaning-making filter becomes less porous, and the influence of contextual elements on the self-perception of identity decreases.” In this sense, when a student understands himself more complexly, the influence of context decreases and vice versa with a less complex understanding of self. Thus, a developed student identity is one that is self-contained and independent from contextual influences of all types (See Features 4 & 8). In contrast, a relational perspective portrays a developed student identity as one that is co-constituted by contextual influences and thus dependent on such influences for identity development. Rather than portraying a student as separated from contextual influences by a “meaning-making filter,” a relationist would portray a student as partly constituted by those influences, to the extent that those influences are part of that student’s shared relational being.

**Feature 3: Relationships.** The third feature of liberal individualism recognizes the individual as primary and the relationship as secondary because self-contained individuals exist independently before entering into a relationship with other self-contained individuals. Thus, community is viewed as a set of self-contained individuals or billiard balls that might interact with each other intermittently when they get close enough. However, such interactions do not essentially change the individuals unless the individual brings such outside influences inside of the self-contained self. In contrast, relationality focuses on the relationship as primary because individuals themselves are nexuses of relations. In this sense, individuals are always and already in relationship (i.e.,
individuals are existentially dependent on one another and their relationships).

Community and relationships are viewed as just as essential, if not more important, than the individuals “within” because those individuals are themselves partly constituted by their community and relationships.

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced in the texts in the ways the authors approach relationships developmentally and ethically. In each of these approaches, relationships are understood as artificial aggregates of self-contained individuals, as opposed to an organization of relationships more fundamental, or real, than the individuals “within.” Thus, theories that focus on how individuals develop in relationships place primary emphasis on the individual. Similarly, the ethic of relationships focuses on moral and ethical issues that ultimately pertain to collections of self-contained individuals.

Consider, for example, the following quote from the author’s discussion of relationships in regard to self-authorship:

"As a result of intensive self-reflection, individuals develop a strong self-concept. In relationships, renegotiation often occurs as young adults weigh their needs and desires, along with those of others around them. Individuals are also more careful in making relationship commitments to ensure that the commitment "honor[s] the self they [are] constructing" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 140)” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 186).

In this quote, relationships are “renegotiate[ed]” to place primary emphasis on individual “needs and desires.” Note how these “needs and desires” are separated from “those of others around them.” This separation is consistent with an assumption that such
“needs and desires” are self-contained within the individuals interacting in the relationship (See Feature 1). Thus, the relationship is merely an artificial aggregate of the self-contained “needs and desires” of individuals. It is the individual that is considered primary in this discussion of “needs and desires,” not the relationship itself. In contrast, a relationist views the individual “needs and desires” as partly constituted by their relationship to other individuals and their broader socio-historical context. Thus, primary importance is placed on the relationship co-constituting the individuals that are instances of this relationship themselves. The following quote continues this individualistic assumption of focusing on the individual within a relationship.

"Belenky at al. (1986) asserted that "it is in the process of sorting out the pieces of the self and of searching for a unique and authentic voice" (p. 137) that women discover the two basic insights of constructivist thought: all knowledge is constructed and the knower is an intimate part of what is known. The authors characterized constructivists as able to listen to others without losing the ability to hear their own voices" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 123).

This quote evidences an individualist assumption in the statement in which the author’s put forward the need for individuals to be “able to listen to others without losing the ability to hear their own voices.” From a relational perspective, such a separation between “listen[ing] to others” and “[not] losing the ability to hear their own voices” is not possible, because an individual’s “own voice” is partly-constituted by the “voices” of others (See Feature 2). The following quote continues this individualistic notion of primarily focusing on individuals when discussing relational ethics.
"Relational ethics constitutes one school of ethical thinking (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984). Caring is the fundamental principle that guides this approach. The principle of caring asserts that taking the well-being of the other person into account should be the supreme consideration in ethical relationships…Thinking about a relationship or a problem within it serves the higher goal of understanding how to care about a particular person in a specific situation. Gilligan, who writes descriptively about moral development, struggles with the same type of integration. *Her model of female moral development has three stages: (1) caring about self (2) caring about others, and (3) balancing care for self with care for others.* Although Gilligan discusses moral rather than cognitive development, it is clear that increasingly complex thinking capacities are necessary for people to think through moral dilemmas when they are trying to *take the needs of both people* into account, as they do in stage three of her framework” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 107).

Note the sequence of the stages in the development model at the core of this approach to “relational ethics.” This sequence appears to separately focus on the “self” before separately focusing on the “other” and lastly “balancing care for self with care for others.” This sequence is not possible from a relational perspective because focusing on the “self” necessarily includes a focus on “others” that the self is existentially dependent upon and vice versa for the second stage. In fact, a relationist would also challenge the notion of “balancing care for self with care for others,” as if it is possible to separately care for each individual in the relationship and “take the needs of both people into account.” In contrast, a relationist would instead place importance on taking the need of
the relationship into account, despite potential individualist suffering which might result (See Feature 6 & 7). The following quote continues this individualistic focus in regard to notions of caring for self and others.

"As persons begin to question the logic of always putting themselves second, the second transition, from goodness to truth, begins, and the concept of responsibility is reconsidered in an effort to include taking care of oneself as well as others. In the third level, the morality of nonviolence, the individual "asserts a moral equality between self and other" (Gilligan, 1977, p. 504) and comes to understand that the prohibition against hurting also includes not hurting oneself …" (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 181).

As described above, the author’s interpretation of Gilligan’s moral development theory separates out care of oneself, care of others, and care of both self and others into sequential stages. Thus, notions such as a “morality of nonviolence” that lead individuals to “assert…a moral equality between self and other[s]” as well as “come…to understand that the prohibition against hurting also include not hurting oneself” appear to place a primary focus on individuals. In contrast, a relationist would place a primary focus on the relationship itself, with individual “hurt” or suffering viewed as often necessary and beneficial for the relationship (See Feature 6). The following quote continues this individualistic focus in regard to caring for the roommate relationship.

"In residence life… conflict between female roommates can be best resolved through sensitive negotiation that benefits both parties…” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 116).

Note the emphasis on a “negotiation” that “benefits both parties” in this quote. In this sense, the roommate relationship is split into separate “parties” that may or may not
“benefit” from the “negotiation.” While the authors focus on “both” parties gaining benefit, this focus is still individualist because of the primary focus on each party. A relationist, in contrast, would instead emphasize a “negotiation” that “benefits” the roommate relationship. From a relational standpoint, a “negotiation that benefits both parties” may not benefit their relationship. Similarly, a negotiation that benefits the relationship may not benefit both parties. In this sense, placing a primary emphasis on the roommate relationship might have a radically different result (See Feature 6).

**Feature 4: Liberation.** The fourth feature of liberal individualism is a valuing of individual freedom and liberation from tradition and moral authority. This valuing implies that individuals are not only best *understood* when separated from such contexts, but that such a separation is considered a moral good, or *ought*. In this sense, separating individuals from authority structures is viewed as a liberation or emancipation of individuals from otherwise oppressive contexts and cultures. This complete separation or freedom from such contexts is possible because individuals are not constituted by them. In contrast, a relational stance views individuals as always partly constituted by their tradition and moral authority. Thus, while individuals can certainly critique such tradition and moral authority structures, a relationist views even this critique as partly constituted by the individual’s tradition and moral authority. In this sense, tradition and moral authority are important but not uncritically examined sources of co-constitutive identity for the relationist.

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced in the texts in the ways many theories promote a liberation or freedom of individuals from their contexts of tradition and moral authority. Such contexts include parental figures, peer influences, and broader
cultural pressures, as well as others external influences. For example, individuals are considered to have reached a higher form of development once they begin to internally think for themselves, instead of thinking through broader cultural or moral lenses that are viewed as external to the individual. In fact, many developmental theorists, as interpreted by these authors, view cultural and moral authority as primarily oppressive of individual identities, especially nondominant identities. In this sense, such theorists see a complete liberation or emancipation of individuals from these oppressive contexts as a moral good or ought because such emancipation is viewed as the primary path toward identity development.

Consider, for example, the following quotes from psychosocial theories of development.

"Individuals rely on an internal rather than an external process to construct identity and contextualize their experiences. They choose their own path in life. Achievement is viewed as the healthiest psychological status one can obtain…" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 54).

"…in identity achieved status, people tend to construct their identity as opposed to allowing others to shape their view of whom they are” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 54).

In both of these quotes, the individual separates him or herself from their context in order to “construct their identity.” This separation is complete in the sense that individuals “rely on” their own “internal” processes to “contextualize[s] their experiences.” Thus, rather than rely on “external processes” or “allowing others to shape their view of whom they are,” individuals constitute themselves. That is to say, individuals “internally” constitute their own contexts by which they then “construct their
identity” (See Features 1 & 2). This separation and self-constitution is radically different
than a relational view of identity development, in which individuals are viewed as partly
constituted by their socio-historical contexts – including contexts of traditions and moral
authority – and existentially dependent on others for their very identity. From a relational
perspective, “others” necessarily co-constitute, or partly “shape [one’s] view of whom
they are.” These individualist assumptions continue in the following quotes on
psychosocial theories of development. The latter two quotes are examples the authors
have provided to explain the theories in action with fictitious characters in the texts.

"In this pathway [of identity achievement] women break the psychological ties to
their childhood and form separate, distinct identities” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 55).
"Carla is beginning to address identity issues. She is rejecting an identity given to
her by others and looking for a lifestyle and roles that are meaningful to her”
(Evans et al., 2010, p. 69).
"Lisa is examining integrity issues. She is moving away from a value system
ddictated by her sorority sisters and beginning to establish a personal value
system” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 69).

These quotes further evidence the importance placed on individuals “rejecting,”
“moving away,” and “break[ing]…psychological ties” to forms of authority in order to
develop identity. This separation is important because individuals better constitute their
own “identities,” “lifestyles,” and “personal value system[s]” outside of the influence of
others. While a relationist might similarly critique each of these forms of authority that
individuals are separating from, the relationist would recognize that very critique as itself
partly constituted by those forms of authority. For example, the unified call for liberation
or freedom from these forms of authority for individuals would be considered by a relationist as partly constituted by a liberal individualist culture (See Feature 2). Thus, the importance placed on breaking ones “psychological ties” to childhood is itself a product of one’s culture, tradition, and moral authority. The following quotes provide additional evidence of this assumption that individuals should be liberated from tradition and moral authority in theories of self-authorship.

"Self-authoring persons generate their beliefs, values, identities, and relational roles on the basis of internal standards they have created for themselves” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 210).

"Drawing on the work of Kegan (1994), Baxter Magolda (2008) defined self-authorship as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (p. 269) " (Evans et al., 2010, p. 183).

"Once individuals learned to trust their internal voices, they began building an internal foundation, which Baxter Magolda (2008) defined as a personal philosophy or framework to guide their actions” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 187).

Note the conspicuous absence in these quotes of cultural standards or broader contexts. In this sense, individuals “create” their own “internal” standards independently from the influence of standards external to themselves. Thus, individual “beliefs, values, identities” and even “personal philosophies” are all generated from standards “internal” to the self (See Feature 1). This individualist self-creation of standards is radically different than a relational co-creation or co-constitution of such standards. From a relationist perspective, it is not possible for individuals to have “created for themselves” “internal standards.” This would be similar to individuals creating such standards ex
nihilo, or from nowhere. That is to say, without an individual’s relationship to other standards – even standards they disagree with – such a self-creation is not possible (See Feature 2). The following quote provides additional evidence of this individualist assumption that one should – and can – be liberated from one’s context in order to shape one’s identity.

"Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, particularly, shape their own identity, since our heterosexist culture provides little or no socialization for how to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In the [fictitious student group presented as an illustration] LGBQQA, the students are defining for themselves what it means to be gay, lesbian, and bisexual personally and on their campus” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 316).

This quote emphasizes how “[l]esbian, gay, and bisexual people” “shape their own identity” because their “heterosexist culture provides little or no socialization for how to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.” In contrast, a relationist views even a “heterosexist culture,” i.e., a culture not only in contrast to one’s identity but opposed to it as well, as providing a context of important possibilities for these students. For example, lesbian, gay, and bisexual students could vote against political candidates who they considered heterosexist. Thus, from a relational standpoint, even a “heterosexist culture” provides “socialization for how to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual,” even if this socialization is how not to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. The following quotes continue this individualist assumption of culture in regard to identity development and oppression.

"Formally assessing the overall campus climate using a model such as that proposed by Rankin (2003) is another institutional approach [for developmental intervention]. Since oppressive environments have the potential to restrict
development of identity for members of nondominant groups (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996), having accurate information on campus climate is important as a precursor to intervention” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 357).

"One of the most widely used paradigms to emerge in recent decades [for student development research] combines aspects of critical and cultural paradigms (Guido, et al., in press). Knowledge from this shared paradigm is subjective, experiential, and transactional. Tenets of this paradigm include emancipation of nondominant groups to alter their oppression, intersections of multiple critical and cultural views…” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 19).

These quotes focus on nondominant groups in relation to oppression and their identity development. As the author’s state, one “tenet” of “one of the most widely used paradigms” for student development research is the “emancipation of nondominant groups to alter their oppression.” Additionally, when discussing developmental interventions, the author’s state that “oppressive environments have the potential to restrict development of identity for members of nondominant groups.” In this sense, it would seem important to not only emancipate nondominant groups from oppression as a good in itself, but to also ensure such oppression does not restrict such nondominant group members’ identity development. While a relationist might disagree with the dominant “oppressive” group, they would not underestimate how much the individuals of the non-dominant group are defined by the “oppressive” group regardless of whether they are emancipated or not (See Feature 2). In fact, to be an emancipated group is to be emancipated from the oppressive group. Even the term emancipated implies a clear
relationship to the oppressive group. Indeed, the very term “nondominant” is clearly in relation to the dominant, in a relation of difference rather than similarity.

**Feature 5: Value-Freeness.** The fifth feature of liberal individualism emphasizes its stance toward values. In this sense, individualists promote a freedom for individuals to select their own values, often called value-freeness. Manifestations of this value-freeness are evidenced in notions of open-mindedness and neutrality. For example, counselors or helpers seek to be open-minded to client values so that the client has the freedom to choose values in therapy. Relationists, in contrast, assert that values and biases are inescapable and point to the paradox that individualists value value-freeness. In this sense, individualists promote value-freeness because they value individuals having a freedom to choose their own values. Thus, while counselors might attempt to be open-minded to client values and thus be value-free, they are also paradoxically valuing their client’s freedom to select values. That is to say, open-minded counselors are implicitly promoting the value of being open to other individuals’ freedom to choose values with their open-minded approach to therapy. This individualist value is in direct contrast to religious clients, for example, that might explicitly value not being open to an individual freedom to choose values. In a paradoxical sense, open-minded counselors are thus closed-minded to closed-minded clients (e.g., devoutly dogmatic clients) (See discussion of psychological research on “open-mindedness” in Chapter 2).

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced throughout the texts, but specifically in the ways the authors approach values and biases in the topics of counseling, student development, and research. Such approaches promote an idea that students best develop and are best counseled by practitioners that are open and truly
accepting of student values, i.e., truly accepting of the student’s freedom to choose their values, whatever those choices might be. Similarly, research is presented in the texts in a way that is also open to reader values and subjectivity. In this sense, research findings are neutrally presented by the authors – and at times presented as findings that speak for themselves – to better allow readers freedom to individually interpret such findings with their own values, apart from author bias.

Consider, for example, the following quote from the author’s discussion of counseling as a student affairs application of experiential learning:

"Sugarman (1985) found links between Kolb’s cycle of learning and the implementation of the counseling process. The symbols for the leaning style components have been inserted to show the connection. Sugarman stated, ‘As a counselor, I aspire to approach each client in an open minded way and attempt to involve myself fully and without bias in the experience (CE)…. I must, however, remain separate from the experience so that I can observe and reflect on it (RO)…. On the basis of these observations, I develop a theory or hypothesis of how to best intervene next… ‘” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 146).

Note in this quote the counselor’s aspiration to “approach each client in an open-minded way” as well as involving themselves “without bias in the experience.” Each of these aspirations assumes an individualist value-freeness, which is often paired with a belief that such value-freeness is “without bias.” A relationist would point out that such an “open-minded” approach is itself value laden and biased. The following quote continues this individualist theme in helping relationships.
"...helpers can assist individuals in transition explore what is happening to them by providing an unbiased relationship as well as listening and responding, understand what is happening by offering a more objective perspective, and cope by influencing appropriate action or inaction" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 221).

This quote also evidences liberal individualist values in the way the helper attempts to provide “an unbiased relationship” with and “a more objective perspective” to the individual they are helping. In both of these instances, the helper is seeking to free the individual from external values and biases so that the individual can better explore and understand what is happening to them (See Feature 1 & 2). In contrast, a relational helper would explain their values upfront as a type of informed consent, as opposed to an implicit promotion of individualist values through “objective” and “unbiased” relationships. This individualist theme continues in the following quote about the importance of helpers accepting students.

"Without a doubt, unconditional positive regard, or the helper's genuine acceptance of the student's feelings, behaviors, experiences, and attitudes, is a necessary condition for trust and connection. Furthermore, if students are worried about being judged, they hold back and are unable to benefit from the helping relationship. Conversely, if students believe that their helpers will accept them even when they are made bad choices or are struggling, then they will be more open and able to grow in self-awareness. When students experience ‘genuine acceptance and empathy, therapeutic change is most likely to occur…’” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 404).
In this quote, the “helper’s genuine acceptance” of the student is a “necessary condition” for trust, acceptance, and therapeutic change. In fact, without such acceptance, the student will be “unable to benefit from the helping relationship.” In this sense, individuals must be provided an individualist freedom within a helping relationship to value what they want, even if such values, “feelings, behaviors, experiences, and attitudes” are understood as “bad choices” (See Feature 6). The relationist, in contrast, would point out how such acceptance is “conditional” or value-laden on the assumption that individuals should be open to an individual freedom to choose values. The following quote continues this individualist notion of acceptance in regard to client “belief systems.”

“Lownsdale (1997) and Genia (1992) both found value in Fowler's theory for therapists and counselors in that it provides a framework to understand clients’ ideas about faith and to develop therapeutic interventions in line with clients’ belief systems, particularly for clients who are experiencing crises of faith” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 201).

Note how the “value” in Fowler’s theory is interpreted as helping therapists “develop therapeutic interventions in line with clients’ belief systems.” In this sense, therapists are attempting to align their therapy strategies with their clients’ value systems so that their clients maintain the freedom to choose their own values in therapy. As discussed above, this valuing of value-freeness or open-mindedness is a hallmark of an individualist worldview that paradoxically assumes that such open-mindedness is not itself value laden. A relationist, in contrast, would point out at least three value systems at work in the therapy session; the client’s value system, the therapist’s value system, and
the value system inherent in the intervention itself. None of these value systems is escapable from a relational standpoint. Even the therapist’s valuing of their clients’ freedom to choose values and beliefs in therapy is itself part of an individualist value system, a value system which might itself be considered a source of client problems. The following quote on student development continues this individualist notion of openness and acceptance.

"In the challenging college environment, student affairs staff can act as "sympathetic coaches" (p. 74), providing support for students to be who they are while also encouraging them to move beyond their current way of making meaning” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 182).

In this quote, student affairs staff provide support for students to “be who they are.” In this sense, student affairs staffs purposefully support students’ freedom to choose what they value. This freedom of choice is individualist in the same sense that an “open-minded” therapist is “open” to their client. The following quotes continue this liberal individualist approach to development with a specific focus on faith development.

"Around midlife, a strong and confident sense of self leads to a new understanding of faith in which individuals come to see the value in others’ beliefs and perspectives without experiencing them as a challenge to their own values” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 205).

This quote is presented by the authors as the most developed way an individual understands their faith in relation to others. Note how the individual comes to “see the value in others’ beliefs and perceptions without experiencing them as a challenge to their own values.” In other words, the individual views themselves as open or neutral to
others’ “beliefs and perspectives” because others should have the freedom to decide their own values and beliefs. In contrast, a relationist would point out that such individuals would not be open to other persons that do not “see the value in others’ beliefs,” or at least view such persons as not attaining a “strong and confident sense of self.” In this sense, individuals would be biased against such other persons’ closed-mindedness, much in the same way that open-minded therapists are biased against closed-minded clients. The following quote also evidences this individualistic openness and neutrality in the neutral presentation of research in the texts.

"However, the empirical research that examines student interactions reveals that students of color are much more likely than White students to report that they interact across racial and ethnic groups…” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 49).

"A study of twenty colleges and universities with better-than-predicted graduation rates and scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) revealed that the factors and conditions that matter to student success are many and varied…” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 259).

Note how the authors of the texts portray these studies as “reveal[ing]” results to the reader. In this sense, the authors are neutrally presenting such findings as speaking for themselves, as opposed to value-laden interpretations made by the authors. In an individualist sense, the authors are attempting to minimize their biases or external values on these findings so that readers have freedom to choose their own interpretation. In contrast, a relationist views this attempt at neutrality or bias minimization – like open-mindedness – as always value-laden. Even research findings are value laden because they gain their meaning by being co-constituted by the data and the researchers’ value-laden
interpretation of that data (See Feature 2). The following quote also evidences the author’s individualist assumptions in regard to formal and informal theory.

"Unfortunately, informal theory is not self-correcting (Parker, 1977). People have no basis on which to determine if their interpretations are accurate. Formal theories validated by research are needed to ascertain whether individuals' perspectives hold for the persons with whom they work and the situations in which they find themselves” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 23).

In this quote, “informal theory” is represented as interpretations that are not “validated by research” in comparison to “formal theory” that has been “validated.” Formal theory is thus “needed to ascertain whether individuals’ perspectives hold.” From an individualist perspective, the formalization of theory takes away the subjectivity or interpretation of the researcher by “validating” it against research. This validation is in line with the broader liberal individualist project to remove or free individuals of external values so they can decide for themselves (See Feature 8). In contrast, a relationist would point out that “research” itself is value-laden and even cold, hard data are necessarily interpreted by warm, soft researchers. Thus, a validation of value-laden interpretations by value-laden research does not ever remove or free individuals from values.

**Feature 6: Happiness.** The sixth feature of liberal individualism focuses on the primary end or goal of a self-contained self, individual well-being or happiness. In this sense, individuals check if they are attaining their life’s purpose or primary end by the amount of individual happiness they are experiencing. These checks on one’s individual happiness are necessary because individualists view themselves as liberated from the moral traditions that might have otherwise provided such guidance. Goals themselves, in
this sense, are necessarily self-contained and focused on getting the individual where they want to be. In contrast, the primary end of a shared self, from the perspective of a relationist, is a virtuous relationship or relational well-being. Relationists view their very existence as dependent on quality relations, and thus their primary or existential goal is a strengthening of those relations. From this perspective, happiness and individual well-being might ensue from a virtuous relationship, but suffering and individual anguish (e.g., caring for a chronically ill spouse) are also possible. Furthermore, a relationist is able to check on the quality of their relationships by their moral tradition and socio-historical context, which are viewed as co-constitutive of the individual.

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced throughout the texts in the way individual well-being and happiness are at the root of foundational concepts such as ethical choices, conflict, student development, and life goals. In this sense, an individual’s life is understood to be successful if that individual experiences high amounts of satisfaction, happiness, and attained individual wishes and desires. Individuals are thus also considered developed when they conduct themselves in ways that make them happy.

Consider, for example, the author’s use of a quote from the Dalai Lama to evidence their view that individual happiness is at the root of ethically caring for others.

"The Dalai Lama (1999) also has discussed the complexities of caring for others as well. *'We all desire happiness and wish to avoid suffering. We have no means of discriminating between right and wrong if we do not take into account others' feelings... One of the things that determines whether an act is ethical or not is its effect on others' experience or expectation of happiness. An act which harms or
does violence to this is potentially an unethical act’ (p. 28). The Dalai Lama points our thinking to the inescapable reality that everyone and everything is connected to everyone and everything else” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 108).

There is a sense in this quote that the authors could be interpreting the Dalai Lama as discussing a relational happiness. After all, “one of the things that determines whether an act is ethical or not is its effect on others’ experience or expectation of happiness.” In this sense, an act would be considered unethical if it does not at least have an “expectation” of making others happy. While this idea of making others happy appears to relationally focus on others, this focus is still individualist from a relational standpoint. In this sense, a relationist would point out that individual or relational “happiness” has nothing to do with relational quality or virtuous relations. In fact, the absence of happiness (e.g., individual suffering, two spouses arguing) often ensues from quality relationships (e.g., the individual suffering inherent in around-the-clock care of a chronically ill parent by a son and how this care might affect that son’s marriage relationship). From a relational standpoint, focusing on if “an act is ethical or not” by an “expectation of happiness” is individualist because an expectation of suffering is equally possible in quality relations. The following quote also evidences this individualist focus on happiness in regard to student development. In this quote, the author’s quote a student’s response in a developmental study, evidencing the student’s development in relation to her focus on doing “what makes me happy.”

"When asked what she does when there is a conflict between what she wants for herself and what other people want from her, she replied: I think that's part of
what changed. *Previously I would've done what they [my parents] wanted... but at this point, I'm going to do what makes me happy.* I feel awful about it sometimes because so much of me wants to make them happy with me and keep them being my friends, but at the same time, *it's not what I want*... Whereas Gabriella *formerly would have made her decisions about how to interact with her society to make her parents happy*, she now has confidence in her own judgments, puts her challenges with the group into a longer-term perspective, and chooses to seek her own balance. All are signs of movement away from external authority and toward self-authorship” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 213).

Note in this quote the fundamental role of individual happiness. In this sense, when the student interviewed must decide “what she wants for herself and what other people want from her,” the student chooses to “do what makes me happy.” Even if the student feels remorse about such choices, she is resolute in her self-chosen goals because “external” goals are “not what I want” (See Feature 1). Thus, this student uses her experience of individual happiness as a way to identify her life goals, i.e., “what she wants for herself” (See Feature 4). The author’s view such “movement away from external authority” toward doing “what makes [the student] happy” as signs of development. A relationist, in contrast, would not link a focus on individual happiness to development because the development of one’s relations that partly-constitute oneself can end up in experiences of individual happiness and suffering. The following quote continues this focus on individual happiness in regard to student development.

"Participants followed external formulas throughout their college experiences, and many carried them into their post-college lives. However, they quickly discovered
that the formulas either *did not yield success or left them feeling dissatisfied*” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 210).

In this quote, the authors are presenting reasons to the reader why students develop internal (i.e., developed) – as opposed to “external” (i.e., underdeveloped) – formulas to direct their lives (See Feature 1). In other words, the authors are describing why individuals develop self-chosen, internal-goals, as opposed to other-chosen, external-goals. The reason given by the authors is that “external” formulas “either did not yield success or left them feeling dissatisfied.” As discussed above, a relationist would consider this focus on satisfaction as a uniquely individualist notion because individuals can feel satisfied in poor quality relationships and “dissatisfied” in high quality relationships. In this sense, quality relationships are not about feelings of satisfaction or “dissatisfaction” at any level. Thus, using such feelings to describe why individuals choose to develop self-chosen, internal goals would be viewed by a relationist as a uniquely individualist interpretation. The following quote also focuses on the role of individual satisfaction and happiness as a core “concern” for students upon leaving higher education.

"As they attempt to find answers, young adults are bombarded by the fast pace, lack of clarity, and complexity characterizing society. They enter the unfamiliar world outside of education with concerns that center around establishing careers, developing meaningful relationships, being able to manage their lives on their own, eventually establishing families, and being satisfied and happy…” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 184).
Note how the authors explain fundamental “concerns” that individuals have when they “enter the unfamiliar world outside of education.” Among these concerns is “being satisfied and happy.” From an individualist perspective, such a concern would necessarily be included in this list because life itself should end up with individuals “being satisfied and happy.” It is in this sense that the authors placed this focus on happiness at the end of this list of concerns, i.e., after “manag[ing] their lives on their own” and “eventually establishing families.” A relationist, in contrast, would not consider happiness a primary or existential concern because individuals are existentially dependent on relationships, thus their primary focus or concern is on these relationships. The following quote also evidences a focus on happiness as a way individuals decide on life goals in relation to dropping out of school.

"Again, the question of whether trial and error is likely to be less expensive in the long run deserves to be raised, especially if programs are ineffective or result in unhappy students who decide to leave school" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 27).

This quote is taken from a context in which the authors are discussing if using theory to guide developmental activity with students (i.e., with potentially costly instruments and labor) is more expensive than not using theory, and thus having to manage the potential expense of “trial and error.” However, for the purposes of this discussion on individualism, note the link between “unhappy students” and their “decision to leave school.” This assumption that happiness or unhappiness can be used as a barometer for one’s life choices, such as staying or leaving school, is individualist (See Feature 7). In contrast, a relationist would point out that while individuals can base decisions on their feelings, these feelings are only secondarily important in relation to the
quality of these individual’s relationships with others and the school itself. The following quote continues this individualistic focus on happiness in regard to how individuals learn to live in relation to others in ways that are “meaningful and satisfying.”

"Developmentally, students have frequently conflicting personal needs - to make friends, to choose majors and pursue careers, to learn group and leadership skills, and to achieve academically. Students are attempting to make sense out of their lives and learn how to live in relation to others in ways that are meaningful and satisfying” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 106).

Note how the authors assume that students have individualistic “personal needs” that are frequently in conflict with other individuals. Students thus use these “needs” as ways for them to “live in relation to others” (i.e., in relation to other students’ conflicting individual needs) in ways that are “meaningful and satisfying” for the individual. The author’s focus on “satisfaction” in this quote is a uniquely individualist interpretation of how students “attempt…to make sense out of their lives and learn how to live in relation to others.” In this sense, students appear to learn how to judge their relationships and their lives by the degree of personal satisfaction they receive from their relationships and life experiences (See Feature 7). As discussed above, an individual could have “meaningful and satisfying” relationships that could still be bad quality. Furthermore, from a relational standpoint, the only way to judge good or bad quality relationships is by a moral tradition, which is co-constitutive of the individual (See Feature 2 and 4). Since the individualist is liberated from moral traditions, all they have to judge their relationships and their life is the amount of individual happiness or satisfaction
instrumentally taken from relationships and life experiences, as exemplified in this quote.

The following quote continues this focus on “needs” in relation to conflict.

"Human needs can be found at the foundation of all conflicts. People engage in conflict because of a desire to fulfill their needs, live out their values or fulfill their wishes and desires… (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 435).

This quote emphasizes the individualist assumption that individuals “desire to fulfill their needs.” A critique might say that these could be the needs of the individual for relationship, but these needs are still the individual’s needs and hence aren’t relational. In this sense, the only way that this author could be meaning wishing and desires is individual wishes and desires. The primary focus in this quote on this individualist desire, even in relation to conflict, is not questioned by the authors. In this sense, the authors’ message is not that individuals should stop focusing on their individual well-being, but instead that such a focus is assumed to be at the root of behaviors like conflict. In contrast, relationists do not assume that individuals are primarily focused on “a desire to fulfill their needs.” Thus, relational needs can instead be found at the “foundation of all conflicts,” such as a father figure in conflict with a son or daughter for the purpose of strengthening their relationship.

**Feature 7: Instrumentalism.** The seventh feature of liberal individualism builds on the sixth by promoting an instrumental mindset to reach one’s primary end in life, individual happiness. In this sense, anything considered “outside” of the self-contained individual – including other individuals and relationships themselves – are treated as instruments, or means, to this individualist end. For example, if “external” individuals and relationships are not serving their individualist function, i.e., as a means to the end of
greater happiness, then they should be discarded and replaced with better, more functional instruments. From a relational standpoint, using the relationships that partly constitute one’s shared being to reach individual ends would be considered self-defeating. For example, one’s identity as husband within a marriage is constituted by the quality of that marriage relationship, not the amount of individual satisfaction or anguish one feels from that relationship. In this sense, a relationist does not focus on an individual’s well-being “within” a relationship, but instead on the quality of the relationship itself.

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced in the texts throughout, but especially in developmental theory. In this sense, these theories are interpreted by the text authors as promoting a view of relationships as *mutually rewarding*. In this reciprocal sense, individuals use one another in an instrumentalist way where each individual seeks to attain their self-chosen *needs* and *desires*. Thus, when these needs are not attained, individuals are further encouraged to individually reflect on these needs and make choices accordingly, even if such choices result in one’s separation from that relationship. Consider, for example, the following quote from the author’s discussion of student development:

"As a result of intensive self-reflection, individuals develop a strong self-concept. In relationships, renegotiation often occurs as young adults weigh their needs and desires, along with those of others around them. Individuals are also more careful in making relationship commitments to ensure that the commitment ‘honor[s] the self they [are] constructing’…” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 186).

Note the “renegotiation” of relationships in this quote. This renegotiation is being conducted so that “young adults” and “others around them” that have “developed a strong
self-concept” are better able to use these relationships as a means to their “needs and desires.” In this instrumentalist sense, every individual “weigh[s]” not only the relationships they are a part of, but also the individuals making up these relationships in regard to how well they are used as a means to individual happiness (See Feature 6). In contrast, a relationist would recognize that one’s “self-concept” and very identity is partly constituted by one’s relationships. Thus, an instrumentalist “renegotiation” of relationships would not occur because relationships are considered ends in themselves.

The following quote continues this instrumentalist use of relationships in regard to self-authorship.

"In this order, self-authorship is the focus. Individuals ‘have the capacity to take responsibility for and ownership of their internal authority’… and establish their own sets of values and ideologies... Relationships become a part of one’s world rather than the reason for one's existence. Support at this stage is evident in acknowledgment of the individual's independence and self-regulation. Individuals are encouraged to develop further when significant others refuse to accept relationships that are not intimate and mutually rewarding” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 179).

Note in this quote how “[r]elationships become a part of one’s world rather than the reason for one’s existence” when individual’s assert their “internal authority.” In this sense, relationships become instruments for individuals to use in “mutually rewarding” ways once individuals have progressed far enough in their “internal” development. In contrast, a relationist would view relationships as not only providing the “reason for one’s existence,” but also allowing for existence itself, because individuals are
existentially relational (See Feature 1 and 2). Thus, as individuals further develop, they would further treat their very existence, i.e., relationships, as ends in themselves as opposed to means to individualist ends. The next quote continues this instrumentalist approach to relationships in regard to self-authorship.

"For example, the self-authoring person comes to see relationships as object, reflected in having relationships instead of being the relationship (subject). Inner emotional states and values become object, making it possible to reflect on them and make internal choices about them that are separate from others’ expectations” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 210).

Note in this quote how the “self-authoring person” moves away from “being the relationship” to “having relationships” “as object.” In this sense, the individual is able to “reflect” and “make internal choices” that are separate from the context of “others expectations.” The “inner” freedom of such choices allows individuals to use external relationships (as objects) as an instrument of individualist ends, hence instrumentalism. In contrast, a relationist does not understand how an individual’s expectations can ever be divorced from the expectations of community and culture (See Feature 4). Consequently, this non-separation or co-constitution between individuals and their relationships in turn allows individuals to treat such relationships as ends in themselves. The following quote also evidences an instrumental view of relationships in regard to psychosocial development.

"In this stage, adults work toward intimacy, or establishing committed relationships with others, such as friendships, intimate relationships, or participation as a productive member of a community. This stage may involve
**distantiation**, or what Erikson (1959/1980) described as ‘the readiness to repudiate, to isolate, and if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own’… If adults at this stage lack a strong sense of identity, they may have difficulty building relationships, which may lead to emotional stress or isolation” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 51).

Even this psychosocial “stage” that explicitly focuses on “establishing committed relationships” ultimately assumes an instrumentalism of these relationships. In this sense, the involvement within this stage of “the readiness to repudiate, to isolate, and if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own” evidences a “readiness” to use others as instruments of individualist ends or “essences.” Such a “readiness” to “repudiate” and “if necessary, to destroy” others is not consistent with a relational approach in which other persons co-constitute the self. In this sense, using and subsequently “destroy[ing]” others would appear to a relationist as self-defeating or self-“destroy[ing]” of one’s otherwise shared identity (See Feature 3). Furthermore, a relationist would not view knowing “one’s own” essence as possible once others have been “destroy[ed]” because those others co-constitute oneself.

**Feature 8: Autonomy.** The eighth feature of liberal individualism is a focus on human maturity or developmental progress. In this sense, such maturity or progress occurs by attaining increasingly greater control and autonomy of one’s life. The end result of such progress is a developed individual that is both self-sufficient and independent from others. In contrast, a relationalist views oneself as existentially dependent on others and one’s relationships. Thus, developmental progress from this perspective is viewed as a movement from immature to mature dependence. A mature
dependence, in this sense, would affirm – rather than deny – one’s dependence on others by being accountable and responsible in these dependent relationships. This responsibility might mean critiquing these relationships for the express purpose of strengthening them and thus attaining greater relational maturity.

**Summary of Findings.** This feature is evidenced in the texts in the ways students are largely portrayed by the authors’ interpretations of developmental theories as progressively attaining greater amounts of *autonomy* and *control* over their lives. In this sense, the authors interpret practitioner support for such development as an acknowledgment of the student’s *independence* and *self-regulation*. In fact, the end of development is portrayed as one’s ability to maintain *independence* from others despite potential limitations of aging.

Consider, for example, the following quote from the author’s discussion of student development:

"In this order, self-authorship is the focus. Individuals ‘have the capacity to take responsibility for and *ownership of their internal authority*’… and establish their own sets of values and ideologies... Relationsh**ips become a part of one’s world rather than the reason for one's existence.** Support at this stage is evident in *acknowledgment of the individual's independence and self-regulation*” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 179).

Note in this quote how the author’s interpret support for student development as “acknowledgment of the individual’s independence and self-regulation” from others. Such acknowledgement supports student development because individuals are viewed as developed in relation to their increasing independence and self-regulation (See Feature
4). In contrast, a relationist would view the encouragement of individuals gaining “independence” and “self-regulation” as counterproductive to the development of a mature dependence on others. In this sense, denying one’s dependence on others by portraying oneself as independent and self-sufficient causes harm to one’s development, from a relational perspective, because one is existentially dependent on others and should instead affirm and seek to become more mature in this dependence. The following quotes continue this assumption of student development through independence in the authors’ discussion of a model developed to promote student learning and self-authorship.

"For externally defined learners in Tier 1, the developmental goals focus on seeing the limitations of relying on others for their knowledge and identity. The learning outcomes focus on experiences that bring these limitations to the surface and offer initial opportunities to think through them. Creating a safe environment and validating learners’ capacity to learn (e.g., by asking them to engage in critical reflection of their assumptions about learning), using their experiences as a context for learning (e.g., by inviting learners to choose relevant learning experiences to meet goals), and encouraging multiple perspectives all match the LPM's [this models’] supports and challenges for students who are trying to extract themselves from reliance on external formulas.” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 219).

In this quote, the authors describe the “developmental goals” of “externally defined learners,” that are “trying to extract themselves from reliance on external formulas” (See Feature 1). The suggested goals to help these students develop include a “focus on seeing the limitations of relying on others for their knowledge and identity.”

this sense, practitioners should help students view a reliance on others as a “limitation” to knowledge and identity. In other words, practitioners should help students become more independent from others in regard to their knowledge and identity in order to further develop. As discussed above, a relationist would view such individualist “developmental goals” of “seeing the limitations” of dependence on others as harmful to a student’s development of a mature dependence on others. The following quotes also focuses on independence and control over one’s life in relation to personal maturity. Both of these quotes are taken from the same section in the text and refer to characteristics of self-authorship that reflect personal maturity in students.

"Interestingly - and not coincidentally - there is a strong correspondence between characteristics of self-authorship that reflect personal maturity and characteristics associated with the goals of higher education related to learning outcomes” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 214).

“...a large body of scholarship now informs our understanding of the kinds of learning environments that enhance this kind of personal maturity. A common attribute of these environments is that they not only give students opportunities to learn new skills but also systematically and intentionally build in opportunities to help students ‘make object’ that to which they are currently ‘subject’ (to use Kegan’s (1994) language). Building in reflective practices (e.g., discussion questions, journal prompts) that include provocative questions and stimulate students' assessments of their own meaning making is another common attribute of programs and courses that enable students to gain the kind of control over their lives to which Mezirow (2000) refers” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 215).
In these quotes, the authors portray the “characteristics associated with the goals of higher education” as corresponding to the “characteristics of self-authorship that reflect personal maturity.” These characteristics include “intentionally build[ing] in opportunities to help students ‘make object’ that to which they are currently ‘subject’” as well as helping students gain “control over their lives”. In other words, the goals of higher education and personal maturity are interpreted as students increasingly separating from and gaining control of their lives (make object) (See Feature 7). This focus on “control” in relation to personal maturity, from a relational sense, is viewed as a harmful individualist cultural interpretation of maturity. In this sense, a relationist would instead champion one’s dependence on others as not only a more accurate portrayal of one’s existence in the world, but also a vital part of becoming relationally mature (See Feature 1). For example, such dependence without individual control over others is viewed as necessary, from a relational stance, for a relational intimacy with others. The following quote, taken from career development theory, evidences a “final stage” of development in which the individual is ultimately independent from others.

"The final stage, decline (age sixty-five and older), involves adjusting work to one’s physical capability and managing resources to remain independent” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 174).

Note in this quote how the “final stage” of career development promotes the idea of an individual that manages their “resources to remain independent” in spite of their need to “adjust” their work to their declining “physical capabilities.” In this sense, even if an individual is becoming less “physically capable,” they still work to ensure their “independence” from others. This individualist ideal of independence from others, even
when one must deal with declining “physical capabilit[ies]” is viewed from a relational stance as a denial of one’s existential dependence on others, thus making the development of a mature dependence on others increasingly difficult.

**Relational Findings.** As reported above, there were 159 relational value statements in these texts out of 2034 total value statements. Thus, roughly 8% of the value statements in these texts were identified as consistent with this ideology. While I found no chapters that were wholly relational, I did find 3 chapters that at least had some prominent relational value statements in them. These chapters basically encompassed the topics of ethics, gender identity development, and conflict. The purpose of this section is to present exemplary quotes from these chapters that evidenced prominent features of relationality.

It should be noted that it was very hard to find relational value statements because of the dominance of individualism in these texts. However, I was especially careful and sensitive to locate anything that was possibly relational because of hermeneutic objectivity. This resulted in often finding relational material that was nevertheless surrounded by context that was not relational. The three topics of ethics, gender identity development, and conflict were the most likely to have both the relational value statements and the relational context, in other words, both the relational parts and wholes.

**Ethics.** Consider first this quote taken from the Schuh, Jones, and Harper’s (2011) chapter on ethics:

“The principle of respecting autonomy has become difficult to apply in dealings with students who come from cultures that are more collectivist and less individualistic than the United States. Southeast Asian, Native American, African
American, and Latino students often understand freedom of choice differently from the ways Anglo-Americans understand it…Doing no harm has become as complex as respecting autonomy…But what kind of harm do we do when we tell students from a collectivist culture to make their own decisions and ‘follow your dream’? We may well be setting those students up for serious, potentially harmful conflicts with their families” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 99-100).

Note in this quote the author’s focus on “culture” in relation to “doing no harm” to students. In this sense, the author is specifically questioning “what kind of harm” an individualist practitioner might do to collectivist students when that practitioner encourages the students to “make their own decisions.” As the author says, such encouragement might be “setting those students up for serious, potentially harmful conflicts with their families.” In a relational sense, the author is pointing out how both students and practitioners are partly constituted by their individualist or collectivist cultures. Furthermore, the author is identifying how these cultural values are inescapable for both practitioners and students. In other words, practitioners that attempt to promote a value-freedom for the collectivist students might “harm” those students’ relationships with their collectivist families. Lastly, the author is expressly questioning the practitioners’ encouragement of the individualistic notion of autonomy by critiquing the idea that practitioners should “tell students” to “make their own decisions” and “follow your dream.”

In contrast, an individualist would point out how both practitioners and students are not constituted by their cultures. In this sense, collectivist students have an individualist freedom from their collectivist traditions, including such traditions with
“their families.” Furthermore, an individualist would advocate that promoting value-freeness to such collectivist students would help those students be liberated from their familial pressures to not “make their own decisions.” In fact, helping students “make their own decisions” would be considered by an individualist as helping those students develop and mature into autonomous individuals.

**Gender Identity Development.** Consider next these quotes from Evans et al.’s (2010) chapter on gender identity development:

“As an alternative to a set of binary categories, linked to one another by assumptions of causal relationships (sex causes gender, which leads to appropriate gender role and sexual orientation), Lev (2004) proposed a model…in which each element is on a continuum and exists in interaction but not causation with other elements…Lev proposed that in any category [sex, gender, gender role, sexual orientation] people can change their behavior, presentation, or identity and none of these categories represents an immutable entity” (p. 96). This fluidity within and across categories, in the present and across time, represents a different way of thinking about gender identity and its relationship to sex, gender, and sexual orientation” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 330-331).

“Viewing the identities of transgender college students through these six processes allows a multidimensional, fluid model for how identities are context specific and influenced by reciprocal relationships with others in the context. Another strength is that it emphasizes a life span approach, maintaining the possibility that gender schemas are not fixed and immovable by the time a student enters college” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 343).
Note in these quotes the authors’ focus on how “identities are context specific and influenced by reciprocal relationships with others in the context.” In this sense, one’s identity is partly constituted by and thus dependent on others and one’s broader context. This constitution is further focused on the way the authors describe how “each element is on a continuum and exists in interaction but not causation with other elements.” In this sense, one’s identity is best understood as a nexus of these relations or “continuum” of these other parts of one’s identity (i.e., sex, gender, gender role and sexual orientation).

The authors’ further exemplify the relational notion of a co-constitution of identity and the resulting changeableness of this constitution by emphasizing the “fluidity within and across categories, in the present and across time” of one’s “gender identity and its relationship to sex, gender, and sexual orientation.” In a relational sense, one’s identity can literally change as one’s context changes and is thus accurately described as “fluid” and not representative of an “immutable entity.” While the quote on gender identity development does not explicitly relate these parts of one’s identity to one’s context, the authors do explicitly relate gender to one’s cultural context at a different part in the chapter, thus making both of these quotes consistent with relationality.

An individualist, in contrast, would view one’s identity as separated and independent from one’s context. Furthermore, the individual is only influenced by relationships with others if that individual allows their influence “inside” of their self-contained self. In this sense, relationships and the individuals within would be understood more as “causal” atoms hitting against one another as opposed to a “continuum” of identity “exist[ing] in interaction but not causation with other elements.” Additionally, an
individualist would view one’s identity or “entity” as self-contained and thus basically fixed or “immutable” across changing contexts.

**Conflict.** Consider lastly this quote taken from Evans et al.’s (2010) chapter on conflict:

> “Under values theory, *all judgments are evaluative.* This is an important point for understanding conflict. *Though a person might claim to be free of judgment,* perhaps as a self-reflective character assessment, *the reality is that as humans we are evaluative beings. We make judgments, and that is a fundamentally important part of our rational, intellectual, and emotional capacities*” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 437).

Note how the author states that “[t]hough a person might claim to be free of judgment,” “the reality is that as humans we are evaluative beings.” The author is making clear the assumption that individuals are not evaluation-free or value-free. In a relationist sense, individuals exist in a value-laden context, which is one of the fundamental principles of relationality. This clear value-ladenness follows the relationist paradigm, but it does raise the question of where the values come from. A relationist would claim values come from a socio-historical context, as opposed to being invented ex nihilo. The author does not explicitly say this, but the author does seem to be coming from a tradition in which a context would help them arrive at a portion of the values.

In contrast, an individualist would not hold that we are inherently evaluators because that would mean that individuals would not have the freedom to not be evaluated. In other words, individuals would not have the freedom to choose their values – a central tenet of individualism – because such freedom stems from the liberation of
individuals from potentially oppressive evaluative contexts. This absence of a freedom to select one’s values, or value-freeness, would imply that all research findings are value-laden and counselors are unable to be open-minded to their clients. These implications would go against the individualistic emphasis on neutrality in research and open-mindedness in counseling.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to discuss the implications of the findings.

First, I recap the study to provide context for these implications and bring all of the chapters together into one seamless narrative. Second, the discussion of limitations focuses on such topics as: precision, subjectivity, reliability and validity, context, representativeness, disconnection, and dichotomy. Third, I directly address the research and practical implications of this study. Lastly, I outline future investigations that stem from this study’s implications.

Recapping the Study Narrative

This study began with a focus on how the field of student affairs prevents indoctrination. Student affairs researchers have investigated values and sought to prevent the indoctrination of explicit or knowingly promoted values in the field (e.g., Reason & Broido, 2010; Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993, 2003). However, researchers (e.g., Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Dalton, 1993; Rogers, 1989; Strange, 1994) have also pointed to the existence of implicit or unknowingly promoted values in student affairs. Interestingly, while student affairs researchers (e.g., Young, 2003) are aware of the potentially questionable “subconscious ideology” implicit values might represent, there is currently an absence of research on these values in relation to the prevention of potentially implicit forms of indoctrination. It is this absence of research that this study sought to address.
The absence of this kind of research also means there is little methodological direction for such investigations. Fortunately, the open reliance of many student affairs researchers on psychology provides an avenue of information. Psychologists (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Richardson, 2005) have grappled with implicit values and pioneered ways of researching them. The psychological literature provides not only a logical set of implicit values to investigate in student affairs, called liberal individualism, but a method to undertake such an investigation, called hermeneutics. According to psychological researchers (e.g., Cushman, 2002; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999), liberal individualism is both pervasive and problematic in their discipline, resulting in damaging forms of implicit indoctrination of both practitioners and clients. Given the influences of psychology on student affairs, I wondered whether this ideology might be involved to some degree in the field.

Hermeneutics is the most widely used approach to study implicit values in psychology because many psychologists regard quantitative approaches, which focus on numbers and quantitative data, as too “thin,” if not sometimes misleading, when searching for values and meanings (e.g., Gantt, Lindstrom & Williams, 2007; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Hermeneutists frequently also use the dialectic as a theoretical framework for these investigations (Fowers, 1998, 2005; Held 2007; Jenkins, 2013; Kirschner & Martin, 2010; Martin, Sugarman & Hickinbottom, 2009). This framework protects to some extent against confirmation bias by ensuring that researchers are purposefully open to contrasting implicit values. One of the most often used dialectics for investigating liberal individualism is a set of implicit values called
relationality, which I subsequently investigated and adopted as my dialectic for this project.

The implicit values research in psychology, along with its influences, suggests the need to investigate the potential existence of implicit values in student affairs theories, research methods, and practices. Student affairs’ textbooks are a logical place to begin such an investigation, because textbooks are a compendium of formalized interpretations of theory, research, and practice. I identified two primary student affairs textbooks that have been acknowledged (e.g., Love, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012) not only for their widespread use but also for their important role in the formalization of theory, research, and practice in the field.

I thus began my hermeneutic investigation of liberal individualism and relationality in these texts. This investigation included: (1) multiple readings of the texts to allow me to understand each part of the text in relation to its greater whole, (2) identifying and classifying statements and concepts relevant to this investigation, and (3) keeping a research journal to keep track of my progress and ensure hermeneutic objectivity. My analysis reached its conclusion as I wrote up the analysis chapter of this study, all the while still reading and rereading the texts during this write up.

The analysis of the resulting data revealed a fairly strong liberal individualistic influence within both texts with a minimal influence of relationality. Furthermore, the liberal individualistic influence was evidenced in a relatively large portion of the chapters and topics of each text. This general individualist influence also extended to each of the eight features of liberal individualism. In this sense, these eight features were so prominent that they seemed to affect at least the theorizing and explanations of many
portions of the texts. I will be exploring both the research and the practical implications of these eight features of liberal individualism in regard to the texts in the “Implications” section below.

What seems fairly apparent, however, was the influence of these features on the textbook author’s interpretation of student affairs’ thinking. For example, many of the theories in the texts were interpreted by the authors as understanding individual students to be self-contained beings, with only secondary relations to their contexts (Feature 1). This atomistic view was frequently extended beyond individual students to include a self-contained perspective on groups of students and research samples where these groups were interpreted as relatively independent of their other groups and their respective situations (Feature 2). The development of individual students and student relationships were also approached with a primary focus on the individual (Feature 3), often resulting in the need for a liberation of individuals from there contexts and relationships to promote development (Feature 4). In this sense, the text authors frequently interpreted student relationships as the instruments of individual student happiness and success, with ethical choices and goals rooted in these individualist notions (Feature 6 and 7). Individualist values, such as openness and neutrality, were also promoted through methods of counseling and interpretations of research (Feature 5), so that students would have the opportunity to select their own values. These values were typically advanced to ultimately help students move away from their dependence on others so that they could achieve the developmental capacity to “self-author” their lives upon graduation (Feature 8).
Addressing the Research Limitations

While this investigation evidenced a fairly strong liberal individualist influence throughout the texts, its methods were not without limitations. This study has, in fact, many important limits that need to be taken into account to fully understand the results. Indeed, hermeneutists are invested in understanding the limits of their studies because they believe that any form of knowledge is, in principle, non-final and incomplete (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Some of these limitations are raised and addressed below.

Precision

Because the data of this study are not numerical, some researchers might be concerned that these data are not as precise as numbers. Perhaps most importantly, the proportion of the text chapters occupied by liberal individualism, and thus the dominance of individualism for certain topics, cannot be known with exactitude from these data. However, in a broader sense, the prevalence of meanings in general is difficult to exactly gauge. For this reason, this study used a hermeneutic method that has long been acknowledged as a preferred approach to gauging the validity of imprecise meanings (see chapter 3). In this sense, the idea of precision associated with many quantitative studies is not applicable for this qualitative investigation of meanings and values. Thus, the evidence of this study, even if inexact, shows a widespread influence not only of this ideology generally, but also of its eight specific features.

Subjectivity

Another potential concern for some researchers is the obvious role of subjectivity in this study’s method of interpretation. As discussed in chapter 3, this role is necessary
because of the impossibility of separating subjectivity from objectivity in the
identification of meanings or ideologies. Consequently, researcher subjectivity in this
type of study is a controlled subjectivity, referred to as hermeneutic objectivity, because
it: 1) stays grounded in the texts, as evidenced by the use of extensive quoting, 2)
describes explicitly the researcher's justifications for his interpretations, and 3) attempts
to maximize the researcher's openness to the ideologies targeted.

**Reliability and Validity**

The reliability of a hermeneutic study may be a concern for some researchers.
Might someone other than the researcher judge these texts in a similar way? It is possible
for different researchers to judge the texts differently. Nevertheless, this study is not
unlike virtually all other investigations, whether quantitative or qualitative, in its need for
replication. The strength of this investigation is its ease of replication. Salient and
exemplary quotes are presented extensively, along with the interpreter’s reasoning, for
example, as to why a quote is liberal individualist and not relational. This procedure
allows ensuing investigators to check and challenge such reasoning and thus the validity
and reliability of the findings. In fact, for the purposes of this investigation, select
dissertation committee members spot checked the researcher’s reasoning and thus the
reliability and validity of his interpretations of the texts. From a hermeneutic standpoint,
the pivotal issue regarding validity and reliability is whether its methods and results allow
for similarly trained investigators to achieve similarly analyzed results, permitting inter-
investigator debate and dialogue.
Context

Another potential limitation of this study is that the exemplary quotes are not provided with extensive discussion of their context in the texts (e.g., context of section and chapter). In this sense, it is possible that an interpreter misreads context and thus misunderstands the meaning of the quote itself. However, some context was provided for this study, especially the interpreter's explanation for how he understood the quote and identified its meaning. This issue also raises the question: what quantity of context is sufficient? Obviously, there are space limitations, and the two texts are available for any subsequent researchers to check the context for themselves. Moreover, the consistency of the many quotes, both across related features and across the content of the two texts, functions as important context for any particular set of quotes. In this sense, the whole of the dissertation analysis should contribute to the reader's understanding of the context of each of its quote parts.

Representativeness

The selection of the texts for this study was based on their importance to the field of student affairs. However, it is significant to note that just because the findings of this study show the prevalence of liberal individualism in these texts, these findings do not necessarily imply that the field of student affairs is pervasively liberal individualist. This is an important limitation of this study, and this investigator has not argued that these findings are representative of student affairs. Still, it is not inconsequential that these texts are an important part of the greater whole of the field. Given their role in student affairs, it seems unlikely that they would not reflect the whole of the field to some degree. Future research may reveal the extent and importance of that role.
Disconnection

Another important limitation of this study is the potential disconnect between the theories and conceptions of these texts and the practices of student affairs professionals. In other words, even if liberal individualism is fairly pervasive in these texts, this influence does not necessarily mean that the features of this individualism influence the manner in which student affairs professionals practice or teach students. Even so, the potential of this disconnect does not take away from the liberal individualist influence in these texts and the importance of student affairs professionals’ awareness of this influence on the students, practitioners, and faculty using these texts.

Dichotomy

The theoretical framework for this study can be described as a dichotomy or dualism when understood in relation to theories of student development (e.g., Perry’s theory of intellectual and ethical development). Thus, this framework might be characterized as a simplistic “either/or” form of thinking (i.e., dualism in Perry’s scheme) as opposed to a more complex “both/and” form of thinking (i.e., relativism in Perry’s scheme). However, this characterization is itself either/or (i.e., either “either/or” thinking or “both/and” thinking). As noted in chapters 1 and 2, the ideologies of this project are frequently viewed in psychology as ontologically distinct, and thus springing from radically different first assumptions. In this sense, while they are "both" in some ways (e.g., both philosophies and meanings) they are wholly different – and thus "either" – in other ways (e.g., either the moral tradition is vital or the moral tradition is not vital), especially when it comes to the implicit values of these studies.
Research Implications

Implicit values have long been recognized in the field of student affairs (e.g., Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Dalton, 1993; Rogers, 1989; Strange, 1994; Young, 2003). However, a review of relevant literatures indicates that these values have never been investigated in the field. As the first study of this type in student affairs, this investigation appears to have three main implications for research: (1) raising the consciousness of researchers about a particular set of implicit values in the field, (2) defining a methodological pathway to investigate implicit values in student affairs, and (3) utilizing psychological research on implicit values as a resource for examining such values in student affairs.

Raising Consciousness

The first research implication from this study is the identification of a specific set of implicit values that should be a future focus of student affairs researchers. In a sense, this study might serve to raise the consciousness of these researchers about liberal individualism by not only presenting findings showing its prevalence in cornerstone texts, but also by providing an alternative set of values, relationality, to facilitate dialogue about its merits for the field. These findings clearly have limits. Even so, they suggest that liberal individualism is a prevalent set of implicit values in student affairs that should be evaluated in relation to the ideals and explicit values of the field (e.g., ACPA, 2006; CAS, 2012; NASPA, 1990; Reason & Broido, 2010; Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b; Young, 1993, 2003). I elaborate this proposed evaluation in the “Future Investigations” section below. At this point, these findings need to first be summarized in regard to this study’s research questions.
1) In what ways, if any, do the two cornerstone textbooks used in master’s preparation programs for student affairs professionals contain evidence of implicit values that promote liberal individualist values and/or relationist values?

The general and specific findings of this investigation provide evidence for a fairly pervasive influence of liberal individualism throughout these texts and a very limited influence of relationality. In this sense, these findings evidence much more of a universal, as opposed to a narrow, adoption of liberal individualism in the explanations and theories in the texts. As described in Chapter 4, liberal individualism was found in roughly two-thirds (1366/2034) of the total relevant value statements of both texts and was prominently featured in 84% of the chapters of these textbooks. In contrast, relationality was found in 8% (159/2034) of the total value statements and prominently featured in 6% of the textbook chapters. This relational ideology was limited to the topics of ethics, gender identity development, and conflict.

2) What is the nature of the liberal individualistic or relational features in the texts, and how might they interact with specific topics/chapters of the texts?

The features of liberal individualism appeared to embody many common-sense notions of the field, such as how research is critiqued, how students develop, and how relationships thrive. The nature of these features appeared commonsensical because they often went unchallenged in the texts and were frequently presented as axioms instead of potentially questionable values. While the relationship of these features with specific topics of the texts were discussed at length in Chapter 4, I elaborate some of the more salient relationships below as well as explore their relational alternatives to facilitate a dialogue of these feature’s merits for future discussion and investigation in the field. The
nature of specific relational features and their potential connections with topics in the
texts are not discussed because the indications of relationality in the texts were
insufficient to point to specific features.

**Self-containment verses holistic relations.** The second feature of liberal
individualism, the push for a separation of that which is studied (e.g., students, groups)
from its context in order to best gain understanding (e.g., Fowers, 2005; Reber & Osbeck,
2005), appeared salient in regard to the topic of research. In this sense, even groups or
large samples of students were “individualized” to the extent that they were understood
independently of other groups and thus part of their socio-historical context. For example,
practitioners were directed to investigate other samples of groups as if the population of
their first sample where not reflective of the whole. Thus, in the same way that individual
people are individualized and considered self-contained, individual groups are
individualized and considered self-contained with the properties they hold. For this
reason, practitioners were asked to discount a theory for a student population of interest
when it was based on a different population. In other words, not to consider a theory
valuable for a student population they worked with if it was based on a different
population of students and not tested with others.

In contrast, from a relational perspective, practitioners would be directed to
critique the value of studies and theories based on the extent to which the studies
investigated the relations of the sampled groups to their surrounding socio-historical
context, what Packer (2011) referred to as the study sample’s “constitution.” In other
words, from a relational, or holistic perspective, parts are always reflective of the whole
of which they are a part (e.g., Slife & Christensen, 2013). The head of a stick figure
reflects the other parts of the stick figure (e.g., Slife, 2004). For example, if a study was conducted on White, privileged male students, and that study examined the relations of those students to non-White, non-privileged, and non-male students (i.e., what constituted the sample’s characteristics), then practitioners would be able to consider those findings valuable for their work with both White and non-white, privileged and non-privileged, and male and non-male students.

**Openness verses informed consent.** The relationship of the fifth feature of liberal individualism seemed particularly prominent with counseling or helping skills in the texts. This feature of liberal individualism promoted a freedom or liberation for individuals to select their own values, often referred to as value-freeness (e.g., Richardson, 2005; Sandel, 1996, 1998). Within the helping relationship, such value-freeness was frequently manifested as open-minded practitioners who sought to be as open or free of their values to promote the student’s autonomy to choose their own values. This open-minded approach was often paired with an attempt to use objective or bias-free therapy or helping strategies with students.

This common notion of open-mindedness in helping situations is contrasted by the relationist’s assertion that such open-mindedness is itself a bias and can potentially lead to harmful implications for student wellness (e.g., Richardson, 2004; Richardson & Bishop, 2014). For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, psychologists have shown that open-minded therapists are fairly closed-minded about their openness when confronted with closed-minded patients. Recall how the open-minded counselors did not adopt the values of their closed-minded clients. They instead indoctrinated their clients by requiring them to adopt their open-minded values (Slife, Smith, & Burchfield, 2003). From a
relational standpoint, every approach “helpers” take with students is biased and value-laden. Thus, practitioners should minimally (1) work to become aware of the biases and values informing their approaches in helping situations – including the values and biases informing their therapy strategies – and (2) clearly stipulate these values to the students with whom they are working as a type of informed consent.

**Individual happiness versus relational virtue.** The sixth feature of liberal individualism, happiness as the primary end of life (e.g., Richardson, 2005; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999), appeared salient in regard to topics such as ethical and developmental choices. In this sense, a student’s choices were largely considered ethically and developmentally appropriate if they led to individual happiness. In fact, the developed student – liberated from moral traditions that might otherwise provide guidance on life decisions and choices – was viewed as able and responsible for making their own choices based on their own understanding of happiness.

The relationist, in contrast, views cultural and moral traditions as indispensable to ethical and developmental choices. Rather than ignoring moral traditions and placing individual happiness as the main priority in life, the relationist practitioner instead places virtuous relations – as guided by one’s moral tradition – as this priority (e.g., Slife & Richardson, 2008). Interestingly, for a relationist even suffering could be viewed as promoting good ethical and developmental choices if this suffering aids one’s quality relationships with others. Ethical and developmental choices thus focus more on achieving relational virtue, as opposed to individual – or even relational – happiness and satisfaction. For example, housing professionals working with roommate relationship
issues would focus primarily on the relational quality of the roommates as opposed to their individual happiness or suffering.

**Methodological Pathway**

The second research implication from this study is the method it brings to the field to investigate implicit values. Implicit values can be challenging to investigate using conventional methods because they are not inherently observable and are somewhat subtle, given their implicit nature. In this sense, part of the reason such investigations have not been conducted in student affairs is likely due to the unconventional nature of the subject matter (e.g., Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Freeman, 2012; Packer, 2011; Slife & Williams, 1995). Such an unconventional topic calls for an unconventional method.

The hermeneutic method – with its controlled use of researcher subjectivity and biases – has long been used historically as well as presently as a method in psychology to investigate implicit values (e.g., Cushman, 1990; Fowers, 1998, 2005; Kirschner & Martin, 2010; Martin, Sugarman & Hickinbottom, 2009; Packer & Addison, 1989). While this method might appear unconventional, psychologists have repeatedly evidenced how hermeneutics, with the theoretical framework of the dialectic, can be used to investigate any set of implicit values (e.g., free-will/determinism, liberal individualism/relationality, naturalism/theism) in theory, research, and practice. Consequently, this method and theoretical framework was adapted in this project to investigate implicit values in the theory, research and practice of student affairs. This implication for the broad use of hermeneutics and the dialectic in student affairs is valuable because it offers a new method to explore other potentially implicit values at play throughout the field. Furthermore, if this study shows the presence of implicit values
in a few important textbooks, then what other implicit values might be promoted to students by student affairs researchers and practitioners without conscious intent? Questions like this can now be investigated using this method.

A key part of this method is its dialectical theoretical framework. This framework was useful for ensuring a hermeneutic form of objectivity in this investigation. In the tradition of hermeneutic surprisability discussed in Chapter 3 (e.g., Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press; Richardson, in press), I found myself regularly surprised at my findings because of my use of this framework. For example, while writing the analysis in Chapter 4, I was truly surprised with the dialectical implications that came up during this writing process. In this sense, through engaging the dialectic (i.e., explaining how an exemplary quote was individualist as well as how it was not relational), I found myself discovering – as opposed to merely confirming my own biases – about how individualist notions appeared commonsensical and how relational notions appeared radically divergent (e.g., Slife, Johnson, & Jennings, in press). In this sense, I achieved an appropriate level of surprisability with the results of this analysis, further evidencing my openness to the texts and thus my hermeneutic objectivity.

The dialectic of liberal individualism and relationality used in this study was fairly comprehensive in scope, covering aspects of liberal individualism that have been considered in the research literature (e.g., Cushman, 2002; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). For this reason, this dialectic was a helpful framework for this investigation and would seem useful for future investigations of liberal individualism in student affairs. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 4, there were no additional features added to the original list of liberal individualism and relationality, although my
understanding of each feature deepened throughout this study. Lastly, the features of this dialectic were holistically connected (i.e., each feature overlaps with the other features). As discussed in Chapter 4, this holistic connection, and thus dependence among the features, makes the discernment of the prominence of one feature over difficult to specify.

**Psychological Research**

The third research implication of this study is the significant resource our allied discipline of psychology might be to the enterprise of examining these values in student affairs. This study describes how the discipline of psychology has not only engaged in implicit values investigations (e.g., Cushman, 1995; Fowers & Richardson, 1993; Fowers, 1998) but has also evaluated the implicit values explicated in these investigations (e.g., Cushman, 1995; Fowers, 2005; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999) (See Chapter 3). Student affairs researchers can thus view psychology as a continuing resource when it comes to investigating and evaluating implicit values. Perhaps most relevant to this study, psychologists have gone to great lengths to evaluate aspects of liberal individualism (e.g., autonomy, instrumentalism, individual happiness) in relation to the aims of psychology as a discipline (e.g., Reber & Osbeck, 2005; Richardson, 2004; Richardson & Zeddies, 1999). It would seem appropriate for student affairs researchers to follow psychology’s lead and become familiar with this psychological literature before conducting similar evaluations of liberal individualism in relation the aims of student affairs. In this sense, this study affirms the work of student affairs researchers, such as Bensimon (2007), who have already consulted the discipline of psychology for guidance on implicit values issues.
Practical Implications

There appear to be two main practical implications of this study for student affairs. The first implication focuses on student affairs professionals using these texts. Liberal individualistic values are prevalent in these texts. This prevalence means that it is possible for the students and practitioners who use them to become indoctrinated by them, especially if these students and practitioners are not aware of their presence, and thus accept them uncritically. In this sense, it would appear important for professionals teaching these texts as well as students and practitioners studying these texts (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Love, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012) to recognize and identify these implicit values and critically discuss them in relation to their professional practices.

Identifying and critically analyzing such unconventional topics as implicit values can be difficult. However, the theoretical framework of this study can be used as a teaching heuristic for facilitating this critical examination. For example, some of the liberal individualist values (e.g., individual happiness) might be so commonsensical for students that unless they are contrasted with alternative values (e.g., virtuous relations that can include individual suffering) they might be difficult to identify and critique. This use of the dialectic as a heuristic aid for critical thinking is widely used in the discipline of psychology, where multiple textbooks and journal articles have been published to aid students in identifying implicit values through dialectical relationships (e.g., Halgin, 2005; Newman, 2011; Richardson & Christopher, 1993; Slife, Reber, & Richardson, 2005).
The second major practical implication of this study focuses on the field of student affairs as a whole. The field of student affairs should now be considered a potential source for possibly promoting liberal individualist values. In fact, an implicit form of indoctrination might generally be occurring in the field if professionals unknowingly promote these values and students uncritically accept them (e.g., Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Young, 2003). The two texts of this study may be reflective of a form of implicit indoctrination happening within the wider discipline. Otherwise, these texts would not be used or they would have been roundly criticized. Even student affairs professionals who are not using these texts should become more sensitive to the potential role of liberal individualist values in their practices as well as their specific practical aims (e.g., as a division of student affairs).

If psychologists have identified certain aspects of liberal individualism as helpful or problematic, it is important for student affairs practitioners to have their own discussions about the merits of these values. For example, professionals in housing and residence life might consider whether their helping skills are oriented around the individualist value of openness, which in turn supports an individual freedom to decide one’s values. Is valuing openness in helping or counseling situations beneficial to students living in residence halls? Should these practitioners consider relational values, such as considering the moral traditions of the culture? Student affairs professionals working in different concentrations in the university (e.g., student conduct, programming) can have similar discussions about aspects of liberal individualism that might be valued in these concentrations. To aid in these discussions, it seems appropriate for student affairs graduate training to help raise the consciousness of graduate students about
implicit values (e.g., Moore & Hamilton, 1993; Young & Elfrink, 1991a). Through using such heuristic aids as the dialectic, graduate programs may be able to help student affairs practitioners become critical consumers of the implicit values of research and practice.

**Future Investigations**

This dissertation appears to point to four main lines of future research. The first involves investigating how representative or reflective these textbooks are of the field as a whole. Given that liberal individualism has been found fairly pervasively in these texts, it would appear important to identify whether liberal individualist values are involved more widely in student affairs theories, practices, and research. Potential investigations might include: the graduate curriculum of student affairs professionals, widely used theories and important books in the field, and the practices of professionals in concentrations such as housing and residence life, student conduct, and student programming. This line of research would seek to answer the question: Are we as a field teaching students to be liberal individualists? Importantly, this line of inquiry should also entail the replication of this study’s findings to identify whether they stand up to inter-investigative scrutiny.

A second line of future research concerns whether we can teach critical thinking to student affairs professionals – perhaps with the aid of a dialectic – that would allow these professionals to become aware of implicit values and critically examine them. Future researchers might consider whether dialectical critical thinking can accomplish these goals. It seems appropriate to critically incorporate the research on this subject that
has already been conducted in other disciplines such as psychology (e.g., Hostetler, 1994; Yanchar & Gabbitas, 2011).

A third line of future research involves the need to evaluate the merits of liberal individualism for the field of student affairs. Which features, for example, would seem appropriate to keep as a field and which features would seem problematic? While reviewing related research in psychology would surely aid in this endeavor (e.g., Cushman, 1995; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999), it would seem appropriate for student affairs scholars and practitioners to conduct their own evaluation of this set of implicit values in regard to the aims and ideals of student affairs practice (e.g., ACPA, 2006; CAS, 2012; NASPA, 1990).

The fourth and final line of future research, which this study seemed to suggest, concerns the indoctrination issue, the issue that spurred this study in the first place. Although this investigation was not designed to evaluate whether individualist indoctrination was happening through these texts, this possibility seems obvious, especially when such ideologies are not identified and discussed critically (e.g., Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Slife & Williams, 1995). Future research will need to investigate whether a form of liberal individualist indoctrination is occurring in the field as well as investigate how student affairs professionals should attempt to mitigate such indoctrination. For example, future researchers might investigate whether the promotion of liberal individualism in key curriculum materials actually results in professional practices and behaviors that reflect those values. In this sense, a pre and posttest might be conducted to see whether students uncritically accept implicit values from specific materials or activities. Again, related research in psychology might be
helpful. For example, many investigators have used the Implicit Associations Test to study some forms of indoctrination (e.g., Greenwald et al., 2002; Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998; Harrison, Stritzke, Fay, Ellison & Hudaib, 2014). Perhaps such methodologies could be extended to student affairs. Whatever is the outcome of this future research, it seems clear that this first study could foster a whole series of productive investigations in the field of student affairs.

**Conclusion**

Chapter 5 has attempted to discuss the implications of the findings. First, a recap of the study was presented to provide a context for these implications and pull the preceding chapters together into one narrative. This led to questions regarding limitations, which were summarized and addressed including: precision, subjectivity, reliability and validity, context, representativeness, disconnection, and dichotomy. Next, research and practical implications were discussed based on the prominence of liberal individualism in these cornerstone texts. Finally, future investigations were outlined which stemmed from these implications.
Appendix A

Table 3: Preliminary Particularization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identity as self-contained</td>
<td>2. Individuals studied and understood best when separated from their context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Individualist practitioners may assume Identity develops internally</em></td>
<td>• <em>Individualist researchers may assume students are best studied under conditions that control or eliminate context</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Individualist practitioners might seek to help students become more self-sufficient in their self-identity</em></td>
<td>• <em>Individualist researchers might attempt to control or eliminate their own biases in conducting investigations</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Identity as co-constituted by the individual and the socio-historical context</td>
<td>2. Individuals studied and understood best in relation to their context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Relational practitioners may assume student identity and socio-historical context have a shared being</em></td>
<td>• <em>Relational practitioners may assume students are best studied within their natural context</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Relational practitioners might seek to help students explore and become more sensitized to this shared being</em></td>
<td>• <em>Relational researchers might seek to identify and account for their investigatory biases</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Individuals as primary and relationship secondary</th>
<th>3. Relationship as primary and individuals viewed as nexuses of relations or parts of the greater whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Individualist practitioners may assume that their primary focus within a student community is the individual</em></td>
<td>- <em>Relational practitioners may assume that their primary focus within a student community is quality or virtuous relationships</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Individualist practitioners might view the quality of the relationships among community members as a secondary consideration</em></td>
<td>- <em>Relational practitioners might also consider individuals themselves as a primary focus, not as self-contained persons, but as a nexus of relationships</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. A valuing of individual freedom and liberation from tradition and moral authority</th>
<th>4. Tradition and moral authority viewed as important but not uncritically examined sources of co-constituted identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Individualist practitioners may assume that moral and ethical principles require no relationship to tradition and moral authority</em></td>
<td>- <em>Relational practitioners may assume moral and ethical principles have a connection to tradition and moral authority</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Individualist practitioners might view student self-expression as not having a necessary relationship to tradition and moral authority</em></td>
<td>- <em>Relational practitioners might view tradition and moral authority as having a necessary relationship to student self-expression</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Promotion of a neutrality toward all values to allow individuals the freedom to decide values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Individualist practitioners may attempt to move away from their own personal values when dealing with students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Individualist practitioners might attempt to facilitate the discovery of the student’s own values apart from tradition and moral authority</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recognition of morality being inescapable and contextually situated within a value laden socio-historical context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Relational practitioners may attempt to acknowledge the unavoidability of personal values when dealing with students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Relational practitioners might assume that a student’s own values do not exist in a socio-historical vacuum</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Individual happiness as the primary end</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>The primary purpose of the individualist practitioner might be individual well-being or happiness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Individualist practitioners might value the individual’s happiness over relational quality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Virtuous relationship as the primary end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>The primary purpose of the relational practitioner might be the quality of relationships, community, and milieu of the community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Relational practitioners might value relational quality over individual happiness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Instrumentalism as a way of thinking and relating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individualist practitioners might assume rational thinking includes instrumental means and individualist ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individualist practitioners might treat relationships as instruments or means to individual ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Value-based thinking that promotes the protecting and enhancing of healthy relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relational practitioners might assume rational thinking is the use of relationally oriented constituent ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relational practitioners might consider quality relationships as ends in themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
IRB Exclusion of Review

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

Social/Behavioral IRB – Review
Notice of Excluded Activity

DATE: June 3, 2014

TO: Dr. Mario Martinez, Educational Psychology & Higher Education

FROM: Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects

RE: Notification of IRB Action
Protocol Title: An Examination of Implicit Values in Cornerstone Textbooks
Protocol# 1405-4828M

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46.

The protocol has been reviewed and deemed excluded from IRB review. It is not in need of further review or approval by the IRB.

Any changes to the excluded activity may cause this project to require a different level of IRB review. Should any changes need to be made, please submit a Modification Form.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.
## Appendix C

### Rupture Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/5/14</td>
<td>Just analyzed Erikson's Identity Development Theory and Marcia's Ego Identity Statuses (SDC, p. 48-54). Erickson's theory seemed to manifest many LI features and I thought going in that Marcia's theory (because it builds on Erickson's) would manifest similar LI features, but I am completely blown away on how strongly LI features are manifested in Marcia's theory because I assumed that Marcia would likely critically evaluate or change some of the individualist implicit values I saw in Erickson's theory. The strength of LI features in Marcia's theory is explained in many different ways including: (p. 54) LI#4 is essentially &quot;viewed as the healthiest psychological status one can obtain&quot; and (p. 54) students not exhibiting LI #4 are essentially &quot;the most easily manipulated and the most likely to succumb to conformity.&quot; Both positive and negative reasons to attain LI #1, #4, and #8 abound in Marcia's theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/11/14</td>
<td>p. 14 Richardson (in press) - ruptured understanding of the individual rights of LI (2nd Theme of Surprisability - Softening my potentially &quot;hardened&quot; views on these rights) - while reading this section on PTSD, I realized that I have never questioned how or why individual rights and promoting individual rights could or would be a bad thing. I've always just assumed it was good. However, Richardson here basically says that a LI approach to PTSD suggests that individuals with PTSD have a &quot;right&quot; to medical treatment, i.e., they have an individual right to happiness. The problem with this right to medical treatment/happiness is that it can cause problems when individuals with PTSD can be really helped by learning from their PTSD suffering. Basically - individuals rights of what? an individual right of happiness is actually a bad thing if people can substantially benefit from working through suffering (and being unhappy). (p. 21) &quot;Rights-based individualism focuses narrowly on the protection or violation of individual rights and prerogatives.&quot; - [Addition - 6/23/2014 - as opposed to Rights for the group/community/relationship]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/11/14</td>
<td>p. 55 SDC - interesting how Josselson appears to just assume that identity formation is developed &quot;internally&quot; in women - this assumption does not seem to be substantiated in anyway, but is instead assumed because of the body of research her theory builds upon (i.e., Erickson and Marcia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/12/14</td>
<td>p. 72-81 SDC - I'm realizing that I have been assuming that the research and critiques presented on these theories at the end of the chapters would provide guidance (or direction) for the reader in interpreting and applying these theories to practice. It appears that instead of providing direction, these authors are neutrally reporting critiques made by others about these theories and research on these theories - as well as how to apply these theories (backed by research) without a question of these theories' individualistic assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/11/14</td>
<td>Basically just general surprise about Jones' multi model as appearing to be individualistic and Fassinger's model as appearing to be individualistic - from my own biases, I assumed these were sophisticated (which they are) AND relational (which they do not appear to be)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D

### Running Commentary Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/24/14</td>
<td>100-101</td>
<td>I am surprised at how theories of moral development appear to sidestep or attempt a neutrality toward morality itself by instead focusing on &quot;moral reasoning&quot;. I'm wondering if the theories presented in this chapter are based on a Kohlbergian theory that is essentially LI #5 (promoting a neutrality toward all values and morality itself instead of R #5 recognizing that morality is inescapable) - if this is the case, then I am wondering if the morally developed person is actually a value neutral oriented person (i.e., LI #5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/24/14</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>&quot;Kohlberg's theory focuses on moral reasoning, the cognitive component of moral behavior&quot; - interesting that this sentence appears to separate out cognition from values - this separation appears to be in line with an individualistic approach (that believes separation is possible) vs. a relational approach that believes separation is not possible and are only secondarily separated from a primary relation LI/R #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/8/14</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>I'm interested to see how the authors address their fictional character's dilemma, &quot;...between her desire to support and honor all of her students and what her family and religion have taught her about same-sex relationships.&quot; Will there be an essentially neutral teaching (i.e., LI #5) or a value based teaching that recognizes that morality is inescapable (R #5) and seeks to protect and enhance healthy relationships (R #7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/11/14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Still waiting for resolution to the question posed on pg. 261 (how to support all students in relation to family and religious values (against?) homosexuality - basically this chapter says that one should be open to and support same sex relationships - without actually saying this in a value oriented way (LI #5) - I am curious if this question will be answered out right (I assume it will) in later chapters of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/14/14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interesting take on paradigms and an understanding of new paradigms in relation to Kuhn &quot;which results in more inclusive theories that challenge dominant or normative understandings of students and student affairs practice.&quot; (p. 158 SS). Interesting their take on challenging of dominant or normative understandings... LI #4? R #4?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/19/14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Amazing switch from likely R#4 to L #4 - with identity in relation to culture changing to identity in relation to &quot;dominant&quot; and &quot;authoritative&quot; culture that should be rebelled against to &quot;self-define&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix E**

**Features Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/2/14</td>
<td>Relationships of similarity vs. relationships of difference - LI #2/ R #2 rubric P. 34 SDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/10/14</td>
<td>Better understanding LI/R #4 (Tradition) after reading some Bernstein (p. 142 &quot;...what we are, whether we are explicitly aware of it or not, is always being influenced by tradition, even when we think we are most free of it. Again, it is important to reiterate that a tradition is not something &quot;naturelike,&quot; something &quot;given&quot; that stands over against us. It is always &quot;part of us&quot; and works through its effective-history.&quot;) it appears that Gadamer sees tradition as playing a vital role in the &quot;horizons&quot; that we use to go about understanding/interpreting - This is a relationist approach to tradition vs. tradition standing against us which would be LI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/24/14</td>
<td>Good clarification about LI/R # 3 when reading through Slife's Strong Relationality paper (2004) p. 159 &quot;From a weak relational perspective, such objects are thought to be “objective” because they transcend their relations to their concrete situations and supposedly retain their identities across all contexts. A tennis racket is a tennis racket, whether it is used for fire wood or returning a serve. However, from a strong relational perspective, weak relationality is only secondarily relational because it omits the shared being of all things. Objectification can only occur through abstraction. The objects must be abstracted from their concrete contexts, because in their fundamental realness – in their practical and concrete realities – all things are ontologically related to their context and can qualitatively change as their contexts change. If a person dying of frigid temperatures, for instance, discovers a cache of wooden tennis rackets, the rackets are firewood. Only an abstraction from this deadly situation allows the person to identify the fuel that provides life-giving warmth as something used in a game. All things, in this sense, are concretely dependent upon, rather than independent of, their contexts.&quot; - in this sense, abstraction occurs after things are already related - it happens secondarily, abstracting from a context that is co-constituting and thus is primary, not secondary from a relationist perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/3/14</td>
<td>Better understanding of LI/R #3 with reading of Bernstein, p. 68 &quot;What is it that happens in a historical span that does not occur in a given temporal moment or instant? The very question shows the stance that needs to be abandoned, the implicit atomism which claims that there is nothing more to a historical development than the repetition and aggregation of isolated events. this atomism prevents us from seeing that “good reasons,” and the social practices in which they are embedded, are not discrete and separable but are always parts of larger networks.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/17/14</td>
<td>Broader understanding of LI/R features after reviewing these features in regard to the entire text (part to whole) of first text book</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix F

**Carefulness Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/19/14</td>
<td>The holism perspective on p. 38 of SDC is an example of how I have also really tried to see this relationally, but how this concept is individualistic. Basically, when I first read through this section on 6-3-2014, I assumed this section would be relational (i.e., student affairs professionals must view students &quot;holistically&quot; meaning that student development is partially constituted by their socio-historical context/college environment. However, this holism concept appears to assume an individualism (LI #1) because it is urging the reader to consider how all of the student developmental theories presented in this book interact within the individual student. Thus a reader using this holistic concept will holistically consider multiple student developmental theories (e.g., cognitive, moral, spiritual) all at the same time - but this consideration is aimed at the individual student, not at the importance of relations to context. (p. 38) &quot;Therefore, it is important to emphasize up front that while we tend to learn about theories individually or as part of theory families, the aspects of development these theories portray are not discrete entities within the individual students. Instead, aspects such as the psychosocial and the cognitive interact within the person, leading to a more holistic developmental process.&quot; ---As opposed to something like &quot;aspects such as the psychosocial and the cognitive are partially constituted by the individual student and their socio-historical context (instead of within the person).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/7/14</td>
<td>p. 204 &amp; 205, really interesting discussion on forms of dependence and forms of community that appears to be strikingly liberal individualistic on two ideas (dependence and community) that I would expect to be relational - just read p. 207 on Mentoring communities that support students interacting with different people so &quot;that people who are different from them may nonetheless share similar feelings and responses to various situations&quot; - fascinating how this is LI - a weakly relational view of communities of difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/7/14</td>
<td>p. 210 - interesting comment by Stamm (2006) in criticizing all stage theories as being &quot;based on Western cultural assumptions of independence and individualism, ignoring the values of community and the common good that are found in many other cultures.&quot; - when I first read this I thought Stamm was criticizing Park’s faith development theory, but actually he was criticizing how Parks used Fowler’s theory as a foundation (which is a stage theory) - so the individualist critique is very light in that the critique is only theoretically on all stage theories, instead of on the individualistic notions that I was interpreting while reading through this theory myself (p. 210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/11/14</td>
<td>p. 330 - Queer theorists putting forward models with relational looking components such as sexual orientation, gender role, and gender identity as shiftable (R #1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Ambiguous Value Statement Example

This level of ambiguous findings is illustrated for the reader below with the presentation of an example of an ambiguous value statement taken from Schuh, Jones and Harper’s (2011) text in which the author discussed leadership. I also provide an explanation for why this statement was interpreted as ambiguous.

“Leadership is socially constructed. One cannot touch, taste, or see leadership. Common views of leadership evolve with shifting social perspectives of such constructs as relationships, gender roles, power, and social capital” (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011, p. 354).

Note the author’s use of the phrase “socially constructed.” After stating this phrase, the author does not further discuss what this phrase means in relation to leadership. Furthermore, while this concept of social constructionism is used throughout both texts, there is not a specific definition given by an author that is explicitly subscribed to by other authors. Without this information, one could interpret this value statement as consistent with either liberal individualist or relational values.

For example, if what the author means by “socially constructed” is that individuals can freely construct things such as their “relationships, gender roles, power, and social capital” independently and separately from their socio-historical culture, then this value statement would be consistent with the liberal individualist ideology. In this sense, the author could be explaining that “[o]ne cannot touch, taste, or see leadership” because it is held within the self-contained individual. Moreover, the individuals of a community are the ones who may construct their socio-historical culture, rather than this
culture providing a relational context for the community that is doing the constructing. In contrast, the author could also mean by “socially constructed” that the social constructors are themselves culturally situated within their “relationships, gender roles, power, and social capital,” which are not itself constructed by the current constructors. In this case, the view of leadership would be consistent with the relational ideology.
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Brown, R., & Krager, L. (1985). Ethical issues in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education, 56*, 403-418. – may throw out because research on values in faculty/students, not SA


profession (New Directions for Student Services No. 61, pp. 87-96). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.


Sandeen, A. (1985a). The legacy of values education in college student personnel work. In J. Dalton (Ed.), *Promoting values development in college students* (Monograph Series, No. 4, pp. 1-16), Washington: NASPA.


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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Nathan Matthew Slife

Degrees:
  Bachelors of Arts in Social Science Studies, 2005
  University of Nevada, Las Vegas

  Master of Arts in College Student Personnel, 2007
  University of Maryland, College Park

Dissertation Title:
  An Examination of Implicit Values in Cornerstone Student Affairs Textbooks

Dissertation Examination Committee:
  Chairman: Mario Martinez, Ph.D.
  Committee Member: Vicki Rosser, Ph.D.
  Committee Member: Edwin Gantt, Ph.D.
  Graduate Faculty Representative: Cynthia Carruthers, Ph.D.