ABSTRACT

WILLIAMS, CHRISTOPHER NATHANIEL LANE. The Power of Campfire Spaces for Diversity Education: A Case Study Analysis of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience Program. (Under the direction of Dr. Joy Gaston Gayles).

This qualitative case study explored the experiences of students and staff involved in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program at a large, research-intensive, public university in the Southeastern U.S. This diversity-focused college outdoor adventure program annually takes a group of college student participants on a week-long outdoor adventure trip with social justice discussions and activities. This study used an embedded single-case design to explore the program under study from a number of different perspectives, including 33 previous program participants, six previous student trip leaders, the program’s founder, and the current program administrator. Semi-structured interviews, a focus group of past participants, and autoethnographic observations were used as the data collection methods. Findings included trying something new; powerful personal connections; group bonding through challenge and adversity; and campfire spaces creating context for discussions and connections. This study adds to the body of research on campus diversity interventions, as a number of studies have investigated campus diversity interventions from a quantitative perspective, but this study provides qualitative research into how college students experience diversity curriculum and interactions. This not only provides the diversity education field with information on a unique program design, it has theoretical implications for the fields of diversity research and outdoor adventure research and provides implications for practice to higher education professionals and administrators.
The Power of Campfire Spaces for Diversity Education: A Case Study Analysis of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience Program.

by
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DEDICATION

To Naoma, Brit, Ashley, and all the other badass women who have taught me so much about how to live life and be a good person over the past 42 years.
BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Nathaniel Lane Williams (aka “Nathan”) was born in Texas, grew up in Chicago (and lived most of his life in the Midwest), but finds that the Southeastern U.S., and in particular North Carolina, is probably his forever home and where he should have ended up. He currently serves as the Assistant Director, Outdoor Adventures at North Carolina State University in the Department of Wellness and Recreation. He holds a Master’s degree in College Student Affairs Administration (CSAA!) from the University of Georgia (Go DAWGS!) and a Bachelor’s in Outdoor Education from the University of Minnesota - Duluth. Nathan lives in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina with his partner, Brit. When not working in higher education, Nathan co-owns a wellness center, Current Wellness, with Brit in Southeast Raleigh. Most weekend nights, you can find him shucking oysters at Locals Oyster Bar in Transfer Food Hall or working on a research project or conference presentation at State of Beer.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For much of my young adult life, I thought I would never get an undergraduate degree, much less go on to earn a master’s and doctorate. As a former (and multiple) college dropout, it certainly strikes me as ironic that I decided to study higher education as a scholarly pursuit. It is only thanks to the guidance, encouragement, forgiveness, and high expectations of many people in my life that I have worked through challenges and produced this big document.

First, and most importantly, I want to thank my parents, Naoma Carol Lane and Paul Allen Williams. They always believed I could do anything, even when I thought I couldn’t. Their love and support, along with my sister Abi Williams, pushed me to expect more of my future and appreciate what I have been given. Along with them, my extended family has always been a font of creativity, intellectual discussion, and different perspectives that have greatly influenced how I see the world. I won’t list every Williams and Lane family member that is important to me, but know that you are loved and appreciated. I have also been humbled by the amount of love and support I’ve received from the Guerin clan, in particular Rob and Terri, who have shown me that in-laws can be awesome.

Along with my born family, my chosen family of friends throughout my life have given me love and support as I’ve navigated this journey. I owe all those in Madison, Wisconsin for getting me turned on to the outdoors and helping me see that universities can be amazing places. I’m thankful to those in Duluth, Minnesota for giving me a chance to take this love and turn it into a viable career and friends and faculty in Athens, Georgia who showed me how higher education can be pursued as scholarly inquiry. In both places, I was able to give myself another chance at higher education and the people I met and opportunities I was given in these places helped me heal a lot of old wounds tied to my past college experiences. The amazing people of
North Carolina Outward Bound School (NCOBS forever!) helped me through some of the hardest experiences I ever encountered and showed me the amazing potential our world has when we hold compassion as our highest value.

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NC State University as a whole has also been a vibrant place to work, study, and interact with colleagues who are doing inspiring things across a number of different disciplines. To the taxpayers of North Carolina, I thank you for the 12 classes I’ve taken on the university’s tuition waiver program (and look forward to many more when I start taking classes just for fun later this year). To all the participants, trip leaders, and professional staff who have been involved in the
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As I have become more familiar with the DIVE program and modified it over the past few years, the destination of the trip, the Louisiana Gulf Coast, has taken on a special significance for me and the people who our trip groups have interacted with have become special to me personally. Growing up in the Midwest, only familiar with Lake Michigan (and later, Lake Superior), I did not understand why either coast of the U.S. was all that interesting. Why would you want to kayak in coastal saltwater and have to rinse your boat after going paddling to keep it in good shape? It was only by fate of getting a job at UNC Wilmington that I got to find out for myself how magical the Atlantic Coast is and fall in love with my favorite ecosystem: the salt marsh. The fact that this ecosystem is rapidly disappearing on the Louisiana Gulf Coast, and that such kind people and rich cultures being impacted by this catastrophe, is something that I think about often. Thank you to the communities and individuals of this area that invite a group of North Carolinians into their (figurative and literal) backyards every year and are such gracious hosts in the midst of such staggering environmental loss and hardship.

Last, and most certainly not least, my heart and all that I am belongs to Brit Guerin and the life we have created together. Thank you for always having the highest of confidence in me that I could complete this thing. Having a partner who would see me work late nights and early mornings and forego typical newlywed experiences for writing days and work catchup is an amazing gift. Thank you for all our adventures in the past and future and I love doing life with you.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Racial and cultural unrest in the United States (U.S.) has been punctuated by acts of violence and intolerance in society at-large and on college campuses (Garcia & Johnston-Guerro, 2015). A series of Black men and women killed by police officers (Lee & Park, 2018) occurred in the midst of a deeply divisive presidential election and heightened intolerance in the U.S.: Americans are increasingly polarized on issues of race, immigration, and the role of the government in addressing social inequities (Pew Research Center, 2017). Meanwhile, on college campuses around the country, large-scale student protests due to racial tensions have become frequent. A few widely-reported examples were student protests at Colgate University in 2014 and University of Missouri in 2015, which were followed by conflicts-turned-violent between White nationalists and student protestors at the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (New, 2014; Phillips, 2018; Spencer & Stolberg, 2017; Trachtenberg, 2018).

Reports of hate crimes on campuses have increased in frequency as well, with reported incidents increasing by 25% from 2015 and 2016, including hundreds of reports “related to the promotion of white supremacy and other bigoted views” occurring before and after election day (Bauman, 2018). Undergirding these conflicts is an atmosphere of fear and misunderstanding demonstrated by discriminatory behavior which has become all-too-common. Examples of this kind of bias and discrimination include: a White student called the police on a Black student who was napping in a university common space (Mangan, 2018); two Native American teenagers were reported to the police while attending a campus tour because they seemingly looked out of place (Chappell, 2018); and a Black professional staff member who was walking to work faced
questioning by police after an anonymous tip was called in because he seemed “agitated” (Andrade, 2018).

While some bias incidents are likely rooted in prejudicial attitudes, others may be due to anxiety and fear of diversity more than racist views (Khuri, 2004b; Nacoste, 2015; Stephan, 2014; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). This lack of comfort with diversity is unfortunately not surprising, given that many incoming college students grow up in schools and communities increasingly segregated by race and socioeconomic status (Orfield & Lee, 2006; Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2016; Putnam, 2015). As a result of growing up in homogenous neighborhoods and schools (i.e., with friend groups of the same race and socioeconomic background), students are also likely to develop segregated friend groups when they arrive in higher education settings (Bahns, Pickett, & Crandall, 2012; Fischer, 2008).

Some amounts of self-segregation provide necessary social supports, particularly for marginalized student populations (Tatum, 2017). Excessive division among identity groups, however, can create a segregation cycle in which previous experiences with segregated environments perpetuate in college even in the presence of structural diversity (i.e., the numeric representation of diverse identities among student populations, Braddock, 1980; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Saenz, 2010). Particularly for White students, who are more likely than students of color to grow up without friends of other races (Orfield et al., 2016), racially homogenous friend groups in college are highly likely (Fischer, 2008). This is unfortunate, given the numerous educational and social benefits of interacting with diverse peers, such as increased academic engagement, critical thinking, sense of belonging, and value placed on citizenship engagement (Bowman, 2010a; Bowman, Denson, & Park, 2016; Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Gurin et al., 2002; Shook & Clay, 2012).
Colleges and universities seem to be recognizing that they can be doing more to reduce bias and discrimination, while fostering better openness to diversity among students. Openness to diversity includes both the awareness of differences among people and the desire to interact with individuals of diverse backgrounds and identities (Shim & Perez, 2018; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001). Additionally, a number of institutions have realized that increasing numbers of underrepresented students will not automatically create campus communities that are equitable and accessible to all: administrators also need to focus on inclusion and how different types of students are engaging across campus (Piper, 2018). In addition to students frequently maintaining racially homogenous friend groups, studies have shown they may actually decrease in their openness to diversity, rather than grow in this capacity, through their first year of college (Bahns, Pickett, & Crandall, 2012; Fischer, 2008; Shim & Perez, 2018).

With the benefits of diversity engagement in mind, colleges and universities have created numerous initiatives and programs aimed at helping students be more open to diversity and knowledgeable about issues of social justice. Colleges and universities have stated diversity and inclusion as a priority in their mission statements, as well as offered programs and courses to try and create more inclusive campus climates (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2007; Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012; Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). Affirmative action and targeted recruitment strategies have been used to promote structural diversity on college campuses (Gurin et al., 2002). There have been a wide array of diversity curricula and workshops; intergroup dialogue courses; and campus strategies to encourage students to interact across lines of difference, such as requiring first-year students to have randomly assigned roommates (Bowman et al., 2016; Hudson, 2018; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-
Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Jayakumar, 2008, 2015). Some colleges and universities have also begun requiring all incoming students to complete a curricular or co-curricular diversity requirement to help prepare them for campus diversity, with the goal of increasing their openness to diversity and encouraging intergroup contact (Chun & Evans, 2018; Douglas & Little, 2017; Thakral et al., 2016). While a number of diversity strategies have been implemented by campuses, there is a dearth of research into how these programs and broad institutional efforts are shaping the diversity experiences of college students from a qualitative lens.

Scholars have studied the impact of structural diversity and diversity interventions with a focus on large, multi-institutional datasets of student surveys and educational outcomes (Bowman, 2010a, 2012, 2014; Chang et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2002; Ryder, Reason, Mitchell, Gillon, & Hemer, 2016). There is also a sizable body of literature into more well-known interventions, particularly intergroup dialogue (e.g., Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Gurin, Nagda, & Zúñiga, 2013; Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009), but there are very few studies which investigate diversity interventions that occur outside of the classroom. This may be due to the smaller size of programs that occur outside of the classroom and the challenges in assessing them quantitatively (i.e., small sample sizes resulting in lower power).

Additionally, while quantitative studies demonstrate the potential benefits of diversity for students in college, less is known about how students experience diversity and diversity interventions from a qualitative perspective (Shim & Perez, 2018). The ways in which students experience diversity is highly dependent on individual student background characteristics (Gurin et al., 2002) and qualitative research is needed which gives students the opportunity to share how they experience diversity interventions in the context of their other experiences. One recent research article noted this need for research from a “qualitative lens to examine how students
make meaning of educational experiences designed to cultivate [openness to diversity]” (Shim & Perez, 2018, p. 472). To meet this need, this qualitative case study fills a gap in the literature by providing qualitative research into how students experienced a non-classroom diversity intervention. The specific case under study is a previously unstudied diversity-focused outdoor adventure trip program. Studying this unique diversity intervention not only provides new knowledge into how students experience diversity, it also creates a bridge between the campus diversity research and literature on college outdoor adventure programs.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the Diversity and Inclusion academic Experience (DIVE) program at a large, research-intensive, public university in the Southeastern U.S. This program has been in operation as part of the university’s campus recreation department since 2013. Each year since its inception, the program has taken a group of 9-12 student participants on a spring break trip with a focus on bringing together students from diverse backgrounds to learn about diversity and social justice issues. These trips have included outdoor recreation components, such as backpacking, canoeing, and camping (the activities and location of the trip have varied since the program’s inception), but these activities have primarily served as a vehicle for the intended diversity outcomes and group processes which are designed to occur throughout the trip. These activities and curricula include discussions of individual identity and privilege; reflection on diversity and inclusion within participants’ home and campus communities; and (during the most recent four years of the trip) reading of a diversity-focused book by a university faculty member (Nacoste, 2012).

Over its seven years of operation, 72 undergraduate and graduate students have participated in this program. Additionally, 10 student trip leaders (one to two per trip year) have
been part of the leadership for the trip and actively participated in the discussions and activities. Lastly, a professional staff member (and, for three years, a second professional staff member) have been part of the trip’s leadership. Aside from being a current student at the university and submitting an application, there are no other requirements for students to participate in the program and the trip is provided at no cost to students who are selected to attend.

The DIVE program is a type of campus diversity intervention that has not been studied previously and represents a unique approach to diversity education. As described in the literature review below, many current diversity interventions in higher education: are classroom-based, such as intergroup dialogue and other diversity courses; involve very short in duration of diversity curriculum and contact, such as multicultural workshops and events; or primarily incorporate contact among diverse peers without a significant diversity curriculum, as in the case of many service-learning and alternative break programs. This study not only fills a gap in the literature and informs diversity intervention research, but also creates a bridge between the (until now) disparate bodies of campus diversity literature and college outdoor adventure research. By providing this link, this study details a new type of campus diversity intervention that may be part of addressing the broader diversity issues that are occurring on college and university campuses.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this qualitative exploratory case study:

1. What are the experiences of college students who participate in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program outdoor adventure trip?
2. Which aspects of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program do participants, trip leaders, and program administrators perceive as most valuable for shaping openness to diverse attitudes and behaviors?

Overview of Theoretical Frameworks

As this study bridges campus diversity literature with the field of college outdoor adventure, two relevant theories from each area were used to inform the research. This did not preclude other theories from being incorporated during data analysis, but these theories provided a foundation for data collection and interview protocols. The study was informed by Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences (a frequently-used framework in campus diversity literature) and Kolb’s (1984; 2015) theory of experiential learning (a frequently-used framework in college outdoor adventure research). A brief overview of these theories will be provided here with a more in-depth discussion, along with relevant and recent empirical research, to follow in the literature review below.

These theories informed the research questions and approach by providing a framework through which individuals view programmatic interventions (in this case, diversity programs). The theory of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) provided a framework to consider where the DIVE program fit within participants’ overall experiences with diversity programming and their informal experiences with diversity. Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) provided a conceptual starting point to investigate how individuals have experienced the DIVE program, reflected on it, and applied knowledge from it. If a participant had a rich background of contact with diverse peers and multicultural programs before DIVE, they may have a decidedly different perspective on the experiences of the program than someone for whom this was an entirely novel experience.
Building on foundational psychology theories (Allport, 1954; Erikson, 1946; Piaget, 1965, 1971), Gurin et al. (2002) proposed a theory of campus diversity experiences and how these experiences led to cognitive disequilibrium and psychological growth. Their theory posits that college students are at a prime developmental stage to form new beliefs and attitudes about diversity (based on the age of traditional college students and their stage in cognitive development). Specifically, when students leave behind their familiar home backgrounds and frequently are entering new campus environments with new people and novel experiences, they are likely to encounter experiences that are unexpected and that lead to cognitive disequilibrium.

The theory of campus diversity experiences (diagrammed in Figure 2.2; Gurin et al., 2002) identifies classroom diversity and informal interactional diversity as the primary activities which drive diversity cognitive growth and learning outcomes, both dependent on sufficient structural diversity and institutional climate. Classroom diversity refers to the curricular content that college students learn as part of courses, in addition to the representation of diverse groups in their classes. Informal interactional diversity are the experiences that students have interacting with other students from different backgrounds and identities outside of the classroom. These could include interactions through student organizations, roommates and friends in living situations, or experiential education opportunities like the program under study. Gurin et al. (2002) stressed that informal interactional diversity was the more important of these two types of campus diversity experiences. The combination of informal interactional diversity, including genuine interactions with diverse peers, and classroom diversity was theorized to promote active learning that would lead to cognitive disequilibrium and growth. Given that the DIVE program incorporates both curricular content and facilitated activities, as well as opportunities for informal interactions (i.e., time in a van driving to locations, camping, meals, and outdoor
recreation activities), this study investigated each type of diversity experience that may have occurred during the program. Also, since the outdoor recreation component of the trip was new to many participants, this study investigated in what ways the novelty of this environment might promote active learning and cognitive growth in relation to diversity.

Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015; see Figure 2.3) posits that people do not automatically learn from their direct experiences. Rather, following the experience, individuals must have an opportunity to reflect on it. In a higher education environment, this reflection could be initiated by a faculty or staff member through group discussions, journaling, or course assignments, for example. This reflective observation may then lead to abstract conceptualization, where the learner recognizes that what they learned from the experience can apply in other contexts. Lastly, the individual ideally uses this learning to undertake active experimentation with their new knowledge (i.e., they use the knowledge they have gained from experiences).

According to Kolb (2015), “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 49). In experiential learning theory, learners both grasp experiences through concrete experience and abstract conceptualization, as well transform experiences through reflective observation and active experimentation. The tension between these continuums (see Figure 2.3) and the resolution of this tension is where learning occurs in experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015). This makes the learners themselves ideal observers of the experiences from which they learn and reflect upon. The DIVE program was the experience that previous participants, trip leaders, and program staff were asked to reflect on.

Given that the DIVE program has included opportunities for direct experience (e.g., diversity discussions and curriculum, outdoor adventure experiences), as well as reflection (e.g.,
group discussions, journaling), experiential learning theory provided an ideal framework to explore the experiences of previous participants and trip leaders. As shown in the study’s findings, previous participants and trip leaders have had an opportunity to generalize and use the learning from their DIVE trip and the semi-structured interviews that were part of this study uncovered these learner-centered phenomena. This theory informed the first research question by seeking to understand the reflective observations of previous participants, trip leaders, and program administrators over the time since their DIVE experience that they have had an opportunity to develop abstract conceptualization of what about this program was beneficial.

**My Positionality**

A full positionality statement is provided in Chapter 3, but I will briefly my share my related experiences here and how they inform analysis and discussion throughout this manuscript. In addition to my role as the primary investigator for this study, I also administer the outdoor recreation unit in which the DIVE program is housed and have been the program trip leader for the past four years. My experience on these DIVE trips has given me a unique vantage point to ask questions and analyze participant responses with an informed view of program activities and curriculum. Particularly for the years of the program which I have experienced, I know what participants experienced on long van rides to far-away destinations; I remember the colder days of the trip or when mishaps occurred along the way; and I have developed personal connections with participants which I believe allowed them to be more open with me than they would have with another researcher.

There is certainly the risk that participants have ‘sugar-coated’ their responses due to my position as the program administrator and trip leader. I have accounted for this possibility with a few strategies which I detail throughout this manuscript. The interview protocol I used included
an opening statement encouraging participants to be honest about their experience and not be fearful of providing negative recollections or opinions about the trip. I arranged for a colleague to interview me early on in the data collection process to identify the biases I hold that could potentially be projected on to participant experiences. Throughout data collection and analysis, I engaged in memo’ing (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013) to capture both the salient aspects of participant experiences and also the emotions I was experiencing related to my positionality with the trip, participants, and data being collected. For example, early on in my interviews, one participant referred to the trip as a life-changing experience. Upon reflection in memo’ing after this interview, I recognized that it would be important for me to not use this initial interview as a catalyst to go in search of every participant experience being life-changing. It was a good reminder that some participants had more meaningful experiences and post-trip reflections than others (and, indeed, participants that I interviewed throughout this study had a wide range of experiences with the trip and their ensuing reflections on it).

In addition to providing perspective for data collection and analysis, my positionality has also enabled me to serve as a narrator and guide throughout this manuscript itself. My knowledge of the trip has enabled me to find connections between themes and participant experiences that may otherwise go unnoticed. In a similar vein, my professional background in outdoor recreation has provided me with an informed perspective to discuss how participants engage with outdoor activities and peers in their group over a week-long trip. I appreciate analogies related to the role of researchers in qualitative studies, such as the researcher-as-bricoleur (Denzin, 2012) who weaves the threads of participant experiences and analysis to uncover a tapestry which addresses the research questions at hand. Throughout this manuscript, I have sought to be the trip leader on this journey of uncovering participant experiences of the
DIVE program. For you, the reader, I strive to be a reliable guide in navigating these findings, analysis, and recommendations for higher education staff, faculty, and future research.

**Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to existing literature on campus diversity experiences by investigating how college students experience a new type of diversity program, diversity-focused college outdoor adventure trips. Given the challenges facing college campuses in educating students about diversity and promoting positive intergroup relations, nontraditional interventions are needed to encourage positive interactions among diverse peers. The findings from this study support the experiential education-based diversity intervention under study for promoting genuine interactions among diverse peers. Providing research into how these students have experienced diversity also informs Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences and Kolb’s (1984, 2015) experiential learning theory. The experiences of participants uncovered themes of informal interactional diversity that overshadowed more formal diversity curriculum in student recollections of their trip.

Campus outdoor recreation professionals, as well as staff responsible for campus diversity efforts, can use the results of this research to consider whether a program like DIVE could be successful on their campuses. Although not all college outdoor recreation trips incorporate diversity curriculum and intentional participant selection criteria to create a diverse group, from my experience leading these types of trips, it is not uncommon to have a wide variety of participant identities represented on outdoor trips, including by race, gender, country of origin, and past experience with outdoor activities (or lack thereof). This creates an opportunity for higher education professionals to apply the results of this study to existing
outdoor recreation trips without necessarily creating a more comprehensive program like the one in this study.

This study also benefits higher education professional staff by providing an example of programs that address larger societal concerns. Higher education broadly is facing widespread criticism over the cost of tuition and the value of attending college (e.g., Hacker & Dreifus, 2010). Campus recreation, specifically, has recently become a target for critics of higher education spending and increased tuition and fees, with special attention paid on new recreation facilities and other campus amenities (Brandon, 2010; Martin, 2012; Schuman, 2013). College outdoor adventure programs, and climbing walls in particular, are often questioned and criticized as unnecessary and excessive frills (Scott, 2012), possibly due to their large and highly visible placement in recreation facilities. One well-known politician commented, “What the hell do you need a rock climbing wall for? Tell the kids at [University of New Hampshire], ‘Go outside and climb those rocks.’” (Casimiro, 2015). Despite this criticism, analyses have revealed that decreased state support is much more responsible for increased tuition than new campus recreation facilities with indoor climbing walls (Kirshstein & Kadamus, 2012). Although this study is exploratory in nature, findings illuminate aspects of outdoor recreation programming that can benefit society at-large and are worthy of further study, while also supporting their place on college campuses.

In addition to campus staff who are directly involved in these programs, this study benefits upper-level administration and policy makers who oversee colleges and universities. The risks of a campus student population (in addition to faculty and staff populations) who are not open to diversity are numerous. For example, the racial unrest and sustained refusal of administrators at the University of Missouri to address student concerns ultimately led to a large
decline in student enrollment and contributed to a $60 million budget shortfall (Keller, 2018). In addition, the university incurred expenses associated with starting the Citizenship@Mizzou program, which sought to address these diversity issues on campus by requiring participation of all incoming undergraduate and graduate students in a newly-created diversity program (Douglas & Little, 2017). There are indications that these types of student protests will likely continue, given that surveys of first-year students show the highest percentage of students likely to engage in campus protests since 1967 (Eagan et al., 2016a).

The extent of a negative diversity event does not need to be widespread for it to incur significant costs and institutional embarrassment: Yale (which was the site of the napping student police call mentioned above), recently announced a new committee and grant program to advance their “strong commitment to eliminate harassment and discrimination and to encourage everyone to exchange ideas openly across intellectual, historical, and social perspectives” (Salovey & Goff-Crews, 2018). This study adds to the body of literature on campus diversity interventions that administrators can consider implementing to help manage their campus climates and mitigate the risks of these costly episodes.

Lastly, this research has theoretical implications to assist future research in the literature areas of diversity interventions and college outdoor adventure programs. As the literature review below demonstrates, these areas of higher education practice might not have much overlap in the research literature, but the outcomes and evidence generated from them contain numerous intersections which should be further explored. This study provides a bridge that the DIVE program represents between these research and programmatic areas, but the investigation of diversity outcomes within college outdoor adventure should certainly not stop there.
Definition of Terms

Prior to discussing the background literature and research design, the following terms used in this study will be defined:

Diversity

In this study, diversity refers to the representation of identities in a given space or organization. This could refer to individuals and groups within the physical space of a campus, the representation of diversity organizationally within a college or university, or the individuals participating in a given program such as the one in this study. Openness to diversity refers to both the interest and willingness of individuals to engage with diverse peers and cultures and also the interest and appreciation for engaging in learning and discussion related to social justice, race, privilege, and other diversity-related constructs (Whitt et al., 2001).

Diversity Education

Diversity education in this study refers to the programmatic efforts of higher education institutions to educate their students (and/or faculty and staff) in the knowledge, awareness, and skills of multiculturalism. These types of programs can include opportunities that are curricular (i.e., semester-long diversity courses) or co-curricular (i.e., cultural center workshops, multicultural student organizations, required first-year student diversity interventions, the DIVE program; Quaye & Harper, 2015). In line with Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory, diversity education can include classroom diversity that encompasses diversity content knowledge and also the interaction with diverse peers in the classroom setting.

Structural Diversity

Structural diversity is the numeric representation of diverse identities among (in this case) student populations (Gurin et al., 2002). While structural diversity includes gender,
socioeconomic diversity, ability, and other types of identities, this study primarily uses structural
diversity to discuss diversity of racial and ethnic identities, unless otherwise specified.

Privilege

Throughout the DIVE program trips, issues of privilege were discussed. In this context
and throughout this study, privilege refers to the unearned comforts and rights of access to
resources and experiences inherited by identities with historical power over others (e.g., White,
male, able-bodied, wealthy, cisgender, heterosexual). Privilege does not need to be recognized
or claimed to be taken advantage of and, indeed, many people who exercise their privilege are
unaware (or actively deny) their privileges (DiAngelo, 2011; McIntosh, 1989).

College Outdoor Adventure

College outdoor adventure refers to programs and activities offered formally by a college
or university to engage students in outdoor recreation and/or education. Some college outdoor
adventure programs are part of a larger campus recreation department, whereas others function
within a student union, student organization, academic department, or other campus office.
Program activities may include outdoor adventure trips, an indoor climbing wall, challenge
course, and outdoor equipment rental as part of their operations or may only provide one or a
combination of these components (Pate, Anderson, Williams, 2015; Speelman & Wagstaff,
2015). Activities may take place in outdoor environments or those that approximate the outdoors
(i.e., college outdoor adventure could include learning to kayak in a pool or rock climbing at an
outdoor destination). Outdoor adventure is used interchangeably with outdoor recreation and
both serve as encompassing terms that may be either co-curricular or academic in nature (i.e.,
outdoor adventure education; Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014).
**Diversity-Focused Outdoor Adventure Trip**

This study uses the term “diversity-focused outdoor adventure trips” to describe college outdoor adventure trips that include diversity curriculum and discussions, in addition to a participant group comprised of a diversity of backgrounds and campus populations (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, type of campus involvement). Although the DIVE program screened for diverse identity characteristics during its first three years, in subsequent years a diversity of backgrounds and identities has been achieved by advertising the intent of the trip to focus on diversity and inclusion, as well as targeted marketing of the trip to multicultural student centers and other organizations on campus that would reach a wide array of student populations. This program design is an emerging diversity intervention, given that there are very few programs of this type.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Prior to discussing the research methods that were used for this study, relevant literature will be discussed and critiqued. This review will first examine the increasing diversity of students in higher education and the potential benefits of diverse campus environments for all students. Next, there are indicators that, even with this increased diversity, students are often segregated along lines of difference and incidents of prejudice and microaggressions are prevalent. One possible cause of these conflicts is the increasing resegregation of schools and communities in pre-college environments (Orfield & Lee, 2006). A lack of prior contact with peers of different races, specifically, has been shown to contribute to increased anxiety and threat response during interracial interactions (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Nacoste, 2015; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Toosi, Babbitt, Ambady, & Sommers, 2012).

These dynamics have created a need for colleges and universities to implement a number of campus diversity interventions focused on increasing student openness to diversity. Specific diversity intervention programs will be discussed, including intergroup dialogue, diversity workshops, and service-learning. One type of diversity intervention that has not been extensively researched is diversity-focused outdoor adventure trips, such as the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) program under study. Given that this program is unique and there is not an existing body of literature which addresses it, the literature review will provide background literature of college outdoor adventure programs and diversity interventions more generally. This will bridge the space where the DIVE program exists: at the intersection of campus diversity interventions and college outdoor adventure programs (see Figure 2.1).
Increased Diversity in Higher Education

Higher education has become a more diverse environment across racial, ethnic, gender, and other identities of students, since its origination in the colonial era when it was an enterprise exclusively for the advancement of White men (Thelin, 2011). Indeed, higher education was illegal or highly restrictive for women and people of color until relatively recently in this country’s history (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005). Particularly in the late 20th and early 21st century, American higher education has seen a very large increase in students who are women, students of color, and international students (Institute of International Education, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). From 1971 to 2015, the racial composition of incoming college students has changed dramatically (see Table 2.1). Students identifying as White in 1971 made up 90% of all incoming first-year students, but this population decreased to 57% by 2015 (Eagan et al., 2016b). Every other racial identity group experienced increases across this same period. While men made up the majority of students attending college in 1966 (with 53% of
first-time students identifying as men), this gender composition has flipped with approximately 55% of all first-time students in 2015 identifying as women (Eagan et al., 2016b).

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more race/ethnicity</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During this same fifty-year period (1966-2015), the number of international students enrolling in U.S. higher education institutions has also risen dramatically. Although this student population is still a small percentage when compared to the overall population of students entering colleges and universities, recent trends suggest that further increases of international students can be expected. While international students made up 1.6% of all college students in 1966 (100,262 students in real enrollment numbers), by 1995 international students had grown to 3.2% (or 453,787 students) of the total population of students in higher education (Institute of International Education, 2017). By 2015, this proportion of international students had jumped again to 5.5% of all students in higher education, with over one-million international students comprising the almost 20-million student population of U.S. higher education (Institute of International Education, 2017). These numbers also do not take into account the number of first-generation U.S. citizens with foreign-born parents in college, suggesting that the number of college students with international backgrounds is possibly much higher.
With the number of diverse students across racial, ethnic, gender, and international identities experiencing such large increases, higher education institutions and professionals have devoted large amounts of time and resources into attempting to create campus communities that are inclusive of diverse groups of individuals. Before considering the diversity strategies that campuses are using to address inclusion and openness to diversity among students, it is important to review the ways in which campus administrators and educational researchers conceptualize diverse student populations and the benefits of this diversity. The numeric representation of diverse groups (i.e., how many students of these different identity groups comprise a campus population) is referred to as structural diversity (Gurin et al., 2002). While structural diversity is an important component of thriving campuses and increased student learning outcomes, simply having diverse groups in the same place does not ensure that students will interact across lines of difference (Gurin et al., 2002). Campus administrators and policy makers have initiated numerous campus diversity interventions to help students interact across these diverse groups and be open to diversity, not only because of the increased representation of diverse groups but also for the benefits that diversity in higher education brings.

**Benefits of Campus Diversity**

Research into the benefits of campus diversity is extensive and much of it is driven by responses to criticism of affirmative action (e.g., Gurin et al., 2004). Contemporary affirmative action within higher education has been used to make universities and colleges diverse learning environments for the educational growth of students and promote equitable access for underrepresented students (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012). Despite these benefits, a number of state governments and individuals have resisted affirmative action initiatives and sought to limit or end their use, such as in the cases of *Grutter v. Bollinger*
and *Fisher v. University of Texas* (both heard before the U.S. Supreme Court). In both cases, the plaintiffs accused the universities of maintaining a quota system for underrepresented minority student groups, while denying admission to White students who would otherwise have been admitted to the university. In each case, the Supreme Court has upheld the university’s right to consider race in admission to benefit the overall diversity of the student body and educational benefits for all students (Liptak, 2016).

In support of promoting diverse student populations in higher education (and in support of affirmative action, specifically), a number of researchers (i.e., Bowman, 2010a; Chang et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 2012; Jayakumar, 2015) have studied the outcomes of students interacting with diverse peers in campus environments. Many of these studies (e.g., Bowman et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2006; Gurin et al., 2002) relied on large-scale, self-reported surveys of changes in students from the beginning of college to the end, four years later. Specifically, data gathered by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has been used frequently with their Freshman Survey and College Senior Survey datasets supporting student outcomes related to diversity exposure and engagement. The sample size for studies using CIRP data has been impressive, with 19,667 students from 227 institutions being used in Chang et al.’s (2006) study; 11,383 students from 184 institutions in Gurin et al.’s (2002) study; and 8,634 participants from 229 institutions in Bowman et al.’s (2016) study. Each of these studies reported similarly positive results for students who are attending diverse institutions and engaging with diversity, including increased academic engagement, increased academic self-confidence, and increased citizenship engagement.
In addition to these individual benefits of student engagement with diversity, there are also indications that diverse interactions may help create campus communities that are more open to diversity. The Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS), a national study which investigates students and their engagement with religious and worldview diversity, has produced promising evidence (Hudson, Rockenbach, Zhang, & Mayhew, 2019; Rockenbach et al., 2019) that students who have close friends of difference develop more appreciative attitudes generally of other diverse groups. In a report of diverse friendship effects, the researchers state the example that “making a close atheist friend encourages students, on the whole, to become more appreciative of Buddhists, Evangelical Christians, Hindus, Jews, Latter-day Saints, and Muslims at the same time” (Rockenbach et al., 2019). This demonstrates that a diverse friendship is not just limited to the immediate students involved but may have ripple effects for encouraging more openness to diversity in the broader campus community.

Preparing Students for Diverse Communities and Workplaces

In addition to the educational and civic outcomes of diversity engagement, higher education institutions and employers have stressed the importance of preparing students for a diverse (and globally connected) world and workplace (Hart Research Associates, 2015, 2018). College and university efforts include the programs discussed in this study, as well as offering an array of academic programs which educate students about diverse groups and cultures; stressing the value of study abroad and service-learning; and supporting multicultural student organizations and multicultural student centers (Cuyjet, Linder, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2016; Mayhew et al., 2016; Stewart, 2011). A large percentage of colleges and universities also
stress the importance of diversity and multiculturalism enough to put it in their mission statement, often with a focus on the multicultural education of all students (Wilson et al., 2012).

This priority on diversity is not just one espoused by individual institutions; there are also higher education nonprofit organizations which are stressing the importance of preparing students for working within, and being active members of, diverse communities. In charting the essential outcomes for college students in the twenty-first century, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) brought together scholars, university (and university system) presidents, foundation presidents, policy makers, and others to create the “College Learning for the New Global Century” report (AAC&U, 2007). As part of this report, the authors identified seven principles colleges and university should concentrate on to prepare students for the challenges of this globally connected world. Principle six states the need for colleges to “Foster Civic, Intercultural, and Ethical Learning” (AAC&U, 2007, p. 37), noting that many students graduate from college without an adequate understanding of diversity and what active citizenship means. “Less than half of college seniors report that their college experience significantly influenced their capacity to contribute to their communities; only half report significant gains in learning about people from different backgrounds,” (AAC&U, 2007, p. 38) the report laments. The report goes on to stress that higher education institutions have made a commitment to this type of development in students, but are not following through on what they have espoused in their missions.

**Campus Diversity Interventions**

Given the benefits of diversity contact (along with the recognition that, even on campuses that are structurally diverse, students may not be interacting across lines of difference), campuses have implemented a number of programmatic interventions designed to facilitate interactions
among students of different races, backgrounds, and identities. Although not an exhaustive review, this section will provide a summary of the most prevalent programs and interventions that are intended to promote contact among diverse groups of students, as well as increase student knowledge of social justice, equity, privilege, and other diversity constructs. The DIVE program being investigated in this study is one such program and understanding the range of diversity programs overall will provide context for where the DIVE program fits within campus diversity interventions.

**Intergroup Dialogue**

Intergroup dialogue is possibly the best-known campus diversity intervention to encourage students of difference to positively interact across groups (Gurin, Nagda, & Zúñiga, 2013; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Intergroup dialogue courses are typically for-credit courses that are offered to bring together students of different identity groups for curricular content to learn about social justice and diversity, as well as to engage in facilitated discussions led by a trained faculty or staff member (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009). Typically, these programs bring together students from two different identity groups, based on gender, race, or religion (e.g., Black and White students, Christians and Muslims). These courses are designed for students to gain knowledge of the other group, as well as systemic privilege and oppression, but they also seek to forge personal relationships between individuals from these groups.

Although there do not seem to be any meta-analyses that have been conducted of intergroup dialogue specifically, there is a sizable collection of research that has demonstrated positive outcomes of these programs (e.g., Gurin, Peng, Lopez, and Nagda, 1999; Gurin, Nagda, and Lopez, 2004; Hopkins & Domingue, 2015; Hurtado, 2005; Khuri, 2004a; Miller & Donner, 2000; Muller & Miles, 2017; Nagda et al., 2009). In a comprehensive literature review of 21
studies, Dessel and Rogge (2008) summarized a number of outcomes that have been studied in intergroup dialogue research between 1997 and 2006, including higher education and non-higher education contexts. Within colleges and universities, the results found in two quasi-experimental studies (Gurin et al., 1999; Gurin et al., 2004) were particularly compelling. Students in these studies (Gurin et al., 1999; Gurin et al., 2004) experienced increased “sense of commonality regarding the other groups, capacity to view differences as compatible with democracy, and political involvement such as more frequently supporting multicultural and affirmative action policies” (Dessel & Rogge, 2008, p. 224).

In Gurin et al.’s (1999) study, 174 undergraduate students enrolled in an intergroup dialogue course were matched with a control group and surveyed on pre- and post-course outcomes four years after their intergroup dialogue course. The research questions sought to determine whether intergroup dialogue courses experienced positive intergroup outcomes, lessened negative effects of intergroup contact, and whether the course enhanced perception of the different group identity (i.e., in a course with Black and White dyad students, whether each group viewed the other more positively after the course). Findings in this study (Gurin et al., 1999) were not conclusive for positive outcomes among White students, but found that African American, Latino/Latina, and Asian American students all reported decreased intergroup divisiveness (i.e., feelings of conflict with the opposite group within their intergroup dialogue course) when compared to the control group. They also reported increased positive relationships with White students four years after their course and a feeling of greater commonality with White students.

In another quasi-experimental approach to determining the outcomes of intergroup dialogue, Gurin et al. (2004) reported on the results of two studies that used University of
Michigan’s Intergroup Relations (IGR) program as the treatment of interest. The studies investigated outcomes related to openness to diversity and participation in democracy, including the following:

Perspective-taking, understanding that difference need not be divisive, perception of commonalities in values between their own and other groups, mutuality in learning about their own and other groups; interest in politics, participation in campus politics, commitment to civic participation after college, and acceptance of conflict as a normal part of social life. IGR is a type of intergroup dialogue which is offered to first-year students at this university. (Gurin et al., 2004, p. 21)

In the first study (Gurin et al., 2004), 87 IGR participants were matched one-to-one with 87 non-participants. Each group was sent questionnaire surveys at the beginning of the first-year of college (i.e., before the intergroup dialogue course) and again at the end of their senior year. Students who participated in the IGR program experienced a greater sense of commonality with racial and ethnic groups other than their own and a greater appreciation for the differences between groups (Gurin et al., 2004). Students in the program also held more positive views of the role of productive conflict in society than students who did not take the course.

The second study Gurin et al. (2004) reported on also investigated the experiences of students at the University of Michigan, but included participation in IGR as well as other diversity experiences (i.e., diversity topics in other courses, participation in multicultural student events, and participation in intergroup dialogue as part of other courses at the university) as part of a composite index of campus diversity experiences. The sample of 1,670 students in this study were surveyed at the beginning of their first-year at the university and again at the end of their senior year. In results that contrasted with their first study, the researchers (Gurin et al.,
2004) found that White students experienced significantly increased perspective taking and a
greater sense of commonality with African American and Latino/Latina students related to their
participation in diversity experiences. Students of color did not experience significant changes
across this same time period, which contradicts the findings of the first study. This raises the
question of whether more diversity experiences (beyond just an intergroup dialogue course) are
needed for different identity groups across their undergraduate careers. As DIVE program
participants were asked about their other diversity experiences in college, findings from this
study informs how students experience different types of campus diversity interventions and
where the DIVE program fits in relation to other diversity experiences.

To explore the process of how students experience intergroup dialogue courses, Ford and
Malaney (2012) used qualitative analysis of student papers in intergroup dialogue courses to
inductively explore how students of color experienced these courses. Participants in this study
included 31 students of color across 6 different intergroup dialogue courses at one university in
the Northeast U.S. The researchers (Ford & Malaney, 2012) found themes related to student
identity development, but also pertaining to how the intergroup dialogue course impacted
students’ perceptions of the campus as a whole. Students expressed being more comfortable in
their own skin and also feeling like they had a community of support following the intergroup
dialogue course (while the initial experience of being a student of color at a predominantly White
institution was a culture shock). The findings from this study (Ford & Malaney, 2012) suggest
that formal diversity curriculum like intergroup dialogue courses may prepare students for other
diversity experiences on campus. In a quantitative study of White students who participated in
an intergroup dialogue course, Alimo (2012) found similar evidence that these courses prepare
students for collaboration across groups. This study (Alimo, 2012) used a sample of 1,463 White
students who participated in an intergroup dialogue course at one of nine different colleges and universities. This treatment sample was matched against a control group of 365 students who were not intergroup dialogue participants. Findings from a pretest and posttest survey showed that students who participated in the intergroup dialogue course were more likely to engage in behaviors of intergroup allyship (Alimo, 2012).

These studies (Alimo, 2012; Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Ford & Malaney, 2012; Gurin et al., 1999; Gurin et al., 2004) demonstrate significant evidence about the efficacy of intergroup dialogue in promoting positive student development and changes in diversity attitudes, but there are important limitations and further questions to be answered. Intergroup dialogue courses (like most of the other interventions discussed here) rely on students to self-select into participating. Students also may be hesitant to enroll in a course given that it requires a full semester commitment and involves discussion about topics that can lead to intergroup anxiety for participants (Khuri, 2004b; Stephan, 2014; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Given that the DIVE program is a shorter time commitment for students (i.e., a one-week trip versus a full semester intergroup dialogue course), this study sheds light on the motivations that were important for students in applying for this program. These findings include the aspect of outdoor recreation that drew most students to apply for the program, even more importantly than its diversity content.

**Diversity Workshops**

In terms of shorter experiences that may influence intergroup contact, diversity workshops represent an intervention that is used on many campuses (McCaulley, Wright, & Harris, 2000). Often these programs are offered in a co-curricular setting (e.g., by a multicultural student affairs office); are generally made up of small groups that engage in discussion topics;
and may be as short as a single 45-minute session or occur in multiple sessions over a full semester. The wide variety of these programs makes them difficult to assess in terms of outcomes, but Bowman et al. (2016) presented compelling evidence that these types of workshops can have lasting impacts. Using a propensity score approach (to attempt to assess causality) the researchers used data from three waves of national survey data collection, including data collected from students when they were first-year students, at the end of their senior year, and then six years after graduation. The sample included a total of 8,634 students from 229 institutions and used outcomes of post-college civic behaviors (such as volunteering and charitable donations) in addition to attitudes and beliefs, while controlling for demographic characteristics and other covariates, such as political orientation (Bowman et al., 2016).

The researchers (Bowman et al., 2016) found that students who had participated in a diversity workshop during college increased across all outcomes measured. This was particularly evident for civic behaviors such as community leadership and socializing with individuals of other racial identities. Additionally, the students who had participated in diversity workshops demonstrated changes in attitudes, in particular recognizing the societal dynamic of unequal opportunities for success. Despite the study’s strong methodology and large sample size, it was somewhat limited by its older dataset (the first-year survey was conducted in 1994 and the post-college survey was administered in 2004) and inherent variability of diversity workshops (participants only indicated whether they attended a diversity workshop or not, so some may have been longer in duration or part of a broader leadership development program).

When considering the influence of diversity workshops in comparison to other campus diversity experiences, a few studies (Antonio, 2001; Cole & Zhou, 2014; Jayakumar, 2008) provide insight into what benefits students most. In a test of Banks (2001) multicultural
education framework, Cole and Zhou (2014) surveyed 2,429 students at one university, both in the fall of 2004 (when participants were first-year students) and again in the spring of 2008 (when most of the students were seniors). Students were asked about their participation in campus experiences, including interracial interaction, multicultural courses, racial awareness workshops, and service-learning. The outcome variables of interest were all tied to civic mindedness, with two in particular most related to student openness to diversity: student commitment to promoting racial understanding and interest in understanding different culture and races. The researchers (Cole & Zhou, 2014) found that participation in racial awareness workshops was positively correlated with increased civic mindedness, but that frequency of interracial interactions was more strongly associated with these attitude changes.

Findings from Antonio (2001) support this idea that, while diversity workshops contribute to positive attitude changes, interracial interactions (also referred to as cross-racial interactions) are more important. In a study using a national longitudinal dataset of incoming first-year student cohorts in 1991 and 1992, Antonio (2001) analyzed “8,877 first-time, full-time students attending 115 4-year, predominantly white institutions across the country” (p. 598). Similar to previous studies discussed (e.g., Cole and Zhou, 2014) students completed questionnaires at the beginning of their first-year in college and again four years later. Students were asked about a variety of involvement variables (e.g., working on group projects, participating in student government, participating in an ethnic student organization), but most relevant to this study, students were questioned about their frequency of attending racial/cultural awareness workshops and how often they interacted with students of different races. The study (Antonio, 2001) controlled for precollege characteristics (i.e., socioeconomic status, high school grades, political orientation), institutional characteristics, and other forms of student
involvement. While students who attended racial/cultural awareness workshops experienced significant gains in cultural knowledge and understanding across the study period, interracial interactions were more strongly associated with these outcomes (Antonio, 2001).

The positive impacts of cross-racial interaction on students is also supported by research which investigates longitudinal outcomes of college (Jayakumar, 2008). Using a sample from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) national longitudinal survey, Jayakumar (2008) investigated whether White student diversity experiences in college promoted greater cross-cultural workforce competencies, including pluralistic orientation (a concept often used interchangeably with openness to diversity). The dataset used comprised a sample of 7,689 students from 226 higher education institutions. Data were gathered from students initially at the beginning of their first-year in college in 1994, again during their senior year in 1998, and finally six years later, after the majority of students had graduated from college and entered the workforce (Jayakumar, 2008). While attending a structurally diverse campus was positively correlated with increases in pluralistic orientation, the lasting effects post-college were much more substantial when the student engaged in cross-racial interactions at their institution. When White students engaged in cross-racial interactions and had also taken part in a diversity workshop, the effects of these experiences on increased pluralistic orientation were even more substantial and statistically significant (Jayakumar, 2008). In line with Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory, the findings from this study (Jayakumar, 2008) support the positive interaction between formal campus diversity experiences and informal interactional diversity to lead to student cognitive development.

While these studies (Antonio, 2001; Bowman et al., 2016; Cole & Zhou, 2014; Jayakumar, 2008) support the positive outcomes of students engaging in diversity workshops,
particularly when combined with cross-racial interactions, much less is known about how students experience these interventions from a qualitative perspective. In a recent study, Shim and Perez (2018) noted that while quantitative research has shown which campus diversity interventions are effective in contributing to student attitude change about diversity, “little is known about why and how these practices situated in a specific educational context were more effective than others” (p. 472) and that qualitative research is needed in this area. By situating this case study of the DIVE program within the existing campus diversity intervention literature, this study helps fill this gap in the literature.

**Service-Learning**

Although not solely focused on promoting interaction between diverse campus populations, service-learning represents another intervention where students can interact with peers of different backgrounds and races/ethnicities (Engberg, 2004; Hurtado, 2005). In recent research, Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) studied 387 undergraduate students who took a service-learning course, which included a service immersion experience trip that occurred during a fall or spring break. The researchers found that, while diversity content knowledge was helpful, it was informal interactions and novel experiences which provided the greatest support for participant diversity attitude change. The study recommended that, “To help promote student growth, higher education practitioners and faculty should facilitate diversity experiences that are contrary to students’ expectations” (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012, p. 197). This coincides with Gurin et al.’s (2002) theoretical framework of campus diversity experiences, which will be discussed below, that incorporates the importance of cognitive disequilibrium in facilitating student cognitive growth. As it is difficult to assess whether an experience is contrary to student
expectations without asking the students themselves, the qualitative nature of this study was a necessary approach to this investigation.

**Random Roommates**

At some college and university campuses (e.g., Duke University Student Affairs, n.d.), policies require new students to be paired with random roommates (rather than allowing students to select who they share their room with) in an effort to help students engage with those different from themselves (Hudson, 2018). While some studies indicate positive results from these initiatives (Camargo, Stinebrickner, & Stinebrickner, 2010; Martin, Tobin, & Spenner, 2014; Stearns, Buchmann, & Bonneau, 2009), simply placing students from different backgrounds in the same living situation does not ensure they will have positive interactions.

There is a need for campuses to provide structured opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and identities to learn how to interact positively with each other and other cultures. Given that negative interactions with students of diverse identities can actually reinforce (rather than reduce) stereotypes (Allport, 1954), administrators may be doing more harm than good if they are mandating diverse interactions without providing adequate supports for positive interaction. These types of negative interactions can also be stressful and emotionally damaging for students, prompting ethical questions about whether these policies are helpful or harmful if improperly implemented (Hudson, 2018).

**Incoming Student Diversity Programs**

As higher education institutions have recognized the importance of new student diversity attitudes and engagement behaviors, colleges and universities have also created programs specifically to address diversity education for first-semester students (Masterson, 2017). In addition to incorporating diversity education into new student orientation, some universities have
created a separate diversity requirement which new students complete at the start of their first semester.

Following student protests over racial incidents and lack of responsiveness by administration at the University of Missouri, the university implemented a required diversity program called Citizenship@Mizzou that all first-year undergraduate and graduate students must complete (Douglas & Little, 2017). Likewise, the University of Wisconsin implemented a program called “Our Wisconsin” in 2017 for all incoming students to learn about “identity, culture, and micro-aggressions” (Chun & Evans, 2018, p. 170). There appears to be little scholarly work around the efficacy of these types of first-year programs but assessment results of one of them show promise in helping students be more open to diversity and increase interest in diversity discussions (Sun, 2017).

**Conditional Experiences of Diverse Interactions**

While the efficacy of these diversity programs varies based on the type of educational intervention, there are also conditional experiences of diversity education and diversity interactions based on student background and identities. In particular, the effects of cross-racial interactions for students has been shown to vary across racial and ethnic identities of student subgroups: White students may benefit more from diversity curriculum and engagement than their Black, Latinx, and Asian peers (Engberg & Hurtado, 2011; Mayhew et al., 2016). White students may be benefiting more from diverse interactions because students of color are pressured into the role of educator, due to microaggressions on the part of majority-identity students (Morrison, 2010). This is troubling as it adds to the stressors already present for students of color experiencing racial battle fatigue, especially if they attend a predominantly White institution (PWI; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).
College Outdoor Adventure Programs

Diversity-focused outdoor adventure trips are unique within the realm of campus diversity interventions, but many universities offer outdoor adventure programs (such as the outdoor recreation program which houses DIVE) in some capacity (Poff & Webb, 2007). College outdoor adventure programs can vary widely depending on the size of the university, the physical location of the campus, and the campus organization in which the program is housed (i.e., as a part of a student affairs division, recreation department, or academic department). Due to these varying factors, it is difficult to make generalizations about all programs of this type. Certain outdoor adventure programs offer greater opportunity for social interactions among diverse students by the nature of the activity. For example, students climbing at an indoor climbing wall in a campus recreation facility may only interact with a few pre-existing friends during their time at the wall. Conversely, students participating in a week-long, spring break backpacking trip who only know one or two other people on the trip may be forced to interact with the other 10-12 participants, student trip leaders, and professional staff (Pate et al., 2015). As a final example, students participating in a high ropes challenge course might be exposed to this type of outdoor adventure experience with an existing student organization group and may develop stronger bonds with their peers, but not make any new social connections during the program.

Due to this wide variety of program designs, this portion of the literature review will concentrate on existing research of programs that have aspects similar to the DIVE program. That is, the literature search concentrated on those studies which include previously unfamiliar peers and programs that occurred in an outdoor setting over a number of days on a continuous outdoor experience. This means that the focus of this review will not include attention on
challenge course programs, semester-long outdoor adventure courses, informal climbing wall participation, and the myriad of other outdoor adventure program options that are possible within a college campus environment. Prior to discussing evidence related to the outcomes of outdoor recreation and college outdoor adventure, specifically, a brief background of college outdoor adventure programs themselves will be addressed.

**Traditional College Outdoor Adventure Programs**

As mentioned previously, college outdoor adventure programs are offered in a number of contexts on college and university campuses across the United States. Historically, the first college outdoor adventure programs were formed as clubs by students within student unions, the first of which being the Dartmouth Outing Club which was formed in 1909 at Dartmouth College (Hooke, 1987). The Dartmouth club was followed soon after by the founding of similar programs within student unions at Williams College, Allegheny College, and the University of Wisconsin - Madison (Poff & Webb, 2007). While early college outdoor adventure was solely for student recreation, current programs have a variety of purposes and organizational structures. These types of programs may still be housed organizationally within student unions, but may also be a component of campus recreation departments, student organizations, outdoor orientation programs, student leadership programs, or as part of an academic department (Bell, Gass, Nafziger, & Starbuck, 2014; Speelman & Wagstaff, 2015). Recreation and wellness may be the focus of the program, but programs might also be academic in focus: students might register for an outdoor adventure physical education course or simply sign up for one or more outdoor adventure trips through a campus recreation program. Students may also pursue outdoor education as an undergraduate or graduate major.
Although quantifying the total number of college outdoor programs is difficult, due to the wide variety of program designs, a relatively recent census (Poff & Webb, 2007) found 236 programs within college and university settings, which outnumbered the 51 other types of nonprofit outdoor adventure programs (i.e., municipal, military and independent non-profit organizations). This suggests that higher education accounts for a large percentage of the organized outdoor recreation which occurs within the U.S. I have personally interacted with numerous students who were experiencing outdoor recreation for the first time on a college outdoor adventure activity. Programs still represent a wide variety of institution types as when they were founded, ranging from large, public, research-intensive institutions (like the university in this case study, the University of Wisconsin - Madison, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, or the University of Georgia, for example) to small, private, liberal arts colleges (such as Davidson College, Whitman College, or Lewis and Clark College; Poff & Webb, 2007).

As college outdoor adventure programs are often offered through campus recreation departments (and this is the case for the DIVE program in this study), it is important to briefly mention the history and organizational makeup of campus recreation departments. Similar to college outdoor adventure programs, the first campus recreation departments were formed at the beginning of the 20th century and often include aquatics programs, intramural sports programs, sport clubs, fitness equipment and classes, camps, adaptive programming, and personal training, in addition to outdoor recreation (McFadden & Stenta, 2015). Students generally have access to recreation facilities included as part of their campus fees and are able to exercise in fitness areas or play basketball on courts, but are also frequently able to sign up for outdoor trips, rent outdoor recreation equipment, climb at an indoor climbing wall, and participate in teambuilding on a campus challenge course (Pate et al., 2015).
**General Benefits of Outdoor Adventure**

Although literature addressing the benefits of college outdoor adventure is limited (Andre, Williams, Schwartz, & Bullard, 2017), there is extensive literature that is related to the outcomes of recreation, generally, and outdoor recreation, specifically. Hattie, Marsh, Neill, and Richards (1997) conducted an extensive meta-analysis of 96 outdoor recreation studies, which included 151 unique samples and 1,728 effect sizes. In categorizing the outcomes of outdoor recreation from these studies, the researchers found six broad categories, two of which were academic performance and interpersonal skills (a necessary prerequisite for students engaging in informal interactional diversity). The study found that the effects of outdoor recreation were likely to last over time after the outdoor recreation experience had concluded.

More recently, Richard Louv summarized a large body of research related to the positive benefits of outdoor recreation on interpersonal development, self-esteem, creativity, environmental awareness, and other developmental qualities in his book *The Last Child in the Woods* (2008). As the title implies, this book focused on younger children and adolescents, rather than (traditional) college-aged young adults. There are, however, a number of studies (e.g., Breunig, O'Connell, Todd, Anderson, & Young, 2010; Cooley, Burns, & Cumming, 2016; Loeffler, 2004) which address these types of benefits for this age group and have potential impact on openness to diversity and interaction with diverse peers.

**Outdoor Adventure for Diversity and Intergroup Outcomes**

A few studies (Breunig et al., 2010; Cooley et al., 2016; Seaman, Beightol, Shirilla, & Crawford, 2010) have identified group contact-related outcomes of outdoor adventure, which highlight the potential of these types of programs to be used for diversity interventions. In a study of 101 sophomore and junior students at a college in upstate New York, Breunig et al.
(2010) measured the impact of outdoor recreation on the students’ perceived sense of community, a construct often explored in relation to diversity and openness to diversity (e.g., Neal & Neal, 2014). The students in this study were divided into 14 groups and each group spent seven days in a camp setting with each other and six days on a wilderness canoe trip together. The Perceived Sense of Community Scale and the Group Cohesion Evaluation Questionnaire were administered to students prior to the program, during the program, and after the program. A subset of the total sample (23 participants) also participated in focus group sessions (Breunig et al., 2010). The researchers found that sense of community increased throughout the program based on themes of group membership; influence of individuals on the group; integration and fulfillment of needs; and shared emotional connection. Although the researchers noted the limitation that students involved were all recreation majors, this finding suggests that outdoor adventure trips may provide a context for meaningful group experiences among college students.

Additional evidence for the positive group-related outcomes of participants on outdoor adventure experiences comes from researchers at a British university (Cooley et al., 2016) who studied participants on a two-day outdoor adventure course. In this study, 238 students took part in a course which included canoeing and orienteering (activities common on outdoor adventure trips) and were assessed on their groupwork skills, including interpersonal groupwork skills. A survey was administered prior to the outdoor adventure course and immediately afterward to measure students' perceived groupwork skills and attitudes about groupwork and group self-efficacy. Among the findings, researchers found that participants had an increased positive attitude about groupwork. While not directly related to diverse contact, these findings suggest
that participation on college outdoor adventure trips can have direct impacts on student’s group interactions and perceptions.

Although not a higher education study, Seaman et al. (2010) sought to understand the influence of an outdoor adventure-based diversity education program for a group of 82 young people and measured their openness to diversity. Participants recruited for the program were between 13 and 19 years-old and included Black, White, Latino/Latina, and Asian participants. The group lived together for a week at a retreat center and participated in adventure-based activities, in addition to community service projects and unstructured free time with each other. The researchers (Seaman et al., 2010) administered the School Interracial Climate Survey midway through the program and the Miville-Guzman Universal-Diverse Orientation Scale, Short Form (MGUDS-S) both the first morning of the program and on the final night of the program. The MGUDS-S was used to assess any change in the openness of participants to engaging with others from different groups, including participant’s “(a) comfort with differences, (b) seeking a diversity of contact with others, and (c) relativistic appreciation of oneself and others” (Seaman et al., 2010, p. 214). The entire group in the study saw increases in their MGUDS-S scores over the program duration, with White students’ showing the greatest increases in their scores (the authors cited the higher likelihood that White students would have more racially homogeneous backgrounds than other students as a potential reason for this).

These quantitative studies on outdoor adventure (Breunig et al., 2010; Cooley et al., 2016; Seaman et al., 2010) all suggest that participants may be impacted by the group aspect of their experience in ways that go beyond the direct experience of outdoor adventure components. These findings are consistent with experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015), which posits that abstract conceptualization occurs after direct experience as a component of optimal learning and
growth: while the concrete experience with peers might be kayaking, backpacking, teambuilding, or other activities, upon reflection the group aspect of the experience may be more influential than the activity itself.

Supporting the potential group and individual growth themes of college outdoor adventure from a qualitative lens, Loeffler (2004) conducted a photo elicitation study with 14 students who had recently participated in one of a number of college outdoor adventure trips, including backpacking, rock climbing, whitewater kayaking, and sea kayaking. Through analysis of 511 photographs that were taken by these participants, in addition to follow-up interviews, Loeffler (2004) found three major themes: spiritual connection with the outdoors; connection with others through outdoor experiences; self-discovery and gaining perspective through outdoor experiences. Illustrating the theme of connection with others, the researcher quoted a participant who said, “I just thought [the trip] taught us so much about ourselves and just how we interact with people” (Loeffler, 2004, p. 545). These findings indicate that, even in the midst of natural beauty and fun activities, the group experience and interpersonal connections may be a fundamental aspect of college outdoor adventure trips.

Summary of Campus Diversity Intervention and College Outdoor Adventure Literature

This literature review has identified the primary campus diversity interventions and outcomes associated with these programs. Formal diversity programs, such as intergroup dialogue and diversity workshops, have shown positive benefits for decreasing student intergroup divisiveness (Gurin et al., 1999), increasing a sense of commonality across identity group differences (Gurin et al., 1999; Gurin et al., 2004), recognizing the systemic inequities associated with privilege and race (Bowman et al., 2016), increasing the interest of students in understanding different cultures and races (Cole & Zhou, 2014), and experiencing increases in
openness to diversity (Jayakumar, 2008). Despite these positive results, multiple studies (Antonio, 2001; Cole & Zhou, 2014; Jayakumar, 2008) found that the impacts of interracial interactions were stronger in producing positive outcomes or that these interactions strengthened the outcomes of formal programming. While there is scant research on the diversity outcomes of college outdoor adventure programming, there is more robust evidence (e.g., Hattie et al., 1997) supporting the powerful interactions that can occur between individuals and groups in outdoor adventure settings. If outdoor adventure experiences can lead to improved sense of community (Breunig et al., 2010), increased interpersonal groupwork skills (Cooley et al., 2016), increased openness to diversity (Seaman et al., 2010), and heightened feelings of connection with others (Loeffler, 2004), informal interactional diversity in such a setting may be powerful for student participants. The exploratory nature of this case study (Yin, 2017) allowed for all themes former participants and staff found valuable about the DIVE program, but the literature reviewed here provides an active dialogue between the findings of this study and the corpus of college diversity intervention and college outdoor adventure research. To guide this investigation and analysis, relevant theoretical frameworks from each body of knowledge were used.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Two theoretical frameworks were used to conceptually guide this study, as well as inform the interview protocols used. The first theory, specific to diversity research, is Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences which predicts that students who engage in informal interactional diversity and classroom diversity will experience cognitive disequilibrium and resultant growth in diversity skills which can be measured through observable learning outcomes. The extent to which this growth occurs varies based on the frequency and quality of
these diverse interactions, in addition to student background with diversity and the structural diversity and institutional characteristics of the college the student is attending.

While this theory of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) explains a process of cognitive changes from diversity, experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) details the process of individuals engaging in an activity, reflecting on the experience of the activity, developing an abstract conceptualization of what was learned through the experience, and then applying this experiential learning in other contexts.

**Theory of Campus Diversity Experiences**

Building on intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) and other foundational theories of psychology (Erikson, 1946; Piaget, 1965, 1971), Gurin et al. (2002) proposed a theory of campus diversity experiences and the effect of these experiences on psychological development. This theory posits that college students are at a prime developmental stage to form new beliefs and attitudes about diversity, based on the age of traditional college students and their stage in cognitive development. Specifically, when students leave behind their familiar home backgrounds and frequently are entering new campus environments with new people and novel experiences, they are likely to encounter experiences that are unexpected and that lead to cognitive disequilibrium.

Piaget (1971) termed this process of disequilibrium as one in which “discontinuity and discrepancy spur cognitive growth” (Gurin et al., 2002, p. 13). Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory states that this cognitive growth is most effective when the student’s background characteristics (i.e., pre-college school and neighborhood, previous diversity experiences, content knowledge of diversity) are different from the college environment which they are entering. Attending college
in an environment similar to the student’s home environment may not provide the conditions necessary for diversity experiences to initiate cognitive growth.

Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences proposes that structural diversity is a necessary precondition for student cognitive growth to occur, but students simply being put in the same place as diverse others is not sufficient to ensure they will interact outside of their familiar identity groups. Students need to be exposed to informal interactional diversity with diverse peers, which may include “informal discussions, daily interactions in residence halls, campus events, and social activities” (Gurin et al., 2002, p. 11). The impact of these interactions depends not only on them being positive in quality but also relies on them being frequent to provide maximum benefit for students (e.g., a White student interacting with a Black student once during their fall semester when they happen to sit next to each other in class is probably not going to be a meaningful interaction for either of them).

**Figure 2.2.** Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences.

In addition to informal interactional diversity (which Gurin et al. stressed is most important for cognitive growth associated with campus diversity experiences), classroom
diversity is another type of experience which can benefit student growth and development. Classroom diversity includes content knowledge gained of diverse communities and cultures (e.g., taking an African history class) and also interaction with diverse peers in the classroom. This theory of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) is diagrammed in Figure 2.2, showing that students bring background characteristics to campus diversity experiences (which are supported by having a structurally diverse campus and supportive institutional climate) and engage in informal interactional diversity and classroom diversity which initiates cognitive disequilibrium, leading to growth and measurable learning outcomes.

In their 2002 study, Gurin et al. validated their theory of campus diversity experiences using data from a national study (CIRP at UCLA) and a survey of students at the University of Michigan. The national study data included surveys from 11,383 students at 184 institutions who were surveyed when they started college and again four years later. The Michigan sample included 1,582 students who were also surveyed at the beginning of college and again four years later. The researchers controlled for student background characteristics, such as gender, high school GPA, parents’ education level, and racial composition of their high school and college, in addition to the structural diversity and selectivity of their college or university. The study confirmed that informal interaction diversity was more important than classroom diversity for learning outcomes measured. Specifically, intellectual engagement, self-assessed academic skills, and importance placed on citizenship engagement were all positively related to informal interactional diversity.

The DIVE program relies both on diversity content knowledge and formal curriculum (part of classroom diversity in Gurin et al.’s framework) in addition to informal interactional diversity throughout the trip. This made the theory of campus diversity experiences an ideal
framework to use in investigating the extent to which participants found the diversity curriculum valuable versus the informal interactions that occurred in the van while travelling, in tents at night, or around meal tables each day. Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory informed the interview protocols (see Appendices) for this study, but also was used to compare facets of the DIVE program with other campus diversity interventions. For example, intergroup dialogue courses include large amounts of diversity curriculum and facilitated discussion, but not as much opportunity for informal interaction.

**Experiential Learning Theory**

Kolb’s theory of experiential learning (1984, 2015; see Figure 2.3) provided the second conceptual lens for this study. Experiential learning theorizes that participants do not automatically learn from direct experiences they have. Rather, following the experience, individuals must have an opportunity to reflect on it. In a higher education environment, this could be initiated by a faculty or staff member through group discussions, journaling, or course assignments, for example. This reflective observation may then lead to abstract conceptualization, where the learner recognizes that what they learned from the experience can apply in other contexts. Lastly, the individual ideally uses this learning to undertake active experimentation with their new knowledge. In campus diversity experience example, a college student attends one multicultural student event, reflects on the intercultural learning and friendly peer interactions, recognizes that this positive intergroup contact could occur in other settings or events, and actively experiments by attending other types of multicultural events or student organizations.

Experiential learning has been diagrammed by Kolb (2015, p. 51) and is shown in Figure 2.3. The outer circle of this diagram represents the cyclical process that a learner goes through
while gaining new knowledge from experience. Through this cycle, the learner encounters the four quadrants described above: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Connecting these quadrants of learner experience are two dialectics which create tension between the action and reflection, as well as the experience and abstraction, that the learner moves through. The learner engages in both grasping the experience (through concrete experience and abstract conceptualization) and transforming the experience (through reflective observation and active experimentation), as shown with double arrows in Figure 2.3.

While the primary research questions for this study were focused on the program itself and not the growth of the learner, experiential learning theory offered a lens for investigating participant experiences which provides information on the trip and program overall. Rather than simply asking questions of participants about what happened on the trip, experiential learning theory informed the questions that pertained to whether students have reflected on their experiences and any knowledge they have developed related to their trip experience.
Much like Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences, experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) was built on the work of influential educational and social psychologists, most notably Lewin (1951), Dewey (1938), and Piaget (1970). Experiential learning theory has been criticized for its lack of incorporating social and political constraints into its model of individual growth (i.e., for being too individually focused; Kolb, 2015). To address this concern, Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory was used to take into account the background characteristics of students, institutional environments, and experiences external to the individual that influenced or constrained individual learning. For example, when considering Kolb’s (1984, 2015) model alone, studying an individual college student experience with a peer of a different race might not take into account the institutional environment of the college and whether diverse interactions are supported. When applying Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory, the institution as well as the backgrounds of each of these students must be considered as part of cognitive growth and educational outcomes.
Since Kolb (1984) studied and wrote his initial work on experiential learning theory, a large body of research has been published (e.g., Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001) across a number of fields using this theory, including education, management, psychology, and information science among others (Kolb, 2015). Numerous outdoor adventure studies (e.g., Beames & Brown, 2014; Cooley et al., 2015; Daniel, Bobilya, Kalisch, & McAvoy, 2014; Harper & Webster, 2017) and program designs (e.g., Deane & Harré, 2014; Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014; Martin, Breunig, Wagstaff, & Goldenberg, 2017) have relied on experiential learning theory, which made it an appropriate choice for an initial theory to explore this case.

Experiential learning theory was used to inform the semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendices B, F, and H) and focus group protocol (Appendix I). These protocols not only asked about the concrete experiences of participants, trip leaders, and the program founder, but also whether these individuals had reflected on their experiences, conceptualized them, and applied them in other settings (Kolb, 1984, 2015).

**Synthesis of Theoretical Frameworks**

In summary, the theory of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) accounted for the factors which were considered with participant perspectives on diversity (and diversity programs). Student background characteristics (e.g., pre-college school and neighborhood demographics, diversity content knowledge and experiences, previous outdoor recreation experience or lack thereof) greatly impacted how students perceived their DIVE program experience. Additionally, some student participants had also experienced other diversity interventions and multicultural programming while in college, impacting aspects of the DIVE program that stood out to some students more than others. Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) provided the theoretical framework that was used to explore how past participants,
trip leaders, and program staff perceived the DIVE program. Both theories informed interview protocols and analysis throughout this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) program at a large, research-intensive, public university in the Southeastern U.S. This case is considered instrumental (Yin, 2017) as it represents a unique program type within the fields of college outdoor adventure and campus diversity interventions. To my knowledge, based on numerous attendances at professional conferences and searching the literature, I am unaware of another university program which offers a diversity-focused outdoor adventure trip like the DIVE program. Given the need for qualitative research into how students experience diversity interventions (Shim & Perez, 2018), this study contributes to the literature on diversity in higher education and to both practitioners who are responsible for diversity and also college outdoor adventure professionals. The DIVE program, which has operated for seven years as a component of the university’s outdoor recreation program area, will serve as the bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) for this study.

The following research questions guided this qualitative exploratory case study:

1. What are the experiences of college students who participate in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program outdoor adventure trip?

2. Which aspects of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program do participants, trip leaders, and program administrators perceive as most valuable for shaping openness to diverse attitudes and behaviors?

To address these research questions, this chapter will provide the rationale for using case study as the research design, summarize data collected and analyzed, and address how trustworthiness and triangulation were pursued to ensure the veracity of the study’s findings.
Given that this is a qualitative study and I as the researcher was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I then provide a positionality statement to address my relationship to the research topic.

**Rationale for Case Study**

Qualitative case study was the research design for this study with the DIVE program serving as the primary unit of analysis. Case study is an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given that this study explored a specific program and the perspectives of individuals about this program, case study made an ideal choice. This case is bound by the participants who have participated in the program since its inception seven years ago; the professional staff founder of the program; the student trip leaders who have facilitated the program with professional staff; the recreation department which offers the program; and myself as the current professional staff administrator of the program for the past four years of the program.

Although some case studies entail quantitative and qualitative methods, qualitative methods were used to form the data collection strategy of this study. Qualitative methods were used due to the exploratory nature of investigating this program as a unique program type within the realm of campus diversity interventions (Yin, 2017). Diversity-focused college outdoor adventure trips are a burgeoning campus diversity intervention design and the knowledge gained from individuals involved with this program since its inception helps determine what aspects of the program are salient for future study. The unique nature of this program also made case study a natural choice: without a base of literature exploring diversity-focused outdoor adventure programs, there were no preexisting instruments or already established protocols for the study to use. Case study was also an ideal choice for this project, given that one of the goals of this work
is to be useful for practitioners, which is a strength of case study analysis (Stake, 2005). A campus administrator is be able to read the findings of this study and have a good idea of how this type of program could be implemented at their college or university.

**Embedded Single-Case Design**

This case analysis of the DIVE program was pursued as an embedded single-case design (Yin, 2017). This case is an embedded design because there are multiple subunits of analysis within the broader DIVE case context. These subunits (see Figure 3.1) include previous participants from the 2013-2018 trip year groups (with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews), the 2019 trip year group (for which a focus group was conducted), student trip leaders within each trip year, the program founder, and myself as the current program administrator. Single-case design was used as this particular case represents an “unusual case” (Yin, 2017, p. 50); that is, there is only one program of this type but given that there are many universities pursuing diversity strategies (and that also provide outdoor adventure programs), it is a program design that could be implemented to foster diversity and inclusion on other college campuses.
Figure 3.1. Embedded single-case study design.

**Context of the Study**

The context for this case was North Carolina State University, a large, public, research-intensive university in the Southeastern U.S where I serve as the Assistant Director for Outdoor Adventures within the Department of Wellness and Recreation. During the period in question (2013-2019), the university population showed little variance in overall enrollment from 24,833 undergraduates and 9,507 graduate students (34,340 total) in academic year 2012-2013 (North Carolina State University, Office of Institutional Research and Planning, n.d.-a) to 24,150 undergraduates and 10,282 graduate students (34,432) in academic year 2017-2018 (North Carolina State University, Office of Institutional Research and Planning, n.d.-b). Within the university’s organizational structure, the division of academic and student affairs encompasses traditional co-curricular programs and services (i.e., University Housing, Student Involvement,
Leadership and Civic Engagement), in addition to academic programs and departments, including Health and Exercise Studies, the Music Department, the Office of Undergraduate Research, and other units.

As part of the university’s division that includes student affairs, the campus recreation department provides both fitness and recreation programming and services, in addition to wellness outreach and coaching. Among its program areas, the department’s outdoor recreation unit offers open-signup outdoor trips for students, an outdoor recreation gear rental service, an indoor climbing wall, and a challenge course high- and low-ropes course teambuilding program. As of 2019, the program is staffed by three professional staff, including an assistant director and two coordinators (one of whom is in charge of the trips and rentals facets of the program, with the other supervising the climbing wall and challenge course areas; I am the current assistant director of this program).

**DIVE Program History**

An in-depth discussion of program specifics is included in Chapter 4, but a brief summary of program history will be provided here. The DIVE program was started by a professional staff program coordinator within the outdoor recreation program area in 2013. The DIVE program was originally started with funding from a grant provided by the university’s diversity and inclusion office. In addition to the grant funds, hiking boots and socks were donated to the program by a local outdoor recreation gear store where the university is located and jackets and warm hats were purchased by the outdoor adventure program (so that a lack of proper gear was not an impediment for potential participants). The department funded the remainder of expenses for food on the trip and personnel expenses for student trip leaders who helped lead the trip.
In all but the first trip year, students were invited to apply to the DIVE program through general announcement on university email lists and in classes, as well as through multicultural student centers and other campus departments. After being selected, trip participants attend two pre-trip meetings prior to the 9-day trip. On the trip itself, participants engage in outdoor adventure activities as well as diversity curriculum and discussions with other participants about social justice, identity, and diversity issues at the university. During the first days of the trip, participants discuss aspects of their own identity that are important to them and hear about the identities of other participants to gain an understanding of identity salience and intersectionality. Later in the trip, the curriculum turns to more challenging topics, such as systemic oppression, privilege, and (in)equity in education. Near the end of the trip, students are encouraged to discuss diversity issues specific to their university how participants can be active in building and sustaining inclusive campus communities.

During the first three years of the program, each trip was led by the program founder (a former professional staff member in the university’s outdoor adventure program) as well as two student trip leaders. All three of these trips used backpacking and rock climbing in the Appalachian Mountains (within a half-day’s drive of the university campus) as the primary outdoor activities. In the fourth year of this program, I assumed management of the university’s outdoor recreation program and I have been the primary trip leader during the subsequent four years of the program. During the fourth through seventh year of the program, trips have still included diversity curriculum and discussions, but outdoor activities were changed to canoeing and kayaking (the fourth year in the Florida Everglades and the fifth through seventh years on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana). Additionally, in the fifth and sixth year of the program, I was joined not only by a student trip leader, but also an accompanying university professional staff
member from a campus unit outside of campus recreation (the Office of Student Conduct and the College of Natural Resources, respectively). Although the change in program leadership, destination, and activities could be seen as a limitation of this study, I believe it is a strength: if participants experienced similar themes across these years, then it is more than likely due to overall program design, curriculum, and interaction with diverse peers rather than factors associated with a particular destination or trip leadership.
Table 3.1
*Trip years, locations, participants, trip leaders, and staff across the duration of the program.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Year</th>
<th>Location of Trip - Primary Activity</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th># of Student Trip Leaders</th>
<th>Primary Professional Staff</th>
<th># of Other Professional Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Western North Carolina - Backpacking</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Program Founder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Western North Carolina - Backpacking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Program Founder</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Western North Carolina - Backpacking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Program Founder</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Florida Everglades - Canoeing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Current Administrator</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Louisiana Gulf Coast - Canoeing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current Administrator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Louisiana Gulf Coast - Canoeing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current Administrator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Louisiana Gulf Coast - Canoeing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current Administrator</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>72 participants</td>
<td>10 Trip Leaders</td>
<td>Two Administrators</td>
<td>Three Other Professional Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pilot Study**

I conducted a pilot study in the spring of 2017 to assess the potential for previous DIVE participants to present “information-rich cases” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 97). Three previous participants of varying genders, racial identities, and trip years were interviewed using a
semi-structured interview protocol (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Individuals interviewed had participated in the DIVE program either a year or two years prior to being interviewed. Despite the time that had elapsed since their trip, participants were able to recall very specific details of their experience and conversations with peers on the trip. While the pilot study used a different theoretical framework and interview protocol than the current study, the interviews conducted support the value of interviewing previous participants as a rich source of data collection.

**Data Collection**

As the case of the DIVE program has multiple groups of individuals involved in different roles (i.e., student participants, student trip leaders, professional staff), these different perspectives were interrogated to provide an in-depth and detailed analysis of the case. This provided triangulation of different realities experienced with the case by these individuals (Stake, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection used, meaning that an interview protocol guided questions that were asked, but I as the interviewer asked follow-up questions that were relevant to the purpose of this research project and the experiences of research participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This allowed for inductive data generation (Jones et al., 2013), in which interviewees were able to share themes and anecdotes which were most relevant to them without being constrained by pre-set survey choices, for example. Previous participants and program staff had the freedom to share their stories of how they experienced the DIVE program trip; how it was experienced in relation to other diversity experiences and/or diversity education; and whether the DIVE experience informed their conceptualization of diversity engagement since the trip (in line with experiential learning theory; Kolb, 1984, 2015).
All participants received benefits to participate in the study as outlined in each data collection section below. This included tangible incentives (i.e., gift cards) to thank individuals for their time and perspective. It also included the opportunity for participants to be informed of the status of the research, so that they may also gain the knowledge produced from this study. Given the benefits of reflection after experiences (Kolb, 2015), there also may be a less tangible benefit in that participants may gain by mentally processing past memories. Participants may also benefit by knowing that the program may be improved through the perspectives they contributed.

**Overview of Data Collection Timeline**

Following submission and approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I arranged to interview the former professional staff founder of the program during July of 2019. Email invitations were then sent to individuals who participated in the DIVE program between 2013 and 2018 with a link to a short interest survey (see Appendix C and D). An email (see Appendix E) was also sent to students who participated in the program in the spring of 2019 with an invitation to participate in a focus group in August of 2019. Email invitations were sent to former students who served as student trip leaders between 2013 and 2019 (see Appendix G). Student trip leaders were invited to respond by email with their interest in participating, due to the small size of this group (a total of 10 individuals served as student trip leaders during the seven years of the DIVE program. Interviews with previous participants and trip leaders, in addition to the focus group with 2019 trip group participants were conducted between July and August of 2019. As specified previously, interview summaries were created following each interview with transcription and data analysis following the completion of interviews in September and October of 2019.
Interview with Professional Staff Program Founder

The professional staff program founder is not currently involved with the DIVE program, but has remained in contact with a number of the program’s participants and expressed interest in participating in this research project (A. Gray, personal communication, January 30, 2019). I conducted a one-and-a-half hour interview with the program founder, Dr. Ashley Gray in July of 2019. Dr. Gray was able to verify program history and any incorrect knowledge I had of the program’s founding and initial activities prior to my administration of the program. The interview was guided by an interview protocol (see Appendix B) that first asked questions related to program history, but then turned to questions related to the program founder’s observations of participant experiences on the trips and also their correspondence with participants since the trips.

Interviews with Previous Participants

Semi-structured interviews were held with 23 previous participants from the 2013-2018 years of the DIVE program, from a total group of 62 students who participated in the program during these years. Participants from every trip year were interviewed, ranging from two to six participants from each trip year (see Table 4.4 for the distribution of participants interviewed across trip years). In addition, an interview was held with one participant from the 2019 trip year who was unable to participate in the 2019 trip group focus group due to availability. A diversity of gender and racial/ethnic identities among participants was represented (see Table 4.3). To recruit participants for this phase of the study, I sent a recruitment email (see Appendix C) on June 19, 2019 with a link to a short survey (see Appendix D) to gather individual interest in participating in the study. An incentive of a $20 Amazon gift card was used to motivate
participants to engage in the research study. Of the 28 students who filled out the survey, all were invited to participate in the survey and 24 followed up to schedule interview times.

Individuals who participated in interviews were asked questions guided by both theoretical frameworks used in this study: Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences and Kolb’s (1984, 2015) experiential learning theory. The interview protocol of eight questions is included in Appendix F. To demonstrate the link between the interview protocol and the theoretical framework being used, Table 3.2 summarizes the content of each question and which aspect of each theory is informing the question. As noted by Gurin et al. (2002), student background characteristics related to diversity are driven by a wide array of factors, including school and neighborhood diversity composition, parental education level, high school academic attainment (due to advanced placement and other educational opportunities often being majority-White spaces; Klopfenstein, 2004), classroom diversity experience in school, and a number of other pre-college factors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question Content</th>
<th>Theoretical Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Please tell me your initial impressions or memories about being on the DIVE trip.</td>
<td>Experiential learning theory - reflective observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What aspects of interacting with other group members stand out in your memory?</td>
<td>Campus diversity experiences - informal interactional diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiential learning theory - reflective observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you recall any of the formal activities or discussions you engaged in with the group (that were facilitated by trip leaders)?</td>
<td>Campus diversity experiences - classroom diversity*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How does the diversity of other participants on your trip compare with your previous experiences interacting with people of different identities? In other words, did you consider your DIVE trip group to be diverse?</td>
<td>Campus diversity experiences - student background characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What opportunities did you have for informal contact and conversations with other group members (i.e., not formal discussions).</td>
<td>Campus diversity experiences - informal interactional diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What aspects of the trip did you find the most valuable (either formal activities, places that the trip visited, or people you interacted with throughout your trip)?</td>
<td>Research Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Did you have other experiences with diversity education or programs in college?</td>
<td>Campus diversity experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Since the trip, can you describe any reflections you’ve had on it or any ways in which you’ve used what you learned on the trip?</td>
<td>Experiential learning theory - abstract conceptualization, active experimentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Campus diversity experiences - learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* While this trip does not occur in a physical classroom setting, the formal discussions and curriculum on the trip include diversity content knowledge that would be considered classroom diversity within Gurin et al.’s (2002) theoretical framework.
Due to the often complex nature of individual experiences with diversity, narrative questions provided an opportunity for participants to share how they experienced interactions with individuals of different backgrounds and identities, in addition to formal diversity education (if applicable). Accordingly, previous participants were asked questions related to their experiences on the DIVE trip to inform understanding of the case, but also questions related to their previous experiences with diversity programs and diverse interactions (given the importance of student background characteristics and previous diversity experiences). As the DIVE program is the focus of this study, questions about individual narratives involving diversity programs will be asked to put the DIVE program in context with other diversity interventions (if applicable for the individual).

As Gurin et al. (2002) identified structural diversity, informal interaction diversity, and classroom diversity as components which lead to cognitive disequilibrium and growth, the interviews then turned to these aspects of participant’s college experiences as well as their experiences in the DIVE program. Questions were asked related to participant interactions with others on the trip, their engagement with activities and curriculum, and any reflection they had on the trip or subsequent diversity experiences. The protocol also included questions that were asked related to participants experiences with campus diversity outside of the DIVE trip (i.e., if a student had a wide array of experiences with multicultural student organizations, diversity town halls, ethnic studies courses, or other campus diversity experiences, they likely would have a different experience with the DIVE trip than a student who did not have these other experiences with diversity).

As mentioned previously, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and I asked follow-up questions to try to obtain stories and program details that were most important
to participants and their experience with the program under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews were completed between July 15 and August 14, 2019. The interviews ranged in time from 24-66 minutes in length and were held either over the phone (21 interviews), in-person on campus (two interviews), or online via Skype (one interview) at the choosing of the interview participant and a day and time that were convenient for them. Recordings and transcripts were saved in a secure university Google Drive storage space to which only I have access.

**Interviews with Previous Student Trip Leaders**

I interviewed 4 previous student trip leaders, again using a semi-structured interview format with an initial interview protocol (see Appendix H). Previous student trip leaders were sent a recruitment email (see Appendix G) on July 16, 2019 soliciting their interest in participating in this study. Of the 10 previous student trip leaders in the program, four expressed interest in the study and participated in a phone interview. These interviews were held between July 23 and August 21, 2019, ranged from 33 to 53 minutes, and were all held over the phone at the choosing of the interview participant. Given that the total number of student trip leaders since the program’s inception is a small group of only 10 individuals, the diversity of identities represented but includes limited gender and racial/ethnic diversity (see Table 4.5). Additionally, two previous student participants involved in the study also served as student trip leaders in the year following their participation, so six out of 10 previous trip leaders from the program were interviewed. These individuals were asked about both their participant and trip leading experiences.

While a diversity of race, ethnicity, and gender identities was considered as part of recruiting these participants, a purposeful stratification sampling strategy was used (Mertens, 2015), focused on having previous student trip leaders from different trip years represented. The
reason that fewer numbers of previous trip leaders were interviewed (in comparison to participants) was both due to the small overall number of previous trip leaders and that the primary focus of the research questions was on the participant experience. Student trip leaders were asked questions related to their observations on the trips and what they witnessed the participants experiencing, but the personal experiences of the trip leaders themselves was not the primary focus of this research study. Perspectives of previous student trip leaders and professional staff are discussed as “non-participant units of analysis” in Chapter 5 below.

**Focus Group with Recent Trip Participants**

While the individual interviews with previous trip participants captured what was memorable about the trip and reflective observations from participants over time (Kolb, 1984, 2015), I also conducted a focus group of more recent trip participants to investigate direct experiences of participants. Participants from the 2019 trip year were invited to participate in a focus group by email (see Appendix E) on July 10, 2019 and all 10 participants from this trip year expressed interest in participating. One participant was unable to attend the focus group due to studying out of the country at the time, so participated in an individual semi-structured interview instead. I facilitated this focus group on August 20, 2019 at an on-campus location and the session lasted one hour and 20 minutes. Individuals who participated received a $20 Amazon gift card in addition to a lunch of Thai food that was served at the focus group. The focus group was held in a meeting room in one of the libraries on the university’s campus, so that it was convenient for participants to attend.

A focus group was used for this phase of data collection for a number of reasons. The perspectives on the program provided by this group provided a point of comparison for the individual participant, trip leaders, and program founder interviews (Stake, 2005). Additionally,
while I sought to conduct all interviews in a way that prioritized the voices of participants over that of my own, one benefit of focus groups is that they can create environments where the researcher holds less of a presence and power than in individual interviews (Mertens, 2005). This hopefully made it easier for participants to share what they experienced on the trip and not “sugarcoat” what they wanted to say. Lastly, the group dynamic of the focus group itself elicited discoveries and connections that individuals alone might not have recognized on their own (Mertens, 2005).

The focus group was conducted in a semi-structured manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) using a facilitation protocol (see Appendix I). Questions asked of the group were similar to those asked of individual participants (i.e., overall impression of the trip, memories of activities and discussions, informal interactions on the trip). Throughout the focus group, I sought to find what concepts the group held consensus on, as well as other concepts that may have been unique to individuals (Mertens, 2015). This helped determine the elements of the program which were commonly valued by participants in comparison to those which were more isolated.

**Interview of Myself as the Current Program Administrator**

The final piece of data collection was an interview of myself by a colleague to collect my observations and experiences of the DIVE program. I define myself as an embedded unit of analysis (Yin, 2017) due to my multiple roles involved with the case under study. I am the current program administrator, in addition to serving as the head trip leader for the past four years of the trip, as well as researching this program as a doctoral dissertation study. Rather than treat this as a hindrance, I believe this has strengthened the study as I have thoroughly situated and investigated my past and present experiences with the program.
A colleague from my doctoral program interviewed me in person at the campus library on July 16, 2019. The interview used a protocol (see Appendix J) I created, but I encouraged the interviewer to ask follow-up questions that would best help inform the research questions and purpose of this study. The interview lasted 67 minutes and I followed the same process of transcribing and coding the interview as with the other interviews and focus group that were part of this study.

Data Analysis

After each participant interview was finished, I immediately wrote a summary of the participant’s DIVE trip experience to attempt to capture the overall intent of what I perceived the participant was trying to convey (the important points they were trying to make). This served as one form of memo’ing to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, as described below (Jones et al., 2013). Following this initial summarizing, I transcribed each interview, first using Otter.ai automatic transcription software. I then listened to each transcript to correct and verify that the text matched up with the audio of the interview. Afterward, I loaded interview transcripts into Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software on an Apple iMac computer.

Interview data analysis followed the Corbin and Strauss (2008) approach to reading interviews, coding them to find concepts, identifying broad categories or themes, and finally looking for axial codes amongst the data that indicate relationships and patterns. Throughout each of these steps, I engaged in writing memos to develop a dialogue with the data and also to assess the extent to which my own personal experience with outdoor adventure and diversity might influence my analysis of participant and trip leader experiences (Jones et al., 2013). Codes related to experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) and the theory of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) were considered a priori, but simply provided an additional lens
through which to view the data, rather than limiting concepts and codes that emerged (Jones et al., 2013). Specifically, I reviewed interviewed codes and concepts to analyze whether the phases of each theory were present or there were information-rich units of analysis which fit one, or both, of the theoretical frameworks holistically (see the “Theoretical Framework Analysis” in Chapter 5).

After interviews were coded for these dimensions, I compared each interview to the summary I created to identify whether the coded interview was consistent with the overall intent of the research participant in conveying their experiences. I then emailed each participant the narrative summary created of their DIVE experience, along with the interview transcript and asked participants whether these were an accurate reflection of their perspective on the DIVE program. This served as a form of member checking to aid in providing greater internal validity for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, numeric counts of concepts were tallied using Atlas.ti to identify any prevalent themes that did not emerge previously.

**Trustworthiness**

I sought trustworthiness for the study through a few different approaches. First, I employed reflexivity throughout the research process by situating myself in the work (Berger, 2015). I did this by identifying my positionality and relationship to this research topic through memo’ing, in addition to holding my self-interview early in the research process. This is in line with Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) recommendations that researchers first place themselves autobiographically in the topic being studied. Following all interviews and throughout the study, I also memo’ed reflections I was having on the research to reflexively identify any conflicts or questions I was having and to draw out any underlying biases I had. This was particularly
important given my relationship to the research, and to maintain openness to new findings and realizations (Jones et al., 2013).

The second approach I used for ensuring trustworthiness in the data was in the data analysis phase of the research. I compared the summaries that I wrote of each interview immediately after its recording to the themes I identified during data analysis. This helped me see if the overall meaning participants were trying to impart matched up with the codes and themes found through data analysis. Throughout this data analysis process, I considered ways in which I am an insider (and share personal experiences with the topics being analyzed) and ways in which I am an outsider, or have no experience with them (Chavez, 2008). For instance, I am an outdoor enthusiast which makes me an insider with this topic, but most of the participants involved in this study were new to the outdoors, making me an outsider to many of the participants’ experiences as beginners to outdoor recreation. This helped me determine topic areas which I needed to learn more about that were foreign to me (or conversely, topic areas which I had experienced but might be different based on my identity or personal background).

Lastly, I sought trustworthiness through member checking with participants from the interview portions of data collection (Jones et al., 2013). As described above, this entailed emailing participants the narrative summary I had created from their interview as well as the transcript of their interview. I asked participants to review the transcript for accuracy and to comment on whether the narrative summary captured the important aspects of their DIVE experience and what they were trying to convey through the interview. All participants confirmed this member check by email.
Ethical Considerations

Given my dual role as the administrator who oversees the DIVE program and the primary investigator in this study, it is important that I address the ethical considerations I have taken to both address my positionality and provide confidentiality to participants in this study. The potential for my own bias is high and I have included a detailed positionality statement below to address the ways in which I balance my own personal investment in this program (and these participants) with the trustworthiness of conducting a truthful study. In addition to my positionality, I have considered a number of facets which could put participants at risk (were confidentiality compromised) and have employed multiple strategies to address these risks.

Although it is frequent in case study research to anonymize the research site, there are exceptions to this strategy in certain situations. There are a number of previous education studies which have revealed the research site and context of study, while keeping participant identities confidential (e.g., Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015; Jensen & Jetten, 2016; Speed, Kleiner, & Macaulay, 2015), including previous dissertation studies (e.g., Brooks, 2015; Pendleton, 2015). While it is common to anonymize research sites and programs, there are questions whether anonymity is the right approach in a number of cases (Walford, 2005), particularly when the research site or program cannot realistically be made anonymous. If you were to search “North Carolina State University diversity outdoor” in Google for example, the DIVE program is the second search result, demonstrating that a reader could easily deduce the program in this study by connecting my employer with the topic of the study. Due to these factors, I have chosen to include both the name of the university in this study, as well as the program name (i.e., the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience). I have made this choice in part because I believe it would be disingenuous and misleading to inaccurately describe my connection with
this program. If I were to anonymize the university and program, it would limit the veracity of the research which partially relies on my positionality and researcher lens to give insights into the curriculum, participant experiences, and my own reflections on the program. It is important that readers of this research know that I administer this program and, given that this is part of my current job at North Carolina State University, I do not believe it is possible to conceal my connection to it (i.e., you can read my institutional affiliation on the front page of this manuscript and in my biography). Additionally, a key benefit of this study is its implications for higher education faculty and staff. The ability for faculty and staff to look up more information (and, in future years after this study is published, current information) about the DIVE program is a valuable resource for the benefit of this knowledge area, which is largely under-studied.

In choosing to share the identity of the institution and program, I considered the principles of doing no harm and fairness advocated in case study research ethics (Simons, 2009). To do no harm, I have considered the consequences for participants if the data and personal details they shared with me were to become public. In situations where participants shared personal details that may impact their lives were the interview data to be publicly identifiable, I have not only disconnected their details from their name (i.e., by giving them a pseudonym), I have also referred to the details of sensitive events as generalities without a pseudonym attached. For example, in one year of the trip, a participant came out as gay to the rest of their trip group. I have not only separated this detail from the participant’s identity and demographics, I have also referenced this event without an associated trip year. I have chosen to not associate any participant pseudonyms with the trip years in which they participated (in situations of sensitive information being shared or not) to provide further participant confidentiality. Instead, I have
referred to their participation in the early backpacking years of the program or the later canoeing years, rather than indicating the year they participated.

To account for fairness to participants throughout this study (Simons, 2009), I have considered who gains or loses when information is disclosed from this study. I believe the participants, trip leaders, program found, and myself all benefit from the release of this study. The reason I believe this is that all participants I interviewed were proud of their accomplishment completing the DIVE trip and were excited to talk about it. Participants chose to apply and participate in the trip and no participants expressed regret about their experience during this study. Many participants expressed interest in reading the study and knowing more about the experiences of other DIVE participants outside of their trip year. To ensure that I accurately recorded and represented the experience of participants, I sent each participant a summary of what I captured from their DIVE trip experience and the transcript of their interview (and each participant confirmed this summary). This served as a form of member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and added another element of fairness in verifying the participant’s perspective that I am representing (Simon, 2009).

In addition to these broad strategies for conducting an ethical study, I have addressed ethical considerations procedurally throughout study execution. I provided each participant with information on informed consent through the invitation emails (Appendices A, C, E, and G) and recruitment form on the Qualtrics web survey (Appendix D). Through these communication mechanisms and the interview protocols used in this study (Appendices B, D, F, H, and I), I stressed that participants could withdraw from the research study at any time for any reason and let them know the ways in which I would protect their confidentiality (Josselson, 2007). This included storing any data gathered for this study on a secure section of my university’s Google
Drive file storage space to which only I have access. I assigned pseudonyms to each participant in this study (see Table 4.3) and maintained them in a securely stored Google Sheet file that matches pseudonyms to each participant’s real name.

As noted above, given the small number of participants that were in each trip year group, I have separated participant pseudonyms from the years they participated. Instead, I have indicated through the findings in Chapter 5 whether the participant was involved in the first three years of the program (when groups went backpacking in Western North Carolina) or the later four years of the program (when groups went canoeing in Florida or Louisiana). This creates context for participant quotes and aspects of program destination, activities, or leadership which may impact the findings, but makes it more difficult for a reader to deduce someone’s identity from their quotes and demographic information.

In communicating with participants, recruitment emails (Appendices A, C, E, and G) and all communications emphasized that participation in the study was voluntary and, particularly for current university students, would have no ramifications should those invited choose not to participate. To my knowledge, I have no pre-existing dual relationships with former DIVE participants who were invited to participate in the study (i.e., I do not teach any classes or supervise any work positions that would involve issues of power imbalance or coercion with research participants). I also acknowledge that diversity issues and discussions around social justice can be sensitive for individuals and broached these topics with sensitivity towards the participants. I let participants know that they did not need to answer any questions which made them uncomfortable and they were welcome to end the interview at any time for any reason. This is reflected in the opening statement of the semi-structured interview protocols and focus group protocol (see Appendices B, F, H, and I).
I have identified the program founder, Dr. Ashley Gray, following her request to be identified in this study and resulting publications. This request was reviewed and approved by my university’s IRB office, as an addendum to this study and included a separate consent form acknowledging her choice to be identified and risks and benefits of this choice. In addition to this being the preference of Dr. Gray, identifying her in this study benefits her as the founder of this program and provides proper acknowledgement of her contribution to this work. This is consistent with the fairness principle (Simon, 2009) which informed other ethical considerations of this study. Additionally, after consultation with my university’s IRB office, I requested permission from each of the student trip leaders I interviewed to identify the program name and research site. Given the smaller number of student trip leaders interviewed, there is a greater chance of their re-identification in comparison to participants in the program. I also provided them the opportunity to edit or redact portions of my interview with them. All of the student trip leaders gave permission for me to identify the program and research site in this study and resulting publications.

Based on the suggestion of my advisor, Dr. Joy Gayles, I also consulted with a peer to review this manuscript specifically from the vantage point of a “privilege check buddy.” Given my positionality (which is discussed below), I sought to check my status as a White male and interrogate language and logic that came from a stance of privilege. For example, in one initial version of my dissertation study proposal, I referred to microaggressions as “smaller-scale diversity incidents” (in comparison to aggressions such as violent hate crimes). Not only are microaggressions not “smaller-scale” for the individuals experiencing them, but even labeling them as microaggressions is problematic and indicates an assessment of value and privilege. My
privilege check peer reviewed my initial dissertation proposal and final full draft and provided helpful comments to improve this study’s trustworthiness.

**Positionality Statement**

As a White male engaged in diversity work, it is important to address not only my research worldview and positionality, but also my personal background that brings me to this research topic. While my postsecondary educational experiences have been at predominantly White institutions (PWI’s), I experienced a racially and culturally diverse upbringing as a younger person that has informed my appreciation of diversity. During my childhood largely spent in Chicago, Illinois, I was privileged to have a mother and father who stressed the importance of cultural engagement and the value of all peoples regardless of their race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Along with their prioritization of appreciating diversity, they brought me to experiences which provided the first sparks of what engaging with diverse peoples and communities can bring.

I remember sitting in a booth at a neighborhood bar and grill with my dad as he received tutoring in Lingala (an African language used in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) from a native speaker and friend of his. I remember the steamy tom kha soup that my family would order from Thai 55, a local restaurant that we frequented. I remember exploring the shops and restaurants of Chinatown with my family or the train rides I would take downtown with just my best friend, Nate, when we would observe or encounter people from a variety of backgrounds and racial/ethnic identities. My baseball team as an eight year-old included Black kids, White kids, first-generation American kids, and probably other ethnicities of which I was not old enough to be cognizant. It was on that same team that I was lucky enough to shake the hand of Harold Washington, the first Black mayor of Chicago and an important figure of racial progress.
in the 1980’s, during a baseball tournament. I was also lucky enough to have the University of Chicago campus and surrounding area resources available to explore as a kid, which likely exposed me to more culture and people from different backgrounds than I will ever be able to remember.

Although I had this exposure to diversity as a younger child, my high school years were spent surrounded mostly by other White kids in DeKalb, Illinois, a small city west of Chicago. I entered a period of stalled multicultural development that did not re-initiate until I was a staff member working at the University of Wisconsin. Through diversity trainings there, in addition to participating in a local, nonprofit leadership program, I began to recognize that I had largely been colorblind in my early adulthood and did not recognize the importance of race, equity, and social justice. Finding a community of diversity-aware peers, and instructing diversity topics, as an instructor with the North Carolina Outward Bound School further solidified my commitment to diversity issues. Afterward, my graduate work at the University of Georgia further opened my eyes to the importance of fighting for social justice, particularly in education.

Through these experiences, I have interacted with plenty of peers and colleagues who have not recognized the importance of diversity in society and seem to deny the inequities which persists in modern society. These people have more often than not been White, frequently well-meaning, but largely under-informed and complacent to issues of systemic oppression and marginalization. It has been interactions with these types of people which have both provided frustration and motivation for this work, as well as informed my research worldview. Additionally, I have been dismayed by the frequency of micro-aggressions and outright racism which have been prevalent in the United States, often driven by White fear and misunderstanding (e.g., Nash, 2018).
I believe that, while critical theories provide the foundation for liberating knowledge and scholarship from systemic oppression of marginalized voices and experiences, the way that I can best be of use to improving education is through the philosophy of pragmatism (Feilzer, 2010). I strive to provide new knowledge that is not only useful from an academic perspective, but also accessible to practitioners and change agents involved in the important work of diversity education. In this study, I have taken on the role of researcher as social justice bricoleur, weaving the pieces of the research that give a narrative and analysis that is as accurate, and also as useful, as possible (Denzin, 2012; Feilzer, 2010).

It is also important that I address my dual role and positionality as the researcher for this study and the professional staff member overseeing the outdoor adventure program in question. I am an outdoor recreation professional and have a deep love for the natural world and its potential benefits for society, broadly, and college students, specifically. Despite this current passion, I did not grow up as an “outdoorsy” kid. I came to appreciate outdoor recreation much later in life (after a first career in information technology). I think this helps me view outdoor recreation as a positive influence, but as one that I know is not always accessible or inviting. In this way, I am able to leverage my position as a partial insider (Chavez, 2008) with DIVE participants I interview. Based on my experiences, a number of participants on DIVE trips experience camping for the first time on their trip and do not have much previous outdoor experience. While I share the common experience of the trip with them, I am often an outsider to participants in terms of age, race, and experience with the outdoors and diversity curriculum.

I have also served as a volunteer and leader in an outdoor adventure professional association, the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE), which has helped me understand the uniqueness of the program under study and the priorities of college outdoor
adventure programs broadly. Many outdoor adventure professionals recognize the importance of diversifying participant attendance on their trips and programs, which can be verified by reviewing the schedule for one of the recent AORE (2018) annual conferences, where diversity engagement, research, and programming have been popular topics.

I have served as a trip leader for the DIVE program for four of its seven years, which has given me an informed understanding of what the trip entails. While this could be seen as a conflict of interest, the current study is not related to the strengths of the program or my abilities as a trip leader: the focus of this study is the diversity experiences and valuable components of the program, based on the perspectives of previous participants, trip leaders, and professional staff. This informs how I am oriented to this research and informed of the “possible human experience” (van Manen, 2016, p. 58) of the phenomenon but do not project my experience on others. Interview questions were framed to ensure that participants understood that negative experiences or challenging group dynamics are understandable aspects of a week-long trip with other college students from different backgrounds. In other words, I did not ask questions in a way that led students to simply reflect on the best parts of the trip or when they felt group interactions were ideal.

I also sought ways to monitor and manage my White and male identities throughout this work. Specifically, I am aware of the potential dynamic of being perceived as a trying to be a “White savior” (Denzin, 2014) in having a vested interest in a program and course of study that involves individuals of diverse racial, gender, age, and other identities. This is particularly a concern as this program is based in outdoor adventure, a disciplinary field and leisure pursuit which have been criticized for their “White, male, middle/upper-class, able-bodied history” (Warren, Roberts, Breunig, & Alvarez, 2014). Indeed, one of my primary goals in administering
and researching outdoor adventure programs and their potential as a campus diversity intervention is to create a more inclusive community within outdoor adventure itself. That said, I know that the outdoors has often been a space of trauma and horror for African Americans with a long history of slavery and lynching that is all too recent in memory and very much still present in the modern era of racial violence and systemic oppression (Johnson, 1998). These outdoor spaces have also been exclusionary and harmful by design: in the creation of U.S. national parks, a number of Native American peoples were displaced (Byrne & Wolch, 2009) and parks were often segregated spaces reserved for White people (Scott & Lee, 2018; Shumaker, 2009).

With this history in mind, my research into this topic (and work in the diversity field) is inherently problematic (i.e., I am a White person researching a domain that has often been exclusionary of people of color). To address this aspect of my positionality, I have sought to be attentive to the ways in which my identity reflects aspects of the White savior narrative through a few key points in this work. Throughout the interviews and focus group in this study, I attempted to listen to the underlying experiences of those involved without projecting my own narrative of the outdoors or this program on to what individuals were trying to say. In these interview spaces, I also acknowledged the power that I hold and have held, being affiliated with this university, responsible for administering this program, and conducting doctoral research. While analyzing data and writing up the results of this study, I also monitored and bracketed (Jones et al., 2013) my narrative and positionality with this program, the outdoors, and diversity while memo’ing. In this, I have tried to best represent the realities of the individuals who have been involved in this program rather than project my views of it.
Limitations

The focus of the DIVE program on diversity, somewhat ironically, represents the primary limitation of this study: since students are self-selecting to participate in this trip and its curriculum is focused on diversity topics, how is the perspective of these participants and trip leaders different than other college students? While the unique perspective of these individuals should certainly be considered, their involvement with the program makes them informed research participants who can best provide insight into the details of the program for this case study. Given that the primary unit of analysis in this study is the program itself, this makes the participation of these individuals ideal.

The participants who came on these trips largely did not have extensive engagement in other campus diversity interventions in college (i.e., diversity workshops, multicultural coursework, or service-learning programs). Even for participants who did have previous diversity intervention experience, these experiences helped them provide insights into how the DIVE program was alike or different than other programs in which they had participated previously. Interview protocols gave participants ample opportunity to expand on their diversity experiences and attitudes independent of this trip to inform what type of student background characteristics with diversity (Gurin et al., 2002) were informing reflection on the program.

Another limitation to this study was my positionality as the researcher investigating this program but also an outdoor adventure professional and the administrator in charge of supervising the program under study. I addressed my positionality earlier in this chapter, including ways in which I have leveraged my perspective as a “partial insider” (Chavez, 2008, p. 475) to this program, rather than letting it distract me from the core research questions that were asked in this study. While I have a vested interest in the DIVE program and a large amount of
knowledge about it, I have not been a participant in this program and have not been an undergraduate student at the institution where the program is housed. This makes my knowledge limited and I certainly deferred to the participants and student trip leaders involved to best inform the pertinent details and outcomes of this program as a campus diversity intervention.

Throughout collecting and analyzing these data, I encountered challenges related to my role as the program administrator. In particular, one of the first interviews I conducted was with a participant who had glowing things to say about the program and her experience. On July 15, 2019, I memo’d about this interview and recognized that I needed to be careful to not project my own wishes for the program on the participants that I was interviewing (i.e., hope to see every participant’s experience as life-changing from this program). My self-interview was also scheduled around this time and it was helpful to record and reflect on my aspirations for the program and be watchful of whether my own themes were creeping into participant interviews and data analysis. I was able to reflect on the activities that I thought would be impactful (the “Identity Trees” activity, for example), the goals of the trip, and what I thought had been impactful for participants. This helped me keep in check my own response to participants as I interviewed them and to monitor how I reacted, so that I did not go looking for interviewees to mention certain activities or preferred aspects of the trip.

This self-interview was also a helpful time to recognize the outcomes of the trip that were less due to my and the student trip leader’s facilitation and more due to the group dynamic on the trip. This was the first time I recognized the campfire dynamic that empowered participants to take ownership of the group discussion and to share their backgrounds and values. “We have end-of-the-day discussions around the campfire,” I said during the self-interview, “and although
we do have conversation starters, I think what comes out of those discussions is something much more rich than the formal question that we introduce” (Nathan, Interview).
CHAPTER 4: DIVE PROGRAM CURRICULUM AND TRIP PROFILES

As this is a case study of the DIVE program, background information will help fully understand the bounded case of this program, in addition to the perspectives of participants and trip leaders. This chapter will provide information on the program’s foundation and administration; details of diversity curriculum and outdoor activities facilitated across the length of the program (since these were modified throughout the seven years of the program’s operation); and profiles of each trip year, which will highlight significant events, weather, and other trip variables that impacted participants’ experiences. Information for this chapter was partially gained through document analysis of program itineraries and curricular guides. I am the current administrator of this program and responsible for administering access to these documents. There is no information included here that I would not otherwise share with colleagues outside of our department and institution.

Program Founding and Management History

The DIVE program was founded in 2013 as part of the outdoor recreation unit of the university’s campus recreation department. The professional staff program founder, Dr. Ashley Gray, was serving as a coordinator within this unit and developed this program based on previous experiences working with a similar program as part of Outward Bound, where she was a full-time instructor. I was also an instructor at the same Outward Bound school where Ashley worked and the information shared in this section will be based both on my own experiences instructing there, as well as my interview with Ashley. All courses at this Outward Bound school include a diversity progression as part of the curriculum, but the school also runs a diversity-specific program, called the Unity Project. This program recruits students from different inner-city high schools in the same geographic region, takes them on a five-day
backpacking course, and then the student participants form a student organization at the high school they attend to address issues of diversity and understanding within their school community. From instructing two Unity Project backpacking courses, my experience has been that the trip groups intentionally try to bring together students of diverse races, genders, socioeconomic statuses, and cultural backgrounds. Throughout the course, participants engage in diversity and social justice curriculum, some of which has been incorporated into the DIVE program.

Ashley was drawn to multiple facets of the Unity Project and its capacity to facilitate social change. When she described the program, she said,

The Unity Project used the wilderness as a catalyst for a peer diversity club that was then formed back at the school systems. So at that time, it was Charlotte, Chapel Hill, and Asheville and Atlanta. And what attracted me to the school at first was that it combined social justice education with wilderness education. And so that was really impactful for me. Prior to that I have always been really passionate about social justice and about outdoor [education] and have a personal philosophy that there are three assumptions in my outdoor career that I always had, which is that the outdoors has inherent value for all, regardless of background or identities or familiarity. So that was an assumption that I had about outdoor ed. The second assumption I always had and still have with me is that there exists real barriers that inhibit full inclusion of some folks, based on their social identities, than others and then the third assumption is that these barriers can be dismantled (Ashley, Interview).

After working with Outward Bound and Unity Project courses, Ashley then took a full-time job at the university in question. As part of this role, she supervised the outdoor trips
program. This program regularly takes students backpacking, kayaking, hiking, climbing, and engages them in other outdoor recreation activities, but is not an academic program and did not regularly incorporate curriculum into trips (beyond outdoor skills lessons) when Ashley was administering this outdoor trips program. During Ashley’s first year working with the university outdoor recreation program, she received an email announcement of a mini-grant available through the university’s diversity and inclusion office. She described making the connection between her Unity Project history and the mini-grant offering,

And [the diversity mini-grant announcement] came my way. And to be honest, I just kind of jumped... I think my head at that time was just - I think people would describe me as a go-getter. And I saw it come through and I was like, “well, this would be a good chance to try to do a Unity type program at [the university].” And so I did a little bit of research, nothing extensive - I didn't go through my doctorate program yet - it was like really small, but basically, kind of tying this idea that outdoor ed, or the wilderness setting inherently… I use this language but it might be problematic now, but was like the great equalizer. It was one of the less-contrived spaces that you could put a group of folks who have different backgrounds and identities together and work toward a common cause. And in that, when you're in those settings, people are able to, if they are not their authentic self and real, they quickly become - and with good facilitation - quickly become authentic and real with each other. And so I made that argument - which is why I think social justice and wilderness education kind of aligned easily, and then also made the argument that we could reduce some of the barriers, such as cost... so it's not just the cost of the trip itself, but it's all the hidden cost, whether it's clothing, gear, etc., that we could use some of the money to help with that… (Ashley, Interview).
In addition to the university’s diversity mini-grant, Ashley formed a partnership with a local outdoor recreation store and hiking shoe manufacturer. This partnership helped Ashley acquire a set of hiking boots for use by program participants (which were also made available to non-DIVE outdoor recreation trip participants). Combined with rain jackets and warm clothing, which the outdoor recreation program already owned, DIVE participants had all of the outdoor-specific clothing and gear they would need for the trip being offered.

**Recruitment of Participants**

After addressing the barriers of trip cost and access to adequate clothing and outdoor gear, Ashley modeled participant selection on the Unity Project at Outward Bound. She recruited representatives from multicultural student organizations across campus, in order to facilitate cross-organization collaboration following their DIVE trip,

I wanted to get groups of folks who probably wouldn't interact very often together. So they weren't in the same major, they weren't going to be involved in the same student groups like we originally were trying to figure out okay, we're gonna’ have two folks from [the Hispanic student association], two folks from the Muslim Association, and two folks from the LGBT Center, and two folks like, from... you know (Ashley, Interview).

During the program’s first year, participants were recruited from specific identity groups and student organizations in this way, but starting with the 2014 trip year the trip was announced and anyone on campus could apply to attend the trip. During the 2014 and 2015 trip years, application selection was based on demographic data collected to comprise a group that was diverse in identity. During the 2016-2019 trip years, participants were selected by comprising a group from a diversity of campus experiences and based on the quality of applications, but specific demographic identity information was not collected as part of the program application.
In all years, student trip leaders, as well as professional staff, participated in the participant selection process.

**Diversity of Participants**

The demographic identities of participants are not being reported for each demographic year to protect the confidentiality of participants involved in this study (e.g., hypothetically, if there were only one student of international origin who participated in the program in a given trip year, by connecting reported events of the trip year with participant quotes below, it would be possible to identify this individual). Additionally, rather than recording the specific structural diversity of a trip year in trip records, diversity of identities was reported in the aggregate (i.e., the report for the trip year recorded identities present on the trip, but not how many participants of each identity attended the trip.

Given the diversity of identities involved in this study is (reported in Table 4.3) and that almost half of all participants involved in the DIVE program participated in this study, there has been a high degree of structural diversity among participants across the years of the program. Participants in this study included a diversity of gender identities among previous trip participants, with 20 participants identifying as female, 12 participants identifying as male, and one participant identifying as nonbinary. A diversity of racial and ethnic identities was also present with 10 participants identifying as White or Caucasian; eight participants identifying as African American or Black; five participants identifying as Hispanic, Latinx, or Latino; four participants identifying with multiple racial or ethnic identities; three students identifying as Asian, South Asian, or Indian; one student identifying as Middle Eastern; one student identifying as Native American; and one student identifying as Dominican-American. Participant year in
school at the time of their trip was also mixed with five freshmen, six sophomores, 15 juniors, four seniors, and three graduate students.

Trip Locations and Outdoor Activities

The first three years of the trip included backpacking and rock climbing in Western North Carolina as the primary outdoor activities. The fourth year of the trip took students canoeing in the Florida Everglades. The most recent three years of the trip traveled to the Louisiana Gulf Coast where students canoed as well. All of these trips included camping every night and learning about outdoor skills as key common activities. Additionally, since this program was based on Outward Bound courses, and both Ashley and myself have served as Outward Bound instructors, there are other commonalities related to how groups take on progressive leadership of their experience.

Training-Main-Final

All Outward Bound courses, and the DIVE trips, contain a progression of increased group and individual participant responsibility across the duration of a trip. This progression is referred to as Training-Main-Final. In the training phase, the instructors (instructors and trip leaders will be terms used interchangeably) spend much of their time teaching and giving groups the requisite skills to survive in the outdoor environment. This generally comprises the first 48-72 hours of a trip, but could be longer or shorter depending on the overall trip duration and the goals of a specific trip.

After the group demonstrates competence, both in outdoor skills and their ability to work together and support each other emotionally, the instructor considers them to be in the main phase of their trip. In this stage, groups are self-sufficient and make most decisions independently, including larger decisions (such as navigation or possibly where to camp for the
night) and smaller decisions (such as when to have meals and take breaks). Instructors are still present with the group, but will only be a resource when asked and will generally not take on a leadership presence unless risk management necessitates it.

During the final phase of trip group development, groups are wholly independent for their trip experience. Instructors may still travel with the group, but will often walk well behind the group (on backpacking trips) and will not be a readily accessible resource. At this time, instructors may intentionally withhold information (i.e., navigational decisions) and allow the group to make mistakes that could produce educational moments. For example, during the final phase of a backpacking course, groups may get lost and hike late into the night, but the group has been trained to a level of competency that they are more than capable of surviving in the environment. In this situation, the instructor would only intervene if a risk management concern arose and would try to let the group solve their own problems rather than step in and save the day. Instructor judgment and trust by the group (which needs to be established during the training and main phases of the trip) are crucial elements for this phase of the trip to be successful.

The Training-Main-Final progression was present across all years of the DIVE program. Although the level and type of training and activities were different (e.g., continuous backpacking travel vs. canoeing day trips and car camping), the goal of giving the group autonomy and responsibility for decisions was still very much a component of all trip years. Training-Main-Final primarily informed the outdoor activities of these trips, but also influenced the diversity curriculum progressions and discussions as well. As the trip progressed, the trip leader might take more of a backseat in discussions or even turn over some facilitation and activity choices to the group.
Backpacking in Western North Carolina: 2013-2015

During the first three years of the DIVE program, groups traveled to the Pisgah National Forest and went backpacking as the primary outdoor activity. Backpacking is an activity where the group loads all necessary group and individual gear (including food) into backpacks and hikes on a trail through a wilderness area. The group may stop and camp at a different location every night and may either end the trip where they began or hike towards a location where they are picked up and driven back to their original location. The mileage covered by backpacking groups vary substantially based on participant experience level, fitness, and the difficulty of terrain (i.e., higher elevations, rocky or uneven trails). Beginner groups may travel 2-4 miles in a day, whereas advanced groups may hike 10-12 miles between campsites. The term “campsite” is also relative to groups and locations: a campsite might just be a small opening to the side of a trail or in the middle of a field (and is often not a conventional car campsite with a designated tent spot and running water).

Given that backpacking requires group to be self-sufficient, there is a high level of skills instruction during the first two days of a trip. Participants need to learn not only how to put up tents or tarps, but also how (and where) to poop in the woods, how to make navigational decisions when there are forks in the trail, how to hang food so that bears cannot get to it at night, and how to purify water (among other skills). As part of the Training-Main-Final progression discussed previously, on DIVE trips groups take on responsibility for all of these routine tasks of backpacking travel.

During the initial trip years, the itinerary was designed for groups to camp overnight 6-7 days and spend two days at two of the intended camping areas (e.g., spend day one hiking to the first spot, spend day two hiking to the second spot, spend day three hiking to a third spot and stay
there for two days, and repeat a similar pattern alternating one-day spots with a two-day spot).
Due to the severe weather of the 2013 trip year, the group was on trail for five days and spent the last two days of the trip back on the university’s campus. The 2014 trip year also had a slight change in plans and spent a rainy rest day in a spot they had originally planned to move on from after the first day. The 2014 and 2015 trip groups both spent six nights on the trail as part of their trips.

Canoeing in Florida: 2016

When I took my position at the university in the summer of 2015, I was excited to administer the DIVE program as part of my responsibilities, partially due to my passion for diversity and social justice, but also because I had worked with Ashley and knew of her creating the program. As part of getting to know students at the outdoor recreation program, I asked students who had served as trip leaders (and in some cases, had been trip leaders and participants) about the program. Although I did not complete a formal needs assessment, my impression was that the trip had often been cold and challenging. While I appreciated challenge as an educational tool, I had also been doing a lot of thinking about how to make outdoor recreation more accessible for diverse populations and abilities. Part of this work was through various roles with the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education, the primary professional association which serves college outdoor recreation programs (in addition to municipal, military, and private outdoor recreation organizations).

These factors led me to choose the Florida Everglades as the destination for spring of 2016. I had previous experience leading trips to the Everglades and knew that it would likely be warmer than the mountains of Western North Carolina. I chose canoeing as the primary outdoor activity because it required less physical strength than backpacking and chose car camping
(where toilets and running water are close by) instead of backcountry camping as the primary camping style. I had originally planned to have a three-day backcountry canoeing portion of the trip, but these plans were altered due to a participant becoming ill.

**Canoeing in Louisiana: 2017-2019**

After I had a chance to get to know the university’s student population and priorities for the institution, I decided to add components to the program that might have broader appeal for the STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) who comprised a large proportion of the university’s students. This led to my decision to include environmental justice and climate change as a component of the program. These topics could be discussed not only through a diversity and social justice lens, but could also be approached with a science and engineering mindset by students who might be interested in the practical application of technologies to real-world problems. During the 2017 trip year, the group traveled to Louisiana for the first time. Given that some of the ways in which Louisiana is attempting to address the environmental catastrophe of coastal land loss are engineering solutions (e.g., diverting freshwater and sediment to rebuild sections of coast; dredging of sediment and physically rebuilding land mass; and installing physical concrete barriers to mitigate wave action from further eroding beaches and other coastal lands), I thought university students would appreciate learning the technical aspects of land loss in addition to the engineering attempts at solutions.

The choice of Louisiana as a destination was also somewhat happenstance: I met a fellow Udall Scholar in 2010 (when I received this environmental scholarship and attended a weekend retreat) who had made it her life’s mission to save the Louisiana coast. I did not think much about this until five years later, when I was on a plane flying over the Gulf Coast and saw the extensive network of barrier islands and salt marsh that are currently disappearing due to coastal
land loss. I thought that this environmental catastrophe could serve as an effective social justice lesson to accompany the diversity curriculum and activities that students were experiencing on the trip. This, combined with Louisiana being a warmer destination during the spring, led to it being a destination for the trip. Outdoor activities during these years have included day canoeing trips and car camping, but also have incorporated interactions with individuals impacted by coastal land loss. Groups have also visited New Orleans to learn how coastal land loss contributed to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the ways in which impoverished communities and people of color were disproportionately impacted by this storm and resultant flooding.

Throughout the founding and subsequent revisions of the DIVE program, the trips reflected the values that Ashley and I each held, in addition to what was most effective for participants. As part of this study, I reflected on whether Ashley’s philosophy that hard experiences tended to be the most effective was preferable to my views of making the trip more accessible and approachable. I also questioned how my and Ashley’s Whiteness influenced the design and accessibility of the program. In my positionality statement below, I address the legacy of outdoor spaces as White spaces and the danger in programs being seen through a White savior trope. Neither Ashley nor I have thoughts that DIVE trip experiences are opportunities we bring to under-privileged students who need them (which would be a White savior narrative), but there is always the risk of this dynamic.

**Program Curriculum**

Given that the DIVE program was based on the Unity Project program at Outward Bound, many of the activities that were part of the trips were adapted from Outward Bound diversity curriculum. The Outward Bound school where Ashley and myself worked required
instructors to include a diversity progression on all courses, so this curriculum and activities were not specific to Unity Project courses (though Unity courses certainly included more diversity curriculum than other courses). The diversity progression for all courses included a progression of individual diversity awareness activities, progressing to an awareness of group diversity, and finally addressing greater societal diversity and issues of privilege, equity, and social justice (designed to encourage positive action among participants). Although I changed or removed many of the activities on the DIVE program when I took over administration of it, this progression has been consistent throughout the lifetime of the program. During the diversity progressions shown for 2013 through 2015, these are notated with the headings Affirming, Building Community, and Cultivating Leadership and coincide with the Training-Main-Final progression.

**Diversity Curriculum on Trips between 2013 and 2015**

During the first three years of the program, DIVE trips used many of the activities which were used on Unity Project trips at Outward Bound (see Appendix K for detailed descriptions of activities and facilitation notes). A sample itinerary is presented in Table 4.1 and shows the activities facilitated across the duration of the trip and the phases of group progression associated with them. Not all years completed every activity and, as findings in Chapter 5 will reveal, certain activities were much more memorable to participants than others. Also, particularly during the first year when weather necessitated a change in trip plans, not all activities were completed on the day they were planned to be completed.

Among the activities that were memorable for participants, “If You Really Knew Me” stood out for multiple trip year participants. In this activity, the group gathers and sits in a circle, ideally around a campfire at night. One of the trip leaders explains that the group has reached a
point in the trip where they might have enough trust with each other to share parts of their identities or past which are challenging to reveal. This activity is generally facilitated mid-way through the trip, after members of the group have developed rapport with one another, but might be limiting their closeness with each other and keeping conversations safe. The trip leader then shares their own personal details that they want the group to know, starting each sentence with “if you really knew me.” For instance, “if you really knew me, you’d know that I dropped out of college the first time I attended.” After the trip leader shares, they invite the rest of the group to each share their own identities or stories.

Another activity that was memorable from the early years of the program was “Color Me Human.” In this activity, the trip leader spreads paint chips on the ground in the middle of the group. Participants are asked to pick a paint chip that was closest to their skin color. The trip leader then asks each individual to read the name of the color on the paint chip. Usually this results in laughter as participants read colors like “autumn prairie.” After all participants read their paint chip color out loud, they are invited to use this as their trail name or create a funny name based on the color. The activity is designed to be a light-hearted way of discussing race, but also as a way of addressing the social construction of race as an invented tool of oppression.

Another activity that was facilitated early on in the trips was the “Superhero Cape” activity. In this activity, the trip leader gives each group member a small piece (e.g., two by three feet) of bedsheet or other light fabric. Group members are then invited to draw words or images on their cape with markers that reflect their beliefs and backgrounds. The trip leader then invites participants to present their cape to the group and highlight beliefs and values that are important to them. Participants were then able to tie the cape to the outside of their backpack or hang it when setting up camp like a flag.
Table 4.1  
Sample diversity curriculum progression for trip years 2013 through 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day One (Training/Affirming)</th>
<th>Day Five (Main/Building Community)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trail Names “Color Me Human”</td>
<td>AM Journaling: <em>The Balanced Human</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Value Contract Revisited</td>
<td>Take a Stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarp Lesson: Access to Resource</td>
<td>If You Really Knew Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Space Norms in Crew Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triggers</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day Two (Training/Affirming)</th>
<th>Day Six (Final/Cultivating Leadership)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM Journaling: “I Was”</td>
<td>AM Journaling: <em>What can you do?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Stories in the Dirt</td>
<td>Action Continuum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applied Human and Ecology Lesson History</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day Three (Training/Affirming)</th>
<th>Day Seven (Final/Cultivating Leadership)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM Journaling: “I AM”</td>
<td>AM Solo- 3 hours: 6-month letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceberg</td>
<td>MLK and Malcom X: Ways of Leading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Trees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day Four (Main/Building Community)</th>
<th>Day Eight (Climbing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM Journaling “I AM Becoming”</td>
<td>Climbing Framing- “Anchors and Belayers that help you make change”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Resolution: VOMP (Vent Owning Moccasins Plan)</td>
<td>Final Debrief of Trip- So What? Plan for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stinky Fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diversity Curriculum on Trips between 2016 and 2019**

Between 2016 and 2019, the shift in adding environmental justice topics made it necessary to remove some of the activities that were facilitated between 2013 and 2015.

Additionally, adding on driving time also cut into the time available for activities (backpacking destinations were approximately a four-hour drive from campus in comparison to 12 hours to get student groups to Louisiana or Florida). A sample curriculum progression is presented in Table 4.2. Similar to the 2013-2015 years, not all activities were able to be completed due to weather or other trip variables and this also caused some activities to be completed on different days or times.

In addition to the environmental justice topics discussed below, participants also received a copy of the book “Howl of the Wolf” (Nacoste, 2012), which is based on qualitative research completed by a faculty at the students’ university. This text includes student quotes related to
campus climate and the intolerance experienced by racial and ethnic minorities at this primarily White institution (in addition to discrimination observed by students of all identities). Students are asked to read the first chapter of this book by the time the trip leaves and then groups discuss it on the first evening of the trip. This book helps create common understanding of the state of inclusion at the students’ university (i.e., even if White students have not observed discrimination at their school, reading the words of other students at their university who have experienced racial discrimination can create common ground for the group).

Additionally, simply because activities are present in Table 4.1 in comparison to Table 4.2 does not mean that they did not occur in some fashion. Outdoor educators are often faced with facilitating activities on-the-fly and pulling activities out of their “toolbelt” when the need arises. For example, conflict resolution may only be taught as necessary for a group rather than being taught at a specified day or time based on an itinerary written well before the start of a trip. Likewise, some kind of evening discussion is almost always a part of outdoor experiences of this type (particularly when led by instructors with Outward Bound experience). The absence of evening discussion topics in the itinerary presented in Table 4.1 does not mean an end-of-day discussion did not occur; it simply means that the instructor for these years did not feel the need to keep a placeholder for it on the itinerary.

One of the activities that stood out for participants during this period of the trip was the “Identity Trees” activity. In this activity, the group gathers in a circle and the trip leader gives instructions for each participant to make a tree in their journals that represents themselves (it does not have to be well-drawn!). Each branch of the tree represents a role or identity the participant holds. The trip leader then asks participants to draw seven branches on their tree and on each branch write or draw their identity respective of these categories: race or ethnicity;
geographic origin; family role; gender; role on campus; religious background; and wildcard identity (i.e., participants are able to pick one that had not been mentioned so far). For example, on my branches, I might write: white, midwestern to southeastern; son, brother, husband; man; staff and student; atheist; and seafood-lover. After participants create their tree, the trip leader invites them to show it to the rest of the group and highlight any parts of their identities they want to share more about. After each participant presents their tree, the trip leader has the option of asking debriefing questions. For instance, they might ask the group whether anyone was surprised by identities that were not present in their group or by the identities that some members of the group shared. The trip leader ends the activity by asking that the group respect that, just because a participant shared their identities with the circle, it is important for the rest of the group to respect that they might not want to discuss them outside of this activity space.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Category</th>
<th>Pre-Trip and Early Trip</th>
<th>Mid-Trip</th>
<th>Late-Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Progression</td>
<td>Individual awareness</td>
<td>Connecting to their immediate group</td>
<td>Relating to their broader environment and experience (and transferring what has been learned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and Inclusion</td>
<td>Trigger words and ground rules</td>
<td>Identity Trees</td>
<td>“Invisible Knapsack” (Privilege reading by Peggy McIntosh) Evening discussion: Micro (and macro) aggressions discussion - incidents at NC State?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>Canoe lesson</td>
<td>Discussion of Ungraded Produce and Agroecology Farm donation</td>
<td>Canoeing on Lake Ponchartrain Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment (Disappearing Coast)</td>
<td>Overview of coastal land loss at pre-trip meeting</td>
<td>Reading Chapter 1 from “Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast”</td>
<td>Gravy podcast episode “Reclaiming Native Ground” (about the Pointe-au-Chien Tribe losing traditional lands to coastal land loss) Visit with representative from United Houma Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit Grand Isle Visitor Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2
Sample diversity curriculum progression for trip years 2016 through 2019.
Incorporating Environmental Justice

As the environmental justice topic of coastal land loss was introduced in the trips, the trip curriculum included resources and external visitors to the group that could help the group understand this topic (and develop personal connections to it). This included podcast episodes played in the van while the group was traveling to different destinations. These included an episode of This American Life titled “Lower 9+10” (Glass, 2015), which documented the experiences of residents of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans as they recovered from Hurricane Katrina. There were also two episodes of the Gravy podcast, a production of the Southern Foodways Alliance, used on the trips, that related to coastal land loss in Louisiana specifically. These included the episode “Holding on to the Bayou” (Edge, 2015), about a commercial fishing family displaced by Katrina and the impact of coastal land loss on their family, and “Reclaiming Native Ground” (Edge, 2017), about the Pointe-au-Chien Tribe, who are losing their tribal lands to coastal land loss and being physically displaced by this environmental catastrophe.

In addition to audio podcasts, readings have been incorporated into the trip in recent years. These have included the first chapter of the book “Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast” (Tidwell, 2004). This book includes a broad overview of the ramifications of coastal land loss but also the varied causes of it (i.e., damming of the Mississippi; destruction of salt marsh by the oil and gas industry; and sea level rise caused by climate change). This reading is printed and given to participants at their pre-trip meeting and participants are required to read it prior to the group’s arrival in Louisiana.

The portions of environmental curriculum which are more difficult to detail are those of the discussions groups have had with Louisiana residents who are being directly impacted by
coastal land loss. As described in each trip year profile below, the individuals that groups visited have changed over the past few years, but the goal of introducing groups to people who are directly impacted by coastal land loss has remained the same. These have included the staff at the Grand Isle Visitor Center and Port Commission, who simultaneously welcome island visitors drawn to the natural beauty of the area and also oversee this major port on the Gulf Coast. This dual role accommodates interests of commercial and recreational fishing, as well as oil and natural gas extraction. Groups have also met a representative from the Nature Conservancy, which owns one of the last stands of forest on Grand Isle and is committed to saving the island from physically disappearing as well as educating individuals and communities on the ecological history of the island. During the most recent trip year, the group had a chance to meet with a member of the United Houma Nation Tribe. This tribe has had extensive tribal lands across coastal Louisiana, but is currently facing displacement due to coastal land loss, particularly in the community of Isle de Jean Charles.

**Trip Year Profiles and Pivotal Events**

Prior to considering the results based on perspectives of past trip participants, trip leaders, and program staff, the conditions and major circumstances of each trip year will be discussed. In addition to regular changes that come to a program while intentionally modifying it over the years, these changing circumstances make each year of the same program a unique experience. As weather, curriculum, accidents, injuries, and interactions with individuals outside of the group all impact trip experiences (and varied across the seven years of the DIVE program), the context of each trip played an important role in the group’s experience. For instance, if it was cold and rainy for your entire week-long outdoor trip, you would have a much different experience than a
participant who enjoyed sunny and warm days. In some cases, weather caused activities to be removed from the itinerary or changed.

Across subunits of analysis (i.e., participants, former trip leaders, professional staff), in some trip years there were pivotal events that all, or most, individuals on the trip mentioned. Some of these included sensitive information about individuals and will not be associated with trip years or participant pseudonyms and identifying characteristics. This included one trip year in which a participant came out as gay to the group (and was not out on campus up to this point). Participants from this year remembered this event and the diversity curriculum which prompted it (the “If You Really Knew Me” activity). Pseudonyms are listed with subunits of analysis below (see Tables 4.3 and 4.5) and can be referenced if there are questions about the identity characteristics of those quoted (e.g., someone learning of another participant’s sexual orientation may be influenced by background or identity characteristics).

This section will present summaries of each trip year, so that participant experiences can be understood within the context of the trip itself, including challenges encountered by each year’s trip group. The first three years of the DIVE program, 2013 through 2015, were led by the program administrator and founder, Ashley. The program design and activities were largely based on courses that Ashley helped lead through a diversity-focused program while working for an Outward Bound organization during the preceding four years before administering this program (Ashley, Interview). Additionally, recruitment of participants was primarily focused on multicultural student organization leaders during these first three years. Despite a detailed itinerary and curriculum progression, cold weather caused major changes to the first year of the program in 2013.
It snowed. It was harsh. It was a hard trip. And unexpectedly so, in the sense that… I think I like hard things. I do think we are capable of more than we know. That was, like I said, an impetus. The snow was harder - it wasn't unsafe - but it was harder than I initially thought. I remember that, like the water in the [water carrier] froze when we woke up. And it was five liters of ice. I mean, it was just wild (Ashley, Interview).

Due to the weather on the trip, the trip returned to campus two days early. Rock climbing took place at the campus climbing wall (instead of outside) and the program culminated with debriefing activities at a campus nature area. One of the participants experienced a panic attack on the trip, which was memorable to participants interviewed (an event which some participants perceived as an asthma attack). One participant recollected, “I remember the young lady who had the asthma attack, while we were in the middle of one of our hikes, that was a scary moment for a lot of us.” This quote is not being attributed to a specific participant, as participant pseudonyms are not being tied to trip years to protect individual confidentiality.

The following year of the program, 2014, also had significant challenges, including a participant who needed to be evacuated from the field due to a health concern. There were also challenges driven by group dynamics and making navigational decisions late at night (after the group got lost trying to find a water source and spot to camp for the night). One participant mentioned the weather as chilly, but the weather did not play a significant inhibiting role as in 2013, when plans were changed based on cold weather and snow. This seemed to also influence what participants prioritized about the trip. Participants also spoke about an activity where they made a flag which represented themselves and their values and also the “Identity Tree” activity.

Although only two participants were interviewed from the 2015, they both had sharp recollections of their trip experience. They both mentioned aspects of weather on the trip (chilly
and rainy), but neither made the weather seem like a significant inhibitor of group activities. One participant mentioned the group bonding as they persevered through rainy days, but not to the extent that it derailed plans as in the first year of the program. Memorable activities from this trip year included participants making a superhero cape, in addition to holding an impromptu poetry slam when most participants crowded into a small tent one night. One of the participants also reported a high degree of learning technical outdoor skills on the trip, possibly suggesting the group had more time to focus on activities and lessons, rather than simply surviving through difficult weather.

I came to the university in the summer of 2015, making my first year leading the DIVE program the 2016 trip year. As mentioned previously, I made the decision during this year to shift the trip further south to avoid winter weather and also increase the perceived accessibility of the trip (i.e., presuming that canoeing in Florida sounds less challenging than backpacking in Western North Carolina to students who do not have much outdoor recreation experience). Despite best laid plans, the 2016 trip year still had plenty of challenges, most notably a participant having gastrointestinal illness early on in the trip. This caused the backcountry portion of canoeing in the Florida Everglades to be cancelled in favor of taking the participant to the hospital, while the rest of the group did activities in camp.

Despite this challenge, participants and trip leaders from the 2016 trip year reported positive impressions of the trip and activities completed. Notably, the participant who got sick still reported benefits from the trip, as they were able to complete the trip after the hospital visit. Neither participant interviewed from this trip year had strong memories of curriculum completed, but both participants mentioned the importance of getting to know other people in the
trip group and learning about their backgrounds. They also mentioned the importance of the
setting of the trip and having the trip be an outdoor experience (both were new to camping).

During the 2017 trip year, the group spent time in and around New Orleans before
traveling Lafayette and surrounding areas (often referred to as “Cajun Country”). In addition to
camping and diversity curriculum activities, the group spent two days with a naturalist from
Louisiana State University’s Sea Grant program. This naturalist was also a lifetime Louisiana
resident and some of the group’s discussions related to his impression of the impacts of
Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on rural versus urban Louisiana. As part of this portion of the trip,
the group visited an alligator farm and frozen alligator meat processing facility. Both of these
visits prompted rich discussion about the need for people to rely on sources of income that may
seem strange or ethically questionable to non-Louisianan students.

Multiple participants from 2017 (and through 2018 and 2019, as well) mentioned
canoeing (an activity where one person paddles with one other person) as an important setting to
have one-on-one conversations and get to know another participant well. Participants
remembered the “Identity Trees” activity as one when they learned about the backgrounds of
others on their trip. Participants also remembered the environmental justice component of the
trip and were emotionally affected by specific moments, in particular when the group drove
through portions of New Orleans that they learned (through a museum visit and a podcast) were
impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

Despite the relative successes of the first Louisiana trip year, the 2017 trip year did not
include locations that spoke to coastal land loss as well as I was hoping they would for
participants: there were too many inland destinations and not enough time seeing the coast up-
close. In addition, time with the naturalist was valuable, but having discussions about the ethics
of the alligator meat industry, for example, was difficult in terms of drawing parallels to the university’s campus and more general diversity and inclusion topics. Because of this, I researched destinations and sought contacts for areas that were directly on the coast of Louisiana. This led to choosing Grand Isle, Louisiana’s only inhabited barrier island, as the trip destination for 2018. The 2018 trip year group still spent a couple of days in and around New Orleans, but then the trip drove south to Grand Isle (rather than southwest to Lafayette as in the year before). In Grand Isle, the group camped on the beach, met a representative from the Nature Conservancy (who was also a longtime Grand Isle resident), had a conversation with a visitor center staff member, and had other opportunities to interact with people who live on this island and know all-too-well of the impacts of coastal land loss.

Meeting these people on Grand Isle was memorable to both 2018 and 2019 trip years when they were interviewed. Participants from both years also mentioned that it was impactful waking up on the beach (these groups both spent three nights camping at Grand Isle State Park on the Gulf Coast side of the island) and seeing barriers designed to prevent beach erosion, in addition to the lights of hundreds of oil platforms on the Gulf horizon at night. Both groups also went canoeing in the salt marsh behind the island and learned about the seafood industry and the impact of coastal land loss on this fishing community.

While both 2018 and 2019 trip years had similar itineraries, 2018 encountered the challenge of strong winds and cold (which was difficult to handle when camping and cooking on a sandy beach). This caused the participant experiences of 2018 to somewhat mimic the 2013 trip year: participants mentioned group bonding through overcoming the adversity of weather and spoke about being appreciative of the trip more in retrospect and less so in the moment (a dynamic outdoor educators refer to as “Type II fun”). Possibly due to seeing the forces of wind
and water first-hand, participants from the 2018 trip year were particularly quick to relate to how much they felt for island residents faced with coastal land loss and the impacts of Hurricane Katrina.

In contrast to 2018, the 2019 trip year had warm and calm weather, for the most part. This dynamic of having an easier outdoor experience, combined with data collection for this year being in focus group format, made results from this unit of analysis particularly emotionally positive. All ten participants from this trip year participated in the study and the only participant who was not at the focus group (and instead, participated in an interview) could not do so because they were out of the country. The focus group consisted of many fond memories and lots of laughter. The group still relayed challenges however and, in particular, the aspect of spending every night camping outside was significant to this group that had little previous camping experience. The group appreciated nightly group discussions and interaction with visitors as particularly impactful. Most participants remembered a new trip activity as particularly important, when the group canoed to visit an oyster farmer at his lease; got an impromptu rescue when wind picked up; and ended the day having an oyster roast and learning to shuck raw oysters with the oyster farmer and his deckhand. The group also had an especially meaningful visit with a member of the United Houma Nation tribe, which is part of a community that is being displaced by coastal land loss and forced to move further inland in Louisiana away from their tribal lands.

While this section has highlighted the aspects of each trip year that stood out based on participant and staff interviews, as the common themes below will illustrate, participant experiences across trip years were more similar than different. Despite the varying weather, activities, and unexpected events, participants recalled the group experience, conversation, and
getting to know the personal backgrounds of other participants as the most impactful aspect of their trip. This was somewhat counterintuitive to my expectations, as I initially thought the 2013 and 2018 trip years may have different reported outcomes given the harshness of the weather and change in activities. The common programmatic elements which may cause this consistency in outcomes will be discussed further in the implications section of Chapter 6.

**Units of Analysis**

The units of analysis below (see Figure 3.1) were examined throughout data collection and the analysis phase. Data collected from each of these units of analysis were compared to each other to provide triangulation of the research questions focus (Stake, 2005): the participant experience and valuable aspects of the DIVE program. Consistent with Corbin and Strauss’ (2008) recommendations, I continuously considered the perspective of each unit of analysis by memo’ing while I interviewed research participants and transcribed these interviews, in addition to during coding and analysis (Jones et al., 2013). In this section, I will describe each unit of analysis and details necessary to share as part of demographic data (and showing the ways in which these participants were representative of the overall group from which they were drawn).

In addition, there were some cases in which analyzing a particular unit of analysis did not reveal the same emphasis on a program dimension as other groups (i.e., trip leaders and administrators seemed to find unstructured downtime and time in the van as less meaningful than trip participants considered these “activities’). Given the research questions that guided this research, I am not examining each facet of every unit of analysis, but focusing on the strands of congruence or incongruence where different units of analysis address the participant experience and aspects of the program.
Embedded Unit of Analysis 1: 2013-2018 Program Trip Participants

Of the 62 students who participated in the DIVE program between 2013 and 2018, 23 students were individually interviewed for this study (when combined with the 10 participants who engaged in a focus group or interview from the 2019 trip, 33 of the 72 individuals who participated in the DIVE program were involved in this study). Given that this is a small group in general and each trip year is only 9-12 students, results will be reported in a way that protects the identities of research participants. Rather than associating participant pseudonyms with trip year participated, only demographic characteristics will be linked to pseudonyms (see Table 4.3). These demographic data were collected when participants filled out the recruitment survey as described in Chapter 3. This will demonstrate that a diversity of perspectives is represented but will not compromise the confidentiality of participants. This is particularly important, given that personal backgrounds and identities were discussed on the DIVE trips and could be overly revealing if individuals were to be identified through this text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
In order to demonstrate that participant experiences from each year were examined, Table 4.4 lists the number of participants from each year who were interviewed as part of this study. While the 2015 and 2016 trip years had smaller number of trip participants represented in comparison to other years, these years were somewhat an anomalous in other ways. The 2015 trip year was the last year that Ashley led the program and occurred during her transition out of her administrative role with the university. The following year, 2016, was the only year the program traveled to Florida and trip plans were substantially modified from their design, due to a participant becoming ill early on the trip. Additionally, during this year, I was new in my role as a program administrator and still learning how best to run the DIVE program. Based on findings from this study, these trip years still seemed to produce notable outcomes for participants, but the fact that fewer research participants were drawn from them should not interfere with the understanding of this program and participant experiences as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tonya</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trina</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 (continued).
Table 4.4
*DIVE program destinations and participants interviewed by trip year.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Year</th>
<th>Location of Trip - Primary Activity</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>Participants Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Western North Carolina - Backpacking</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Western North Carolina - Backpacking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Western North Carolina - Backpacking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Florida Everglades - Canoeing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Louisiana Gulf Coast - Canoeing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Louisiana Gulf Coast - Canoeing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Louisiana Gulf Coast - Canoeing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 Trips</td>
<td>72 Participants</td>
<td>33 Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Embedded Unit of Analysis 2: 2019 Program Trip Group**

In order to balance potential power dynamics that can be part of the researcher-participant relationship in interviews, I conducted a focus group of the 2019 trip group year. Focus groups are also particularly useful in exploratory studies, such as this one, which can benefit from the group dynamic and energy of discussion (Jones et al., 2013). This trip group went canoeing and camping on the Louisiana Gulf Coast, as in the 2017 and 2018 trip years. The trip included 10 participants, a student trip leader, and myself as the program administrator and trip leader. All trip participants responded to my recruitment invitation for focus group participation, but one participant was unable to join the focus group interview. To accommodate their interest in participating, I arranged a one-on-one interview with them but data from this interview was still considered as part of the 2019 trip group unit of analysis.

Given that participants from this trip year would be easily identified by demographic characteristics if associated with a specific trip year, these participant pseudonyms and
demographic data have been included with the overall trip previous participant pseudonyms (see Table 4.3). In cases where findings from this focus group vary from participants in the rest of this study, I will summarize focus group findings or report specific quotes without attribution to keep participant identities confidential.

**Embedded Unit of Analysis 3: 2013-2019 Student Trip Leaders**

Student trip leaders were treated as a separate unit of analysis to invite the perspective of informed students, who would (usually) be more similar in age and stage of development with participants, but would have more background information on the trip and outdoor recreation experience. In addition to the four trip leaders listed below, two previous participants interviewed also served as trip leaders the year following their trip participation. Given that revealing the year in which trip leaders were on the trip would make their identities fairly easy to reveal, leaders are not being associated with trip years (and the leaders who were previous participants are not being identified with their pseudonyms). Each of the leaders below were from separate years of the program encompassing years in which both administrators were overseeing the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alayna</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Cis-woman</td>
<td>Mixed Race, Latinx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Trip years are not being listed for each trip leader in order to protect the identities of this small group. All trip leaders were from different program years.*

**Embedded Unit of Analysis 4: Program Founder**

The program founder and administrator for the first three years of the DIVE program, Ashley, was interviewed about their founding of the program in addition to the three trips they
led between 2013 and 2015. Ashley identifies as a White female and has a professional background both in higher education and in outdoor recreation, specifically working with Outward Bound as a full-time field instructor. As discussed previously, the DIVE program and its curriculum partially originated from a program within Outward Bound called the “Unity Project.” During my interview with Ashley, she discussed the design of Unity Project trips (which I also helped instruct as a field instructor with Outward Bound, but her and I did not instruct these courses together) that, “used the wilderness as a catalyst for kind of a peer diversity club that was then formed back at the school systems” (Ashley, Interview).

During my interview with Ashley, she was hesitant to attribute potential outcomes to participants, instead expressing interest in seeing the results of this study. That said, she had a number of thoughts about the philosophy of using the outdoor environment for diversity education and interactions, which are valuable to discuss here. One aspect of the program design and facilitating a diversity-focused outdoor program in a natural environment came out early in my interview with Ashley,

[The wilderness setting] was one of the less-contrived spaces that you could put a group of folks who have different backgrounds and identities together and work toward a common cause. And in that, when you're in those settings, people are able to, if they are not their authentic self and real, they quickly become - and with good facilitation - quickly become authentic and real with each other (Ashley, Interview).

Based on my interviews with participants described below, this outcome of participants becoming real with each other, occurred throughout the trip. Numerous trip participants mentioned being vulnerable with each other and learning about the personal backgrounds of other participants. In a number of interviews, participants mentioned the outdoors and the
challenge of living in an outdoor environment as one which encouraged the group to come
together in the ways that Ashley hoped they would.

Another aspect of the program philosophy and design which was consistent between my
interview with Ashley, my own perspective on the program, and the experiences of participants
is the concept of the time with the group being one in which participants are somewhat forced to
interact with each other. This is detailed in the subtheme below of conversations during
unstructured time and camp routines.

And [in a conventional workshop environment] instead of kind of leaning into that
challenging discourse, I think, in some traditional settings, you could have it and there
could be no resolution, it’s like, “Okay, we'll agree to disagree, we'll go our separate
ways into our own kind of affinity-based groups or places to recharge,” which I think is
really vital. But the wilderness is like, “Okay, we have this conversation and we still have
to pitch a tent” (Ashley, Interview).

**Embedded Unit of Analysis 5: Current Program Administrator**

As the current program administrator and trip leader for the past four years of the
program, my unit of analysis is highly biased. I identify as a white male and have been working
in higher education institutions professionally for 15 years. My university experience certainly
predisposes me to think that a diversity intervention like DIVE can have lasting impact, but it
also informs me that many diversity interventions (like this program) might not have the
intended outcomes that administrators hope for. With this in mind, I have tried to isolate my
“unit of analysis Nathan” from my “higher ed researcher Nathan” in this chapter. My unit of
analysis frame is based on my interview analysis that includes many optimistic quotes about the
potential outcomes of this program, but I have used the other units of analysis presented here to keep my optimism in check.
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

This qualitative case study explored the experiences of students and staff involved in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) program at a large, research-intensive, public university in the Southeastern U.S. This diversity-focused college outdoor adventure program annually takes a group of college student participants on a week-long outdoor adventure trip which includes social justice discussions and activities. This study was initiated due to the incidents in higher education which highlighted a lack of student openness to diversity (e.g., Andrade, 2018; Chappell, 2018; Mangan, 2018) and the lack of qualitative research into diversity interventions that are designed to address diversity engagement on campuses (Shim & Perez, 2018). The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of college students who participate in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program outdoor adventure trip?
2. Which aspects of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program do participants, trip leaders, and program administrators perceive as most valuable for shaping openness to diverse attitudes and behaviors?

This study used an embedded single-case design to explore the program under study from five different subunits of analysis: previous participants from the 2013-2018 trip year groups (with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews), the 2019 trip year group (for which a focus group was conducted), student trip leaders within each trip year, the program founder, and myself as the current program administrator. Semi-structured interviews, a focus group of past participants, and a self-interview were used as the data collection methods. Following each interview, I wrote a narrative summary of the interview participant’s trip experience and memo’ed aspects of the interview that stood out as important for my research questions and
study purpose. Next, following interview transcription, I used qualitative data analysis software to conduct open coding and identify individual concepts, before reviewing each interview again to generate broader themes, and finally I analyzed the interviews as a whole to identify axial codes that indicated relationships and patterns between research participant interviews (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). I also considered codes from the two theoretical frameworks that grounded this study a priori (e.g., when a participant commented on a reflection that they had on their trip experience, I coded the quote “reflective observation” to match Kolb’s experiential learning theory).

This study was informed by two theoretical frameworks: Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences (a frequently-used framework in campus diversity literature) and Kolb’s (1984, 2015) theory of experiential learning (a frequently-used framework in college outdoor adventure research). These theories informed the research questions and study approach by providing a framework through which individuals view programmatic interventions (in this case, diversity programs). The theory of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) provided a framework to consider where the DIVE program fits within participants’ overall experiences with diversity programming and informal experiences with diversity. Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) provided a conceptual starting point to investigate how individuals have experienced the DIVE program, reflected on it, and possibly applied learning from it.

Findings presented in this chapter are organized based on the experiential journey of participants through the DIVE program. The first primary theme, “trying something new”, recognizes the motivations of participants prior to coming on their DIVE trip and informs the theoretical analysis of Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences. Most
participants interviewed were new to the outdoors and encountered peers with whom they had not previously interacted - both conditions which led to their trip experience being a novel and meaningful growth experience. The second primary theme, “group bonding through challenge and adversity”, illustrates participants having concrete experiences with trip conditions that surprise them and lead them to form tighter connections with their trip peers. The third primary theme, “campfire spaces creating context for discussions and connections”, uncovers salient times when participants came together to engage in group conversation with each other. These spaces were also the first times that participants engaged in reflective observation (Kolb, 1984, 2015) on the trip itself as they debriefed the day and discussed connections between the trip experience and broader diversity topics. Lastly, the fourth primary theme, “powerful personal connections”, shows that participants reflected on their trip experience and formed valuable diversity learning from fellow participants in their trip groups. For some, these personal connections led to abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984, 2015) as well as cognitive disequilibrium and growth (Gurin et al., 2002).

Each primary theme will be examined in addition to the sub-themes associated with it (see Table 5.1). These subthemes provide additional nuance to the primary themes and reveal ways in which different participants and groups of participants experienced the DIVE program. Participants on the DIVE trips all experienced the trip in unique ways, some of which were driven by identity factors, such as race, gender, and previous experience in the outdoors. Connections to theoretical frameworks will be made throughout these findings with a more thorough analysis at the end of this chapter.
Table 5.1
*Themes and subthemes of findings.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trying something new</td>
<td>A. New to the outdoors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Seeing new places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Something to do over break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group bonding through challenge and adversity</td>
<td>A. Overcoming physical discomfort and weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Emotional discomfort of learning about structural inequities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campfire spaces creating context for discussions and connections</td>
<td>A. Facilitated discussions and activities leading to deeper conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Conversations during unstructured time and camp routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Outdoor activities providing settings for connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerful personal connections</td>
<td>A. Learning about personal backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Assumptions challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Interactions with locals and subject matter experts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the primary purpose of this case study is to encapsulate the overall participant experience of the DIVE program, themes and subthemes emerged that specifically addressed the research questions at hand. A table featuring particularly salient connections is provided here (see Table 5.2) and will be fully discussed in Chapter 6. Throughout the current chapter, connections are noted which demonstrate that participants’ concrete experiences were largely conversational and informal. The outdoor recreation components were important settings and contexts, but often it was the connection made between participants that was more memorable than the outdoor activities themselves.
Table 5.2
Themes and subthemes related to specific research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Theme Addressing this Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What are the experiences of college students who participate in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program outdoor adventure trip? | 1. Trying something new  
2. Facilitated discussions and activities leading to deeper conversation  
3. Conversations during unstructured time and camp routines  
4. Outdoor activities providing settings for connections  
5. Learning about personal backgrounds  
6. Assumptions challenged  
7. Interactions with locals and subject matter experts |
| 2. Which aspects of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program do participants, trip leaders, and program administrators perceive as most valuable for shaping openness to diverse attitudes and behaviors? | 1. Group bonding through challenge and adversity  
2. Facilitated discussions and activities leading to deeper conversation  
3. Conversations during unstructured time and camp routines  
4. Outdoor activities providing settings for connections  
5. Learning about personal backgrounds  
6. Interactions with locals and subject matter experts |

In answering the first research question (“What are the experiences of college students who participate in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program outdoor adventure trip?”), Table 5.2 shows the seven emerging themes and subthemes that contain details of participants’ concrete experiences (Kolb, 1984, 2015) on the DIVE trips: trying something new; facilitated discussions and activities leading to deeper conversation; conversations during unstructured time and camp routines; outdoor activities providing settings for connections; learning about personal backgrounds; assumptions challenged; and interactions with locals and subject matter experts. Participants’ vivid details provided throughout our interviews were often
related to their first memories of interacting with trip environments and a diverse group of fellow participants who were new to them. I observed this in a memo on July 31, 2019 (during the time when I was conducting most of these interviews), “One theme I’m noticing is that, contrary to what might be assumed, a lot of students seemed to come on the DIVE trips precisely because it was out of their comfort zone.” The unexpected aspects of these environments and conversations were the primary experiences upon which participants reflected and were often more important than the outdoor recreation aspects of the trip. While deep in data analysis on September 13 of 2019, I memo’ed about this dynamic and noted, “Another theme coming to mind is this idea of participants being drawn in by the outdoors of the experience, but getting more out of the interaction with people (both the group and visitors to the group)”.

To answer the second research question (“Which aspects of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program do participants, trip leaders, and program administrators perceive as most valuable for shaping openness to diverse attitudes and behaviors?”), Table 5.2 identifies the six themes and subthemes which address this question: group bonding through challenge and adversity; facilitated discussions and activities leading to deeper conversation; conversations during unstructured time and camp routines; outdoor activities providing settings for connections; learning about personal backgrounds; and interactions with locals and subject matter experts. These themes and subthemes include the ways in which participants made reflective observations and abstract conceptualizations (Kolb, 1984, 2015) during and after the DIVE trips. As I describe below, some participants recognized the salience of their diversity experiences on their trip, but others needed time to reflect on it before they came to realizations about it. “This idea of formal diversity discussions setting a foundation for informal conversations that have a greater impact definitely seems like a potential theme/pathway,” I
wrote in a memo on September 13, 2019. Participants in this study found some value in formal diversity activities, but informal moments and learning about fellow participants’ backgrounds were more prominent in shaping their diversity experiences. Participants placed high value on the unstructured moments they shared with other participants and having opportunities to interact in smaller group settings in outdoor recreation settings (e.g., in tents and canoes).

**Trying Something New**

Almost all of the participants interviewed for this study attended the DIVE trip to try something new. While the majority of participants had little or no outdoors experience, there were also participants who came on the trip to try new activities, visit new destinations, or meet others of different backgrounds and perspectives they would not have otherwise met. This openness to new experience and being unfamiliar with what they were about to encounter primed participants for cognitive disequilibrium and growth (Gurin et al., 2002). For many participants, the novelty of the trip was found in the subtheme of being new to the outdoors. Even when participants had previous experience with the outdoors, they were often encountering new outdoor activities or were motivated by the second subtheme of seeing new places. The third and final subtheme, something to do over break, captured the motivations of a small number of participants who primarily did not want to go home over break and were seeking a new adventure through their DIVE trip.

Motivations for attending the DIVE trip are important to consider as these indicate whether participants were experienced in either outdoor activities or diversity activities (and thus predisposed to experiences that may not be new or novel). In general, this was not the case as participants attended the trip to try something new. This has implications for later discussion in
light of the power of novel and unexpected experiences for student growth in the areas of diversity and attitude change (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012).

**New to the Outdoors**

As a facet of participants attending the trip to try something new, the majority of participants decided to attend the trip because they were new to outdoor activities and wanted to stretch themselves. Of the participants I interviewed individually, 17 had little or no outdoor experience while seven indicated previous experience with camping and other outdoor activities. Despite lacking experience in outdoor recreation, most participants said they came on the trip due to the outdoor nature of it and often mentioned going out of their comfort zone as a reason for attending the trip. This was the case for Camille, who was a junior when attending the DIVE trip and identifies as female and Middle Eastern,

So, I decided that I needed to do something that terrified me, because I think I spent a lot of time growing up in a comfort zone. I had never gone camping. Like I had never spent an extended period of time outdoors. I knew I wanted to, but it just wasn't something my family ever did. Really. It wasn't something like culturally that's very familiar to me (Camille, Interview).

This quote demonstrates that Camille applied for the DIVE trip to try something outside of her comfort zone. She had never been camping before and spending time outdoors was not something she felt was valued by her family or culture. Throughout our interview, she commented on how much she appreciated learning about the backgrounds of others on her trip and connecting with them in conversations. Although she found the trip challenging, she was glad she did it and felt like it was a good break from the routine of college. Similarly, Brianna, a freshman at the time of the trip who identifies as female and African American, came on the
DIVE trip to Louisiana because she wanted to push herself and try new things. She had never been camping or to Louisiana before and both of these interested her.

Motivations for participants who went on the earlier backpacking trips that traveled to Western North Carolina were similar in trying new things and being new to the outdoors. Deanna, who was a junior when she attended the trip and identifies as Hispanic/Latino, had previous appreciation of the outdoors in an agricultural sense (having grown up on a farm), but had not been camping or spent time in other outdoor environments. She also described the experience as taking her out of her “comfort zone” (Deanna, Interview). In addition to the allure of the outdoors, she went on the trip for leadership experience and learned a lot about vulnerability and trusting others through the trip. Bryan, who identifies as a Black male and was a freshmen when he attended his backpacking DIVE trip, had never been camping previously and came on the DIVE trip for something to do over break and to try something new (the trip being advertised for diverse populations caught his attention). “You tell me it's going to be free and paid for,” he said, “and it's a first time adventure for me - I'd never gone camping - I definitely decided, ‘Yeah, I may give this thing a shot”’ (Bryan, Interview).

There were similar sentiments among the other participants I interviewed who did not have outdoor recreation experience, but wanted to try something new. While higher education faculty and staff might expect that students gravitate towards activities with which they are familiar and in which their friends are engaged (e.g., students participate in outdoor trips because they are “outdoorsy”), it is interesting to note that neither of these was the case for these participants: they were new to the outdoors, had never been camping, and were not encouraged to attend by friends or family. It was often students from minoritized identities who did not have previous outdoor recreation experience or support engaging in these activities; of the seven
students who did have previous outdoor recreation experience, the racial composition included five White-identified students and the gender composition included five male-identified students. My previous experiences included being new to outdoor recreation in my early adulthood, but I had privilege earlier in life that included car camping with my family and having parents who had an appreciation of the outdoors. This made it a challenge to check my privilege and be open to students who saw the experience of our trip as the most outdoorsy thing they had ever done. Reflecting on my interview with Ashley, the program founder, was a good way to remind myself of the values I place on outdoor environments that might be less-than-thrilling to experienced outdoorspeople but were transformative to newcomers in the DIVE program.

There was a sense among participants who were new to the outdoors that, even if they had considered going on outdoor trips previously, aspects of the DIVE program made them more comfortable and encouraged them to apply. For some, this included just seeing the word “diversity” and this conveyed to them that the trip was for beginners and students who otherwise might not typically go on outdoor trips. Regina, a junior, female-identified, South Asian student, remembered that seeing DIVE advertised for underrepresented groups encouraged her to attend even when she had passed on previous outdoor recreation opportunities. “I'd been really interested in the kayaking trip that [campus recreation] offers,” she said, “but was always very intimidated by it at the same time not knowing if I was physically strong enough to do it” (Regina, Interview). Regina had limited previous outdoor experience and had never been camping or backpacking. She was encouraged to come on the trip by the trip leader and felt like the trip was designed with her in mind, as a beginner to the activities. Camille also commented that the trip being advertised for diverse populations encouraged her to apply. “I think if that
aspect [of diversity] hadn't been advertised on the trip, I would have been like, ‘Oh, this is not something I know how to do’,” she said (Camille, Interview).

Reducing barriers of cost was also a factor for some participants and seemed to make being new to the outdoors less of a concern. Although Bryan worked for the campus recreation department in which the DIVE program is housed, he had never participated in outdoor activities until he went on the DIVE trip. He noticed a trip advertisement email and was drawn to the trip being targeted for diverse populations and this, combined with the trip being free, led him to apply and attend. The fact that it was a “first-time adventure” (Bryan, Interview) also encouraged him to go on the trip.

Among the smaller group of students who had previous outdoor experience, participants were drawn to the outdoor activities on the trip but also the chance to meet people of difference. As noted above, this group of participants was largely White and largely male in identity. Ethan, a White male student who was a sophomore on his trip, came on DIVE to explore new places and engage in diversity discussions, but also had a large amount of previous outdoor experience and was drawn to this aspect of the trip. Darius, a Latino male who was a senior when he attended the trip, had previous camping experience and was open about wanting to attend the trip because it was a chance for him to go on a free backpacking trip. While that was the primary reason he stated for attending, he was also very interested in interacting with diverse peers to better prepare him for engaging with diversity on campus and beyond. Darius became close with others in his trip group as they overcame challenges and bonded on the trip. Thomas, a White male who was a junior on his trip, also had extensive outdoor experience; he was interested in the outdoor recreation components, as well has having a chance to meet students with whom he would not otherwise interact on campus. He had limited interpersonal interactions on campus
being a little older than traditional-aged college students, married, and living off-campus. Paul, who was a junior student and also male-identified and White, mentioned the outdoors as the primary motivator for attending the trip. He had previous camping experience, but was one of the only students to mention diversity specifically as another drive for attending the trip.

The two White female-identified participants who had previous outdoor experience, June and Amelia, both attended the trip because of the outdoor recreation components but also each had strong interests in diversity. June, who was a junior when she attended the DIVE trip to Louisiana, had participated in an alternative service break and the LeaderShape program prior to her trip. During our interview, June spoke about how much she liked the combination of diversity and inclusion with outdoor recreation components and recalled, “Wow, this is everything that I like it and it's free. So, why not?” (June, Interview). In addition to a love of the outdoors, Amelia discussed having a value for diverse identities while growing up which informed her experiences on her DIVE backpacking trip. She remembered having “a very open-door policy family” (Amelia, Interview), meaning that her parents were open with discussing the diverse identities of family friends and others.

Considering racial identities and access to outdoor experience, there were elements of privilege among the seven participants who had previous camping experience, but there were aspects of marginalization in this subgroup as well. Two of these participants identified as gay, two were women, one was a student of color, and one was a non-traditional student. All students in the program were able to use different aspects of their identities and experiences to share with each other. There did not seem to be a feeling of tokenization among certain students (e.g., Black students being expected to teach White students about race).
Throughout my years helping students prepare for the DIVE trip, it was frequent that they were learning to canoe and put up tents for the first time, in addition to encountering other new experiences on their trip. At times, students were new to cooking outdoors, but also new to cooking meals that involved a large amount of vegetables and that went beyond mac n’ cheese, for example. This led to a sense of individual discovery and at times this discovery was shared with others in their trip group. There were also chances for those with previous outdoor experience to help the students who were new to the outdoors. Throughout the process of memo’ing when I collected these data (primarily in July and August of 2019), I noticed that the outdoor aspect of the trip was not incidental to participants choosing to attend the trip. It was not that the trip just happened to be outdoors and they chose to attend in spite of this: participants were drawn to the outdoor recreation of the trip even when this was a completely new experience for them.

**Seeing New Places**

For some participants, both those new to the outdoors and outdoor participants with previous outdoor recreation experience, exploring a new destination was a primary draw of attending their trip. This subtheme of seeing new places was at times tied to a particular location (e.g., Louisiana and New Orleans), a region (e.g., the Southeast), or just related in general to exploring new places that participants had never been. Brandy, a female-identified freshman student who is Asian, tied together the desire to try new outdoor activities with an interest in exploring the Southeast U.S. region more thoroughly as she was from a different part of the country. She had little previous outdoor experience and saw it as an opportunity to try new outdoor activities. She enjoyed learning about the experiences and backgrounds of others on her trip and was struck by witnessing and learning about socioeconomic injustices and inequities in
post-Hurricane Katrina Louisiana. The trip helped her develop an appreciation for the outdoors and to be more comfortable getting out in nature. Veronica, a female-identified African American student who came on the trip as a sophomore, wanted to step outside of her comfort zone and was not interested in spending another spring break at her parents’ home, but it was the allure of visiting a new destination of Louisiana that was a draw as well. She had never been camping or done many outdoor recreation activities previously. Andrew, Ethan, Damon, and Jack were also from the Louisiana years of the trip and also expressed this desire to see this new destination state.

In contrast to the Louisiana years of the trip, none of the participants from the years when the trip traveled Western North Carolina (2013-2015) expressed specific destination as a motivator for attending the DIVE trip (e.g., “I really wanted to see the Western North Carolina mountains”) beyond simply going somewhere new. This trend may be somewhat by design: the trip was intentionally modified to visit locations further south in recent years to avoid backpacking in the snow and the perception of hardship. This may have communicated to participants new to outdoor recreation that the trip was more accessible. Changing trip locations was designed to make the trips more approachable, so it is not surprising that some of the participants in this study expressed an interest in the (possibly more attractive) trip destinations.

As the trip transitioned to visiting Louisiana, additional programmatic components included learning about coastal land loss and exploring this environmental justice topic through the lens of diversity and inclusion. In addition to canoeing through salt marsh landscapes (that are disappearing at an alarming rate), participants also met residents of coastal Louisiana and learned about the impacts of Hurricane Katrina, which were extreme partially due to the effects of coastal land loss. This topic area and educational component became a motivator for some
students to apply to the program. Andrew combined their interest in visiting a new state with learning about land loss and also being part of positive social change. They said that coastal land loss was “really important and I want to make a difference or learn and have some type of information on how I can do something different to stop this problem that's going on” (Andrew, Interview).

**Something to do Over Break**

While most participants expressed a desire to venture outdoors, visit new destinations, or had other motivations related to the content of the trip, some participants also just needed something to do over spring break. This was frequently combined with the affordability of the trip and not having money to go anywhere else, as well as a lack of other plans for break (or the somewhat-dreaded alternative of going home for break). This idea of needing something to do over break transcended the Western North Carolina and Louisiana years of the trip. Brandy, Veronica, James, Bryan, Brianna, and Jasmine all discussed not having other plans and choosing to come on the trip because it was something to do. Some participants mentioned considering other options, but the trip being free made a difference (in comparison to alternative service break trips, which charge a fee for participants).

In summary, across these subthemes, the concept of participants trying something new is clear. Students were not only new to these experiences, they also frequently did not know what to expect based on experiencing new destinations, activities, and people. I recall a number of participants who were surprised that the Gulf Coast and the beach in Louisiana could be as cold as it was (as in the 2018 trip year). Some participants had a conception of the beach always being a warm destination and encountering this different setting seemed to challenge their mental model. Many participants were also experiencing sleeping on the ground in a tent for the first
time and did not know what this would be like (some enjoyed it and others vowed to never go camping again).

Although an outlier among participants, at times this theme of trying new things was also combined with participants being pressured by parents to not attend the trip. Miranda and Deanna both had their families openly question why they would want to attend an outdoor trip over spring break. A few participants were actively questioned about their choice to attend the trip, which could warrant further study for outdoor education researchers: if there is negative social pressure on participating in outdoor recreation, encouraging more diverse populations to participate will take much more than simply appealing to an individual and their likes or dislikes. For Deanna, she recalled being frustrated with her family and friends who questioned her choice to attend the trip. “Why are you guys putting limitations on me that I’m not even putting on myself?” she said (Deanna, Interview). I remember multiple times throughout the DIVE trips I led when participants would talk about their family’s idea of the outdoors as a day at the beach or a family cookout, but had never been camping or canoeing prior to their trip. It seemed like participants did not have a dislike for outdoor experiences, so much as it just might not have occurred to them or their families to engage in such pursuits.

Whether it was the newness of the outdoor experience or the newness of engaging across difference, participants I interviewed did not have a background in many of the activities on the trip. This lack of exposure to different facets of the trip led to surprising experiences for participants, which in turn initiated cognitive disequilibrium as viewed through Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory. While this theory is focused on diversity and a student’s background with diversity, the psychological theories it is based on (i.e., Piaget, 1971) recognize that disequilibrium can be caused by a number of unexpected factors which may lead to cognitive
growth. The next theme will demonstrate that participants not only encountered new and novel experiences but also navigated physical and emotional challenges that led to this growth and meaningful discovery.

**Group Bonding through Challenge and Adversity**

As discussed in the trip year profiles, 2013 and 2018 were especially challenging years for trip groups due to weather, but challenge and adversity of some kind came up for almost every participant in this study. The challenge of living outdoors and camping every night were common, but for some trip years the emotional challenges of learning about societal inequities and hardships were more prevalent. For 14 of the participants I interviewed, challenges encountered by the group led to increased group bonding as they overcame struggles to live in difficult environments for the week of their trip. As a facet of this theme, participants noted that these challenges also made group members quicker to open up with each other and be vulnerable with their group of new friends. This is reflected in the subthemes of overcoming physical discomfort and weather and emotional discomfort of learning about structural inequities.

**Overcoming Physical Discomfort and Weather**

Weather conditions and the discomfort of being new to camping and backcountry travel were part of the majority of participants’ experiences. In particular, participants in the inaugural year of the trip in 2013 experienced snow and ice on their backpacking trip to Western North Carolina and the 2018 trip year to Louisiana experienced cold temperatures and wind while camping on a sandy beach on Grand Isle. Participants from these years vividly described the weather they encountered. Jasmine remembered that the first hike of the trip “was very steep and very difficult. And then the first night it snowed and it was very, very cold” (Jasmine, Interview). Jasmine was new to outdoor recreation, had a fairly miserable time on the trip (she
described it as a “pretty traumatic experience”), and found the conditions way too challenging for first-time outdoor recreation participants. Despite these challenges, she had meaningful moments with other group members and was appreciative for the trip experience later in life (though she is decidedly more of an indoors person).

Some participants found the trip to be so far outside of their comfort zone that they did not want to try something similar again; for others the cold was memorable and challenging but did not inhibit their sense of adventure or fun when reflecting back on the experience. Devin, who was a junior when he attended the trip and identifies as White and Middle Eastern, remembered that the trip was not fun when he was on it but that he had a lot of “cool stories to share” (Devin, Interview) afterward despite the physical discomfort of being cold. Devin did not have very much previous outdoors experience, but was motivated to come on the trip because he was interested in providing similar outdoor experiences for others (a goal he fulfilled when later providing similar trips through a nonprofit organization he created). He remembered the trip being cold and challenging, but fun, and that the group came together through adversity. Even for trip years that were warmer, in Louisiana, some participants remembered the physical discomfort of being on the ground while camping every night. Discomfort was experienced relatively by participants, but from all trip years the role of challenge was seen as a significant part of the experience.

Although cold and physical discomfort were challenging, a number of participants thought that the conditions of the trip brought their group closer together. Jasmine, recalling that first backpacking night, said that she and her tentmates “were cuddled up like we were best friends for 15 years that first night” (Jasmine, Interview). This theme was present across both the Western North Carolina and Louisiana years of the trip, as well as the singular Florida trip.
While it was warmer on her trip, Miranda noted that spending so much time outside and hearing strange noises at night (one of the campsites where the group stayed was frequented by feral pigs) led to a sense of discomfort but this challenge led to the group “leaning on each other a little bit more” (Miranda, Interview). Both Jasmine and Miranda were new to the outdoors, but participants who were experienced in outdoor recreation recognized this group dynamic even if they did not personally experience physical discomfort.

Amelia had a large amount of previous outdoors experience coming into the trip, but most of the other participants on her trip had no outdoors experience. She felt like the group grew close with each other throughout the trip and appreciated their conversations and learning about others’ backgrounds. During our interview, she recognized that the discomfort and vulnerability her group experienced led to deeper connections. “There was definitely a huge component of being physically vulnerable,” she said, “which led to us allowing ourselves to be emotionally vulnerable and allowing ourselves to open up and really have these deep conversations that we did” (Amelia, Interview).

Some participants made the connection that needing to be close to others in this challenging environment facilitated a closeness that would not happen in on-campus settings. When I asked Veronica, an African American female who was a sophomore at the time of her trip to Louisiana, what brought her group together on the trip, she said,

I guess just being so close to people and spending a lot of time with them. Because, in college, you go to class and then you can come back to your room and you don't have to socialize anymore if you don't want to. So, going on the trip was completely different, because you slept in tents and you were with the people the whole week, constantly. You
couldn't run away. So, you grow close, faster - closer than usual, at a different, faster pace (Veronica, Interview).

Veronica was also one of the participants who was new to camping and outdoor recreation. Another participant, Melissa, who was new to outdoor recreation and on the Louisiana years of the trip also spoke about the ways in which the discomfort of the trip led to closeness amongst her group. “We bonded a lot through those experiences that would have been uncomfortable and broke down those personal barriers that we usually have with other people [on campus],” she said (Melissa, Interview).

Likewise, Alexis, who was a participant during the Western North Carolina backpacking years of the program, had never been camping or done many outdoor recreation activities prior to the DIVE trip (to which she was introduced by working for the outdoor program). She found the trip extremely challenging, but appreciated the chance to step out of her comfort zone and learn new skills with the support of her peers on the trip. She remembered that a number of her fellow participants were also new to the outdoors and this brought them together. Specifically she noticed that women on her trip became close in this unfamiliar environment partially because they had to “sleep together in the same tent, every night” (Alexis, Interview) and that she and her tentmates would reflect on the day and also commiserate on the challenging aspects of the trip (like not being able to bathe throughout the week-long adventure.

In addition to physical proximity and enduring discomfort, other participants remembered that relying on each other and trusting each other brought them closer together. Regina said this was a way of “building trust through the daily activities you have to do to just survive in the woods” (Regina, Interview) suggesting a certain amount of challenge in just completing routine chores and activities. Participants from the Louisiana years of the trip also spoke about the
discomfort creating closeness and trust amongst their groups, such as in the previously-noted quote from Miranda in which she referenced her group leaning on each other. Camille, who was also a participant during the warmer years of the trip, thought one of the more valuable components of the trip was the challenge dimension, seeing times of challenge as a chance for the group to show support of each other. “There were times when we were having a rough time on the water or we were just tired and then everyone else around you is super motivating and supportive,” she said (Camille, Interview).

Along with the sense of the physical conditions and weather bringing the group together, many participants expressed confidence and a sense of accomplishment in overcoming the conditions of the trip. This was unexpected for some participants, in the sense that they seemed to surprise themselves that they were able to work with their group in completing the trip, despite cold weather or other discomfort. This was particularly prevalent among the students who were new to outdoor recreation on their trip. Despite wanting the trip to be over and feeling exhausted throughout, Alexis was proud of learning new skills and getting through a physically challenging week with her tripmates. Other participants from across the backpacking and canoeing years of the trip, including Devin, Tonya, Jasmine, and Miranda, also expressed this idea of the group creating closer bonds by overcoming the challenge of their adventure together.

Like Amelia previously, who saw the physical challenges as a chance to be vulnerable, other participants found the newness of activities and the vulnerability of learning skills for the first time led to greater emotional vulnerability with their group as well. Regina recalled learning new outdoor skills and how the “practical skills you're learning, mirror some of the emotional and social development things that are happening” (Regina, Interview) when she reflected the growth and support that occurred with her trip group. This also illustrates the
salience of encountering new experience and the resulting growth that can occur. Even for trip years when cold water and other weather were not a significant factor, there was this similar sense of learning new skills and gaining self-efficacy. Amanda recalled how her trip was an “eye-opening experience” (Amanda, Interview) when she learned to put up a tent and cook over a camp stove. Even though Amanda’s group was largely car camping (in comparison to backpacking), there was still the reflection that completing the trip was a major accomplishment.

Trip leaders I interviewed also recognized that the group overcoming the challenges of their trip was a facet of their bonding together. Alayna, who identifies as a cis-woman of mixed race and Latinx ethnicity, was a junior student trip leader during her backpacking DIVE trip and relayed that her group “felt really accomplished and felt really strong and felt like they worked together as a group to achieve [the goals of the trip]” (Alayna, Interview). Rachel, a female-identified Indian student who was a junior trip leader during the program, also noted this same sense of accomplishment, including the notion that challenge and discomfort created a chance for growth. “If you put someone way out of their comfort zone in the outdoors,” she said, “they step up and grow a lot more than if you try to do the same thing with a group in the front country [i.e., a non-wilderness context]” (Rachel, Interview).

While some participants found the trip and overcoming the challenge of living outdoors encouraged future outdoor recreation, this was not always the case. For some participants, even when they thought the trip was a valuable experience, it did not encourage future outdoor endeavors. Deanna from the Western North Carolina backpacking years of the program, for example, found the experience of camping in the cold as a chance to learn that she was “definitely not ‘one with nature’ if that's how you can put it” (Deanna, Interview). Other participants found that, while challenge and discomfort brought their group together, there was
also camaraderie from being in a group with fellow students of color on the trip. Sara, who identifies as a Native American female, connected with a sense of belonging by being in a diverse group that was also learning new things together about living outdoors.

In summary, for participants across all years, activities, and destinations of the DIVE program, the direct experience of being challenged by their environment and learning new skills led to stronger group cohesion. This connection amongst participants would set the stage for moments of vulnerability and emotional closeness which will be discussed in the campfire spaces theme below. Conditional experiences of this program will be discussed in Chapter 6, but it is important to note here that many of the participants quoted in this section, recalling physical challenge and discomfort, identify as female. There was a sense to me that male participants, particularly those with previous outdoor experience were quick to note that the trip was not challenging from a physical environment standpoint, but were more apt to recollect the emotional discomfort discussed in the next subtheme.

Throughout interviews and data analysis related to this theme of challenge, I often felt the tension between my multiple roles involved in this study. As a program administrator, I try hard to make the challenges of a trip manageable and help participants work through discomforts, so that they have an enjoyable experience. For some participants, their trip was more uncomfortable than I would have liked (as a program administrator) but was memorable and beneficial for their self-reported growth. It was also a challenge for me that so many of the students who saw the outdoor recreation experience challenging were female-identified. This made me question whether I was providing a sufficient level of support for this subgroup of participants. During these periods, I reflected on the challenge and support model of student
affairs (Sanford, 1967) and reminded myself of the self-efficacy that was reported by many participants.

**Emotional Discomfort of Learning about Structural Inequities**

Participants spoke about physical challenges as something they overcame or survived, but the emotional challenges participants had on the trips were more nuanced. Nine participants I interviewed recalled being emotionally affected by learning about coastal land loss and the impacts of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana. In these interviews, some participants seemed to still be working through the emotions they experienced on their trip, rather than treating them completely as a past event in distant memory. Carla, a female-identified Hispanic student who was a senior on her trip to Louisiana, worked through the emotions of learning about coastal land loss and its disproportionate impact on communities with less privilege. She thought learning about this dynamic was part of “the sad reality that you have to accept that not everyone's as fortunate as you are” (Carla, Interview). During my interview with her, she mixed past and present tense language, giving an indication that the emotional challenge in comprehending inequities is still present for her. She spoke in reflective pauses, with changes in her tone of voice that suggested this was something that she was thinking about seriously.

In similar ways to group bonding facilitating challenge and adversity, there were also clues that emotional challenges encouraged vulnerability and a depth of personal sharing that would not have otherwise been present. Like Carla above, Paul was emotionally affected by learning about the impacts of coastal land loss and Hurricane Katrina. This learning not only brought up feelings for him individually, but he also noticed a “group dynamic shift of getting into the material that the trip was based on [about coastal land loss] and feeling people almost hesitate with this uncomfortableness of it, but being willing to be vulnerable” (Paul, Interview).
Similar to Amelia, who recognized the physical discomfort of the trip creating vulnerability amongst her trip group, Paul found that this emotional discomfort led his group to be more open with sharing their own experiences.

Emotional discomfort was also similar to physical discomfort in the newness that participants experienced with it and how it seemed to lead to growth experiences. June, who attended the Louisiana years of the trip, felt a sense of unease learning about the struggles of communities in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. She remembered “driving through parts of New Orleans that hadn't been rebuilt” and feeling “like that was one of the first times that I had seen a place like that, at least in the United States” (June, Interview). She went on to describe realizations about environmental justice she had on the trip and ways in which she recognized the disparities among different communities and levels of privilege within the U.S. Learning about these facets of social injustice also came up for other participants from the Louisiana years of the trip, including Miranda, Thomas, Amanda, and Brianna.

Participants recognized not only the direct learning about how Hurricane Katrina impacted communities in New Orleans, but also transferred this learning to other examples, a type of abstract conceptualization from the lens of Kolb’s (1984; 2015) experiential learning theory. Brianna saw the ways in which environmental justice played out in Louisiana and, following the trip, noticed similar dynamics in her home city of Raleigh. After explaining an environmental justice issue that she learned about in Raleigh following her trip, she went on to compare it to the themes she learned about in Louisiana. Comparing areas of New Orleans during Katrina when “predominately Black communities were hurt the most,” she generalized this to environmental injustices in Raleigh and elsewhere, “How come the predominately Black area is the worst off? How come that's consistent with a lot of cities?” (Brianna, Interview).
Throughout this portion of the interview, Brianna expressed a sense of frustration and emotional involvement with the material and people about which she was learning.

Although a smaller group of trip participants, some on the trips were challenged about their own personal backgrounds and worldviews. These moments were clues of cognitive dissonance from diversity interactions (Gurin et al., 2002) with which students wrestled upon reflecting on the trip. This is illustrated by Brandy, who followed a vegan diet and routinely had access to fresh fruits and vegetables. She recognized that not all communities are as economically healthy or have food choices as wide as those of her upbringing. The experience of learning how people in Louisiana lived and the ways of life that might seem strange to outsiders led them to reflect on their own backgrounds and views. This reflection revolved around their group’s visit to an alligator farm and processing facility and the discussion that followed amongst the group,

And so [visiting the alligator farm] changed my perspective on that but a lot of that realization came from me seeing it myself and actually having conversations with the trip members around me too, and them sharing some of their stories and saying that they grew up in more rural areas where there were food deserts or they didn't even have that much access to foods (Brandy, Interview).

Trip leaders and staff also recognized the emotional challenges that the group encountered, in addition to working through their own emotional challenges in similar ways as participants. Wade, a male-identified White student who was a senior when he served as a trip leader, spoke about “uncomfortable situations” (Wade, Interview) related to coastal land loss and Hurricane Katrina. He recalled having a visual example for social injustices that he had learned about previously but had never seen first-hand. Scott, a male-identified White student who was a
senior while leading a different year of the Louisiana trip, recognized that not only were the emotional justice learnings impactful for the group, they also put the physical challenges in perspective. He thought this “shared uncomfortableness” (Scott, Interview) created an environment where the group could share personal information and be vulnerable with each other.

In summary, participants from all trip groups recalled some physical discomfort on their trip and many participants recognized the ways in which it created stronger bonds among their group. Participants from the Louisiana trip years also felt a sense of emotional discomfort learning about Hurricane Katrina and coastal land loss (and their disproportionate impact on communities of color and fewer socioeconomic resources). In addition to group bonding, both physical discomfort and emotional discomfort led to greater vulnerability for trip participants to share. The next theme explores how the shared reflection on the challenges of the trip, as well as diversity and outdoor activities, created meaningful contexts for diversity learning and personal connections among participants.

**Campfire Spaces Creating Context for Discussions and Connections**

Some of the opportunities for participants to engage with diverse peers on DIVE trips came in facilitated discussions, led by trip leaders and program staff. Rather than these discussions and activities being self-contained however, participants I interviewed recalled the spaces for important interactions with peers that were not informal but also not completely structured. While the specific context varied, these could be thought of as “campfire spaces” where participants were gathered as a whole group or in smaller groups and engaged with each other beyond the formal interactions facilitated by trip leaders. Campfire spaces were both literal campfires at the end of the day, but were also informal settings in the van between destinations,
boiling water and cutting vegetables during meal preparation, and canoeing through the salt marsh for example.

Each campfire space on the DIVE trip depended on a number of pre-existing conditions that were designed by trip leaders: the group had been taught skills for living in the outdoors for their week together, they had practiced interacting with civility about sensitive topics (through establishing ground rules and participating in activities which role modeled discussion of diversity and identities), and they were gathered in a space because leaders had brought them together. Although the campfire space was designed by leaders, it was self-directed by participants at certain points. For example, while debriefing the day in a group discussion or reflection activity, participants were free to decide how much to share about themselves and what to discuss (especially after leaders had gone to bed); they were able to choose not to stay in the campfire space and opt out; they decided how long to keep the conversation going as a group before putting the campfire out.

The subthemes of this theme largely correspond to the context of these campfire spaces: facilitated discussions and activities leading to deeper conversation, conversations during unstructured time and camp routines, and outdoor activities providing settings for connections. Each subtheme will explore a different setting but the group experience among them is similar throughout. Participants used these settings as a way to engage with diverse peers in deep and meaningful ways.

**Facilitated Discussions and Activities Leading to Deeper Conversation**

Every trip year included daily evening discussions, often around a literal campfire (if possible) not just the figurative campfire space of gathering. These discussions generally started with formal debrief questions and discussions facilitated by trip leaders and staff, but then led to
informal conversations amongst the group after trip leaders and staff went to bed. As Ethan noted succinctly, “The more formal conversations served as a decent foundation and then I found a lot of the really meaningful parts to be followed up by the informal conversations” (Ethan, Interview). Thomas, who participated during the Louisiana years of the trip, recalled that these end-of-day conversations created a chance to learn about other participants’ personal backgrounds and “hear everybody else’s perspectives on the things that we had learned that day” (Thomas, Interview).

For some participants, evening discussions were the first aspect of the trip that came to mind when I asked participants what parts of the trip were the most valuable. Participants often remembered the details of particular evening discussions years later. When I asked Carla what part of the trip was the most valuable for her, she talked about a specific discussion her trip group had. The campfire discussion occurred after the group was in New Orleans for the day and came across a street performer show that engaged the audience with racial and ethnic stereotypes (e.g., making mocking impressions of Chinese people). She remembered the “discussion about it that night and how some of the jokes were inappropriate” (Carla, Interview).

Rather than limiting the topic of discussion specifically to the day’s activities, trip groups often used these topics as entry points into sharing personal details or struggles. Camille remembered learning about another participant who shared their story of being adopted and shared with the group the resulting sense of the abandonment by their birth parents. For Camille, this was “super eye opening and also heartbreaking” (Camille, Interview). Brianna also recalled that these campfire chats were ones in which participants shared their thoughts on “issues that were below the surface” (Brianna, Interview) and mentioned that this was something she had not
done before, particularly with a new group of “people that weren’t all like me” (Brianna, Interview).

Campfire discussions were a chance to discuss deeper issues and personal backgrounds, but the diversity curriculum on the trip also created a similar group space for participants to open up. In particular, participants mentioned the “If You Really Knew Me” activity and the “Identity Trees” activity from multiple trip year groups. The “Color Me Human” activity and the “Superhero Cape” were also memorable within individual trip years. Although the activities themselves were memorable, participants often recalled these activities as creating context for deeper group discussion following them. This pattern was present with participants across all years of the program. Darius attended the trip specifically to learn about different backgrounds of individuals and found that the “Superhero Cape” activity was an effective way to initiate learning about this for his trip group. In addition to this activity giving him a chance to learn about the backgrounds of his fellow participants, he also saw this as an opportunity to “understand how people arrive at different sets of beliefs” (Darius, Interview).

A few participants from the backpacking years of the trip recalled the particularly important “If You Really Knew Me” activity. Discussed in the pivotal events section of Chapter 4, this activity created conditions for some of the personal connections that were most memorable for participants and will be discussed later in this chapter. “Identity Trees” was another activity which created these conditions for personal sharing and was more often remembered by participants and trip leaders from the Louisiana and Florida years of the trip, including Miranda, Carla, Rachel, and Rebecca.

Although some participants vividly remembered activities and discussions from their trip, others did not recall them or they remembered these types of discussions more generally.
Thomas remembered the importance of “debriefing” (Thomas, Interview) and conversations more generally, but did not hone in on specific details. Other participants vaguely remembered their group “being in a circle” (Sara, Interview), that “we did discuss a lot” (Veronica, Interview), “we drew something, but I can’t remember what we drew” (June, Interview), or that “we wrote something and then discussed it” (Madeline, Interview) but did not remember more specific details of formal activities or discussions. A smaller number of participants (Carla, James, Miranda, Regina) remembered the solo activity and debrief. Lastly, a few participants knew that some kind of activities and formal discussions happened but could not remember what they were or general impressions of them. From my experience, these activities being at the end of long and tiring days sometimes led to trip participants falling asleep, which might explain some of this lack of memory about them.

Similar to participants, trip leaders and myself also recognized the value of formal campfire discussions leading to more informal discussion. When Rachel noted the dynamic of participants having meaningful conversations as a whole group and also in smaller subgroups, she recalled that while meaningful conversation happened in whole groups, “formal discussions sparked an interest to continue it [afterward]” (Rachel, Interview). During my interview, I reflected on the emotional learning tied to environmental justice that was discussed related to Hurricane Katrina. Although we as trip leaders facilitated discussion that helped participants make emotional connections, “often what comes out of those discussions is something much more rich than the formal question that we introduce” (Nathan, Interview).

**Conversations During Unstructured Time and Camp Routines**

Facilitated evening debriefs and diversity activities were often mentioned as precursors to whole group discussions, but unstructured time and conversations during camping routines (e.g.,
making dinner and cleaning up afterwards, setting up tents, traveling in the van between destinations) were the times that participants remembered developing closer connections and engaging in one-on-one conversations. Although these were not literal campfires, the conditions of campfire spaces were still present through many of these interactions. The group was in an informal setting, but the structure of the trip and the previous interactions about sensitive topics created conditions where participants could have deeper discussions. Many participants remembered specific one-on-one or smaller group interactions from their trip. In some cases, participants from the first year of the program remembered details and settings of conversations that occurred seven years prior.

A number of participants mentioned mealtimes as memorable interaction times and often prioritized informal interaction with small groups over whole group conversations. Paul remembered breakfast as a time his group would talk about the day ahead and also when smaller subgroups would split off from the main group for conversations with “closer friends that they had made” (Paul, Interview). While some participants developed closer relationships to particular participants with whom they would often engage such as Paul mentioned, there was also a sense of each participant wanting to interact with all the other participants in their trip group. In some cases, particularly for participants new to outdoor recreation, daily routines and camp chores were important contexts and precursors to meaningful interactions. Miranda, who participated in the Louisiana years of the program remembered the nightly routine of her trip group and how cooking and cleanup led to time for the group to have close conversations. “I could connect with everyone else on the trip,” she said (Miranda, Interview).

Informal settings were also chances for the group to discuss diversity curriculum and other formal activities with other individuals and get to know them better. Brandy remembered
participants in her group making a point to chat with those they had not yet had a chance to talk. She recalled an example of intentionally seeking out someone with whom she had not yet engaged and asking them what they thought of the Hurricane Katrina museum exhibit. She found these opportunities a “good chance to talk to every person on the trip and just learn a little bit more about their stories and their journey so far throughout life” (Brandy, Interview).

Unstructured times were also periods that participants mentioned as times in which they might normally revert to being on their phones if they were back on campus, but being on the trip led them to disconnect and create conversation. This came up more so in conversations with participants from the Louisiana years of the trip, when van rides were longer and there was access to cell service (i.e., they could have used their cell phones but intentionally chose not to). “It was really nice to not be on my phone all the time and not have to worry about what's going on, not have to worry about school,” Amanda (Interview) recalled. Another participant from a different trip year (but also during the Louisiana era of the program) spoke about this same dynamic of choosing not to use technology, but noted conversations in the van as an environment that “makes you kind of grow closer” (Veronica, Interview). Brandy and Thomas, also from the Louisiana years of the trip, remembered the van as a valuable time to connect with peers as well. In contrast, Western North Carolina trips were often out of cell service range with less time in the van, so using a cell phone was less of an individual choice and more so a built-in condition of the trip.

This concept of disconnecting from technology (and creating a chance for interpersonal connections) was also a dynamic of mealtime for some participants. While students certainly eat many meals in groups on campus, DIVE participants noted the ways in which preparing and eating meals on this outdoor trip provided a better chance for interpersonal connections to occur.
Lilly, who was a freshman when attending her trip and identifies as a Hispanic/Latino female, contrasted conversation over meals on the trip to those back at campus. She noted that on the trip she “didn't even feel the need to check [her] phone but I feel like so often during meals [on campus], people are just on their phones” (Lilly, Interview).

Whether it was in the van or in outdoor settings, participants found the amount of time spent with their group led to a greater depth of personal connection. For some, this was contrasted with their experiences in other diversity programs. Sara contrasted her DIVE trip with an on-campus mentor program and noted the importance of spending large amounts of time in close proximity with her DIVE group: “I felt like, on the DIVE trip, I got to go deeper with fewer people” (Sara, Interview).

Outdoor Activities Providing Settings for Connections

While the outdoor activities in which groups engaged were challenging for many participants, there were a number of positive recollections about these components of the trip. In addition to simply appreciating nature, the outdoors and outdoor recreation activities created settings for participants to get to know each other better. Rather than participants recalling how much they enjoyed outdoor activities, they often prioritized memories of meaningful conversations they had with individuals and small groups in canoes, tents, and on the backpacking trail. In contrast to group discussions when participants reflected on the day and transferred the concepts of the trip to broader ideas, outdoor activities were settings when participants engaged in the concrete experiences (Kolb, 1984, 2015) of learning about each other’s lives and views.

The tent at night was often an environment in which participants opened up with each other and remembered specific conversations or getting to know other trip participants more
deeply. Brandy remembered talking with her fellow tentmates far into the night and recalled that despite having “pretty different experiences among the three of us, we were able to connect with each other” (Brandy, Interview). The tent was also a setting for Thomas to learn more about the backgrounds of his two tentmates, who both opened up about their experiences as gay men in a way that Thomas said was “eye-opening” (Interview). This valuable interaction occurred because of the close proximity of the tent, but Thomas remembered that sexual orientation came up in the end-of-day discussion first, leading to an opportunity to discuss it further with his tentmates afterward. Devin, from a different trip year, also recalled that conversation topics would begin around the campfire and “then the deeper conversations would happen in your tents at night. That's when you get to explore a little bit more about the beliefs and asking questions like ‘What do you believe?’” (Devin, Interview).

Participants noted that they were somewhat forced to engage with others on their trip by being in close proximity with each other for the week. The physical space among participants was limited and retreat to individual spaces was not possible. This is in contrast to conventional classroom-based campus programs and even certain longer programs that may involve extended time with other participants, but with more chances for individual escape. Amanda contrasted the DIVE experience with a two-week “camp” experience at another university. She said that, even though she got to know people closely, she had a hotel room and the conveniences of modern-day life that kept her from fully engaging with other participants as much as she did on her DIVE trip. The removal from the daily routine of campus and turning off phones was a fairly common sentiment across multiple trip years. In addition to Amanda’s observations, Brandy, Camille, Darius, Devin, James, Miranda, Rachel, Sara, and Veronica all mentioned the aspect of being disconnected from technology as one that facilitated the group becoming close
with each other in this outdoor setting. There was a sense that, even though participants were on a campus program trip with students from their university, participants were a different version of themselves without technology and the norms of daily life.

Although the outdoor setting of the trip facilitated some of this disconnection, it was the exception not the norm for participants to cite the power of nature or beautiful outdoor scenery as a major factor. Participants mentioned canoeing being “relaxing” (Amanda, Interview) or nature being “magic, like the fire and the stars” (Trina, Interview), but this was often mentioned as a smaller component of an overall memory rather than attributing nature for creating the experience. This is important to note for later discussion, because faculty and staff need not plan exotic or picturesque destinations to reap the benefits of groups being removed from everyday campus life.

The outliers among participants, who did recall the power of the outdoors as an important part of their DIVE trip experience, were often male participants who remembered specific moments when nature was a powerful setting for the group. Derek recalled a cold morning yoga session where the group waited for the “sun to come over the mountain” (Derek, Interview). Derek was initially most interested in the rock climbing aspect of the DIVE trip. Although he had spent time at the beach as a younger person, he had very limited camping experience, only having been once with his family, and he had never been backpacking. Devin, also from the backpacking years of the trip, remembered “appreciating the sun and getting a restart in your sleep schedule” (Devin, Interview). James, another backpacking participant, possibly seemed the most connected to the power of the outdoors when he said that “you can’t tame wilderness” and remembered the “hiking trails and sleeping under stars with people of different backgrounds” (James, Interview). James had limited previous outdoor experience, having been
coping once previously, and went on the trip for something to do over spring break, because it was free, and due to his adventurous spirit. In addition to the outdoor elements of the trip, he appreciated that his trip group came together through adversity and shared group decisions.

Participants across all years of the program mentioned specific outdoor activities (i.e., backpacking, canoeing, camping), but often the activity was more a context for meaningful exchanges or group dynamics, rather than the focus of the memory. Certain outdoor activities seemed to be especially conducive to close conversation, in particular hiking during the backpacking years of the trip and canoeing on the Louisiana years. Both of these activities created subgroup environments by virtue of their logistics: trails for backpacking are generally narrow and frequently required the group to move in a single-file line (meaning one person would be in front of you and one person behind you to talk to, not the whole group at a time) and canoes are usually two-person vessels creating a necessarily one-on-one environment (and canoes often become spread out on the water, so you cannot hear conversation from another boat). A participant from the canoeing years of the program noticed this dynamic in their group and that canoeing was a chance for “you and one other person or you and two other people, where there's a chance for everyone to speak their full story and it was more intimate” (Michael, Interview). Michael went on the trip to try something new and to meet new people. He did not have much previous outdoors experience. Despite being challenged by getting sick on the trip, Michael appreciated learning about the backgrounds of other participants in his group.

Trip leaders and staff also spoke about the trip providing a chance for groups to interact with each other in an outdoor environment and outside of the routine of daily life. In contrast to participants, trip leaders and staff were more apt to associate group outcomes with the nature setting and outdoor activities. Alayna, a trip leader during the backpacking years of the trip,
recalled rock climbing as an impactful experience for her group, but this was not mentioned very often by participants. Rachel, one of the student trip leaders in the later years of the program, spoke about the group coming together and attributed some of it to being outdoors and also to the “conversations we were having and putting everybody on the same level with outdoor skills and addressing difficult topics” (Rachel, Interview). In this quote and later in our conversation, Rachel made a connection between the participants learning new skills and how they came together as a group. This newness of experience created opportunities for cognitive disequilibrium and growth (Gurin et al., 2002) as participants were not only engaging with diverse peers but also encountering outdoor skills and settings they had not previously experienced.

Trip leaders also recognized that it was often the conversation that occurred during unstructured time that was a time when group members got to know each other and share personal backgrounds. Scott, a trip leader from the Louisiana years of the trip, remembered “cooking dinner or hanging around camp” (Scott, Interview) as the time when the group interactions were meaningful, in addition to conversations in the van. Wade, also a trip leader during the Louisiana years, remembered meals as an important time for conversation and a chance for participants to “shoot the breeze” (Wade, Interview), while sharing about their lives and personal backgrounds.

During my conversation with Ashley, the program founder, we discussed aspects of the trip that we thought were valuable for participants and the different philosophies of outdoor education. Ashley and I have somewhat similar professional backgrounds of instructing for Outward Bound, completing graduate assistantships in campus outdoor recreation, and working as professional staff in similar campus outdoor recreation positions, but the design of the trip in
her years of administering the program was different than my design. The primary differences were the activities (backpacking vs. canoeing), location (Western North Carolina vs. Louisiana), and remoteness of the experience (backcountry travel in a wilderness setting vs. car camping in a front-country setting). In addition, the Louisiana years of the trip added an environmental justice component that was not part of the initial program design (and cut out some of the diversity curriculum that was facilitated in the initial years).

As a trip leader, I recall many memories of trip participants sharing personal stories and details of their lives in all of the settings mentioned in this section. During the long drives to Louisiana, I remember times when most of the van was asleep but two participants who had never met each other until this trip were sharing life struggles, academic experiences, family backgrounds, and other topics that would normally be reserved for closer friendships. Likewise, throughout group discussions in outdoor settings, participants would share facets of their lives and experiences that they indicated were things they had not shared with friend groups on campus. This occurred in formal discussions at times, but it was usually in other settings (as participants mentioned, in tents at night, around the campfire, or in a canoe) when individuals would seem to form a closeness with peers of different backgrounds and identities on the trip. Some of these moments occurred in outdoor settings, but it was more important that these students were simply removed from a daily routine or typical on-campus setting than it was that they were surrounded by nature and experiencing the outdoors.

**Powerful Personal Connections**

The majority of DIVE participants in this study were new to the outdoors. The idea of embarking on a new adventure or seeing new destinations was the motivation for coming on the trip, but the personal connections that students made with diverse peers were more meaningful
than the outdoor experiences. When outdoor environments or activities were mentioned by participants, it was more as a context for conversations or learning about a peer’s personal background, rather than the primary focus of their memory about the trip. Even for participants who spoke extensively about the outdoor aspect of the trip, this seemed to be in support of a greater outcome of bringing a diverse group together. Madeline, who participated in the Louisiana years of the trip, thought nature was important for her experience, but it was the “really close connections” (Madeline, Interview) she made during the trip and continued afterward that stood out more strongly. In a similar vein, Darius (who primarily wanted to go on a free backpacking trip) reflected on the trip as an opportunity to learn about others’ beliefs, in particular fellow participants of different faiths and sexual orientations. “I enjoyed that because it allowed us to really appreciate each other’s beliefs and gain an understanding of each other,” he said (Darius, Interview).

Participants often remembered the details of their fellow participants’ backgrounds from many years earlier. In some cases, these led them to challenge previous assumptions they had about certain identities or campus group stereotypes. For participants who attended during the Louisiana years of the trip, meeting visitors to the group who were being directly impacted by coastal land loss was a powerful lesson and stayed with participants well beyond the trip itself. Throughout each of the subthemes within this theme, there are numerous indicators of deep experiential learning and learning about diversity.

**Learning about Personal Backgrounds**

When participants spoke about conversations on the trip, some were referring to facilitated group discussions, but many mentioned smaller conversations with one or two other participants where they learned about someone’s personal backgrounds. These were detailed as
direct experiences in previous sections (i.e., when participants recalled making meals together and having close conversations), but there were also the times when participants would return to a memory of an individual interaction and recall with great clarity learning about a peer. For some participants, including Richard who participated in the early backpacking years of the trip, this aspect of their trip stood out most when they considered their trip as a whole. “Getting to interact with all those people and learn their stories was pretty amazing,” he said, “I mean, that's one thing that stands out, like more than the outdoors part, is just the people and their backgrounds” (Richard, Interview). An international graduate student at the time of his trip, Richard mentioned that his original motivation for attending the trip was the allure of going backpacking and using the trip as a chance to explore this new activity type. Throughout our conversation and prior to making his summarizing statement, he was able to recall specific interactions with other participants years after the trip.

Other participants from these early years of the program also recalled specific interactions that stuck with them over the years. Learning about religious and cultural identities came up in interviews and some participants seemed to be interacting with someone of a different faith or culture for the first time in a meaningful way on their trip. Jasmine remembered having a “very in-depth conversation with her about religion” (Jasmine, Interview) and learning more about the prayer practices of her fellow participant who was Muslim. Alexis remembered having positive interactions with a fellow participant she identified as Middle Eastern. Deanna, also a participant from the backpacking years of the program, related that her previous experience “where a lot of Middle Eastern men don't like to talk to women” (Deanna, Interview) was challenged when she found that a fellow participant of Middle Eastern descent “broke all the stereotypes that I had” (Deanna, Interview).
Race and ethnicity were discussed on the trips and went more deeply than simply acknowledging structural inequities and learning about interpersonal abuse related to race (i.e., so-called ‘microaggressions’). On the DIVE trips, staff and trip leaders implemented curriculum and facilitated discussions that encouraged all trip participants to think about and discuss their own racial and ethnic identities. While students of color are often expected to educate others about race and racism in educational contexts, it was important to me that White students were confronted with interrogating their Whiteness on these trips (since many White students have not been put in positions to do this, as students of color are so often). One way this happened early during the trips was through the Identity Trees activity, which I facilitated during each of the four years I led this trip. During this activity, I role modeled by discussing my White, cis-gender, and male identities and shared some of the ways I have experienced unearned privileges as a result of my privileged identities. This technique has seemed to encourage other participants (particularly White males) to address their own racial backgrounds openly through this activity. There have been instances when students from privileged backgrounds have become emotional while acknowledging that they have not had to address their racial identity before this point.

There are indications from participants I interviewed that this dynamic of majority-identity groups confronting their identities and privilege occurred outside of these formal activities and for others beyond those I personally witnessed. Alayna, a student trip leader during the early years of the program, recalled an example in which two students found common ground around their struggles in coming to college in a way which was unexpected for both of them. While the White student had benefits of racial privilege, the student of color was from a higher socioeconomic upbringing. Discussing their identities and experiences led to the “student of color having a conversation with a White student and the White student just sharing their
upbringing and being working class and the student of color not being working class and them finding commonalities in their struggles” (Alayna, Interview).

In addition to personal backgrounds of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, the DIVE trip was also a chance for some participants to learn about college students beyond traditional higher education pathways. This was the case for Brianna who recalled that a fellow trip participant, who is a military veteran and married, was not “what we would associate with a student at NC State,” and she learned that, “some people have more life than being a student here” (Brianna, Interview). In a similar way of finding out about backgrounds that were previously unknown to participants, Camille recalled learning about the prior hardships of a fellow participant around the campfire one night. The participant shared her struggles being adopted and that it was “heartbreaking” for Camille to hear, but that she also had “some intense experiences that I was able to talk about and feel like everybody in the group was super understanding” (Camille, Interview).

Wade, who was a trip leader during the Louisiana years of the program, had observations of his trip group learning about each other’s backgrounds and also made discoveries of his own related to diversity. After describing ways in which the group shared information about their diverse identities and backgrounds on the trip, he described his own learning as “eye-opening” and that he recognized how “hard it is to really, truly understand what someone wants to be seen as and identified as” (Wade, Interview).

In addition to learning about particular identities or backgrounds of students on the trip, participants found that the trip was an opportunity to interact with campus subgroups to which they otherwise would not be exposed. A recurring theme was noted by participants who mentioned having a homogenous group to which they belonged on campus, such as an academic
major or concentration, and seeing their trip as an opportunity to interact with university students outside of this group. One participant, Ethan, remembered that he usually interacted with fellow environmental science students on campus, but the trip gave him a chance to get to know students who were studying social sciences and were outside of his “normal bubble” (Ethan, Interview). Veronica also had a similar experience of interacting with students outside of her academic major because on-campus she would typically interact only with other engineering majors. “Basically, that’s all I do [back on campus],” she said (Veronica, Interview). This was mentioned in a positive light because it encouraged Veronica to find other things to talk about and learn from their peers, other than conversations about classes within her major.

Assumptions Challenged

Some participants simply spoke of learning about others’ backgrounds and gaining from personal connections on their trip, but 12 participants (like Deanna above, who had stereotypes broken) had assumptions challenged when interacting with peers of diverse identities. For Derek, who participated in the backpacking years of the program and identifies as a White male, learning about the experiences of a fellow trip participant who was gay, led him to question his beliefs. He recalled that learning about the struggles of this fellow participant led him to question his beliefs and that the following year, when he attended as a trip leader, he “did not identify as a Christian [any longer]” and that the trip experience made him question his “belief structure for the better” (Derek, Interview).

Not all participants tied learning about a specific identity to internal discoveries, like Derek did, but a number of them spoke about the trip giving them a chance to learn more about the complexities of individuals beyond surface identities. These opportunities occurred during structured activities (in particular, the “If You Really Knew Me” and “Identity Trees” activities
were mentioned), but this also occurred during unstructured time, on the trail during backpacking, or when paddling a canoe with one other person. Other participants summarized the trip overall as a chance to get beneath the surface and learn deeper things about fellow students, like James who went on DIVE during the backpacking years of the trip. He saw his trip as a chance to hear about the complexity of fellow participants as individuals, learning that “people are a lot more complicated than what meets the eye and things you see on the surface level” (James, Interview). This idea of the trip causing participants to think more deeply about their communities at the university was present across years of trip groups. Brandy, who went on the trip when it traveled to Louisiana, had her assumption challenged that everyone at the university “had college-educated parents and was going to go to college” (Brandy, Interview). She cited the trip as making her “more aware of how I approach people and make assumptions about them” (Brandy, Interview).

This theme of having assumptions challenged about specific communities within the university came up multiple times. There seemed to be a number of preconceived notions that participants may have had about groups at the university and not necessarily seeing them as groups they would interact with if given the choice. On the DIVE trip, they had to interact with individuals from different groups at times to lasting effect, as in Brianna’s case when she described interacting with a fellow participant who was in a sorority that helped her “change my mind or not be so quick to judge because she didn't fit that group that I had in my head” (Brianna, Interview).

While some campus groups mentioned were specific to university-settings (i.e., sororities), other identities mentioned were groups that were present on campus, but also had stereotypes outside of the campus setting as well. Jasmine, who identifies as an African
American/Multiracial female, participated in the Western North Carolina backpacking years of the trip and found common ground with a politically conservative male on the trip with whom she initially thought she would have nothing in common. Thomas, who identifies as a White male, found that he expected a particular female participant on the trip to be typical of White people from the state, but learned more about the complexity of their background. After assuming the fellow participant was a “normal White girl from North Carolina,” he found that she had a “different background from what my assumptions were” (Thomas, Interview). In a similar vein, Carla described interacting with a leader on her trip (who is White) and finding commonality in their backgrounds. This was surprising to her and challenged her assumption that her family situation was unique, when she discovered they both had grandmothers who were socially conservative, in opposition to their personal beliefs. For some participants, change or new awareness was attributed to learning about personal backgrounds and having assumptions challenged. Michael spoke about how it encouraged him to meet different people and be “less averse to interacting with people from different cultures” (Michael, Interview).

In addition to having assumptions challenged by others, some participants also confronted assumptions they had about themselves and their physical or mental limits. This was the case for Deanna, who seemed to be surprised by the level of discovery she went through on her trip to the Western North Carolina mountains. She recalled learning deeper things about herself, “not just about my limits physically, but also how I could be as a person in general” (Deanna, Interview). It is important to note that there is reflection indicated here beyond just remembering the trip itself and considering it an isolated experience. Deanna’s example suggests that she developed some abstract conceptualization (Kolb, 1984, 2015) by generalizing the learning about herself beyond the trip and to her as an individual more generally.
Interactions with Locals and Subject Matter Experts

During the 2016-2019 trip years when the program traveled to the Louisiana Gulf Coast, trip groups interacted with visitors to the group to learn more about the impacts of coastal land loss. These interactions took the form of meeting naturalists, longtime coastal residents, tourism officials, individuals in the seafood industry, and others throughout rural Louisiana, which 13 participants in this study found valuable. Carla tied coastal land loss issues to interactions with visitors and broader environmental justice concern and said, “there's so many more problems in the world than just our little first-world problem and just getting everyone's point of views and different perspectives on it” (Carla, Interview). Brianna remembered when her group interacted with a seafood industry business owner on her trip and that it led to a deep discussion about diversity with her trip group and the idea that “diversity doesn’t mean just skin color” (Brianna, Interview). Jack appreciated when his group met up with two oystermen and got to know their way of life and appreciated the ways in which the head oystermen was “not motivated by money and just wants to be in the community and have a positive impact” (Jack, Interview). Madeline recalled meeting visitors with different connections to coastal land loss and realizing “how connected all these stories are” (Madeline, Interview). Lastly, Ethan stressed the importance of “how the people that we met perceived things” (Ethan, Interview) related to the environmental catastrophe of coastal land loss.

Interactions with visitors to the group were also found to be important for student trip leaders from the Louisiana trip years. This was the case for Scott, who found this to be his favorite aspect of the trip despite initially being most excited for the outdoor leadership component of this experience. He described “how hospitable everyone was to us and welcoming” (Scott, Interview), in particular a member of the United Houma Nation Tribe the
group visited and two oyster fishermen with whom the group interacted. “I got a lot more from
the conversations and the interactions with people than I thought I would,” he said (Scott,
Interview). I also recall trip leaders listening intently with their group throughout each of the
other Louisiana years. Trip leaders seemed to be just as heartbroken to learn about the uncertain
future of Grand Isle and its residents in the face of coastal land loss. They engaged with the
representative from the Nature Conservancy and asked questions about her personal history on
the island and the importance of the last remaining forest there. Throughout these experiences,
the trip leaders (and myself and other professional staff on the trips) were experiencing the
richness of the people and communities we were visiting along with the trip participants.

Findings from this study show that some participant themes were common across all of
these trip years, but others were more or less present depending on the trip year. In particular,
the aspect of physical challenge and discomfort was more pronounced during the backpacking
years of the trip and the emotional challenge theme was more pronounced during the canoeing
and environmental justice years of the trip. During my conversation with Ashley, we discussed
this idea of using challenge and the resulting difficulty level for participants. Ashley spoke about
the perspective of making hard trips accessible, even though they were more physically
demanding, and I spoke about the idea of outdoor trips being challenging for newcomers
regardless of the level of physical challenge (e.g., backpacking in comparison to car camping).
While our approaches do not represent polar opposites (and each of us values the other’s design
of this program), these different choices created different experiences for participants and are
worthy of discussion, particularly for contemporary outdoor professionals. This dynamic has
implications for outdoor education professionals which will be discussed in the last chapter of
this study.
My conversation with Ashley and subsequent participant interviews also led me to question whether I (as a cis-gender, White male) limited the outcomes of the DIVE trips for participants. I often question my role as a diversity educator who bears so many privileged identities. Interviewing participants who spoke about Ashley in high regard and appreciated having a trip leader who was a “badass” (Sara, Interview) made me wonder whether participants would benefit more greatly from having a trip leader with marginalized identities. Devin recalled that “getting to interact with Ashley and get to know her on a personal level. I thought that was pretty cool,” (Devin, Interview). Bryan appreciated Ashley role modeling vulnerability and “seeing her live and lead was already making me comfortable” (Bryan, Interview).

Although I have a number of majority identities and privileges, reflecting on these interviews throughout data analysis reminded me that my own vulnerability is a powerful tool that can be used through these programs. I have challenges with mental health, struggling family members, new forays as a small business owner, previous academic setbacks, and other aspects of my personal background that could help participants feel more comfortable opening up with their trip group. I also bring this awareness and challenge to the selection of student trip leaders and accompanying professional staff, trying whenever possible to create a leadership team of diverse identities. I have also learned to modify my leadership style so that I am not always the one talking at the front of the group (or “mansplaining” as the popular expression says). In creating space for participants and locals that the group interacts with, I tried to demonstrate a more collaborative approach to leadership and encourage diverse voices to have greater volume.

**Theoretical Framework Analysis**

Rather than using theoretical frameworks to limit the findings, the thematic analysis presented in this chapter has thus far allowed the emergence of themes and subthemes from what
participants themselves found most important about their experience in the DIVE program.

Theoretical connections have been made throughout this chapter, with themes of the study as the focal points. This final section will shift to a theoretical analysis with the two theoretical frameworks which informed the study as the focal point and lens through which a summary analysis will be conducted. These theoretical frameworks, Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences and Kolb’s (1984; 2015) theory of experiential learning, both enlighten perspectives on these findings individually but also contain powerful connections when combined.

**Theory of Campus Diversity Experiences**

Viewing the findings through Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences demonstrates the ways in which the DIVE experience was not a self-contained trip disconnected from the campus environment. In addition to the informal interactional diversity participants experienced on the trip itself (which were reviewed in the sections above on learning about personal backgrounds and assumptions challenged), some participants also related their interactions on the trip to the broader campus environment. The diversity experiences of participants on the trip were often framed in comparison to their on-campus encounters with diversity (or lack thereof). For some majority-identity students, the university and participant friend groups on-campus (i.e., part of structural diversity and institutional characteristics in Gurin et al.’s theory) were viewed as diverse. One White participant from a rural background, Amelia, had very positive recollections on her diversity experience at the university, recalling “I felt truly free to be myself and to have really meaningful interactions with a diverse student body and a diverse faculty as well” (Amelia, Interview). Wade, a White male trip leader, also
commented at one point during our interview “how beautiful and diverse NC State specifically was, as a community” (Wade, Interview).

There were some indications that the DIVE trip experience influenced the perception students had of the diversity of the institution after the trip. Miranda, a White female participant, found that the connections she formed with individuals in her trip group expanded the network of students she interacted with. She commented that, after the trip, she had “special connections with people that you probably would have previously, like before the trip, just passed and not really thought anything of on campus” (Miranda, Interview). Within Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory of campus diversity experiences, Miranda’s informal interactional diversity from the trip carried over into informal interactional diversity on campus. This highlights one of many instances in which the experiences of participants indicated intersections between Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory and Kolb’s (1984, 2015) theory of experiential learning; when Miranda transferred the connections she made on the trip to the campus environment, she demonstrated abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Likewise, Michael, a Black male student, found that the trip made him “want to interact with different people more” (Michael, Interview).

Other participants also shared this dynamic of their trip group creating interactions that would not have otherwise occurred on campus, even with the presence of structural diversity. In line with Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory that stressed that structural diversity on campus alone is not enough to create informal interactional diversity, Thomas noted that his trip group’s diversity and their interactions were unlike what would normally occur. He noted that, on campus, “people typically associate with the people that are most like them” (Thomas, Interview) and that he enjoyed interacting with students on his trip with whom he would not normally interact. Rebecca noted that interactional diversity was somewhat due to her group being in this new
outdoor environment, rather than campus, and “being more honest and open than you would be in real life when you realize you have your guard up” (Rebecca, Interview).

Some participants attributed the campus routine of sticking to familiar people and communication safeguards to academic majors, which were “very homogenous in a lot of ways” (Sara, Interview). Veronica, who was an engineering major, noted that she “normally just interacted with other engineers” (Veronica, Interview) indicating a limited amount of communication outside of this academic area. Even though this particular university is a predominantly White institution (PWI), some participants noted that their academic program was homogenous in other ways than being mostly White students. Richard, who participated in the DIVE program as a graduate student, noted that his graduate program was “mostly Chinese students who came from China or people from India” and that his trip group was “definitely a different ethnic and diverse background from what I get to interact with on a day-to-day basis” (Richard, Interview). Viewing Richard’s experience through the lens of Gurin et al. (2002), he seems to have an impression of his diversity experiences at the university being fairly limited.

The pressure on minoritized students to educate others about diversity or feel responsible for addressing race in a way not experienced by White students was present for some participants I interviewed. For Brianna, DIVE felt different than previous diversity programs she had participated in, because she was not singled out as the only student of color in the program. Referring to a previous on-campus diversity program experience, she said, “you don't see anybody that looks like you that you feel like you can identify with, but [program facilitators] are saying the word ‘diversity’” (Brianna, Interview). Some participants of color in the study expressed what made the DIVE program trip different from other diversity interventions. For some, there seemed to be a sense of cognitive disequilibrium and growth per Gurin et al.’s
(2002) theory, feeling relief at not being the only student of color in a group (as they experienced on campus at this university). Sara recalled her experience on campus as often being the “only [person of color] in a lot of groups” and feeling a “big sense of belongingness” (Sara, Interview) on the trip being in a group with a diversity of identities represented.

Alayna, a trip leader in the program, also expressed a similar feeling of belongingness that was a dramatic shift from previous experiences. In her interview, she spoke about the unfortunate dynamic of outdoor recreation spaces often being White spaces and not feeling welcomed or represented prior to the DIVE trip. She expressed that the trip as “the first time that I got to go outside with other people who look like me” and that the feeling of not being “the only one anymore” (Alayna, Interview) encouraged her to continue her pursuit of outdoor recreation as a career. Prior to this trip, Alayna had planned to discontinue her work with the outdoor program due to feeling othered amidst a work environment in which there were no other students of color. The trip was a point of cognitive disequilibrium when her previous experiences of feeling like the only one amongst her outdoor recreation colleagues was interrupted by being surrounded by a diverse group. She was encouraged to pursue outdoor education as a career path partially due to her experience being involved with the DIVE program.

Cognitive disequilibrium and indications of growth were also present for some participants who became more aware of discrimination by hearing of the experiences of their fellow trip participants. This was an outcome for Derek and Thomas learning about the experiences of their gay peer participants; Michael who was encouraged to interact more with peers of difference; and Jasmine who discovered she could find common ground with politically conservative peers. Richard, who was an international graduate student when he attended the trip, remembered stories that others on his trip group shared of experiencing discrimination.
Hearing other’s stories “surprised [him] as to how much discrimination and bias exists” (Richard, Interview). I was surprised that Richard had not witnessed or experienced very much discrimination or bias, particularly given the xenophobia in recent segments of U.S. politics and attitudes. I asked him whether he had experienced discrimination as an international student and he said that he had witnessed situations similar to ones described by fellow participants, but had “never paid close attention to it” (Richard, Interview).

**Theory of Experiential Learning**

Alayna’s application of her experience from the trip to her future plans of becoming an outdoor recreation professional is an example of the experiential learning that occurred for both participants and trip leaders through the DIVE experience. In this case and a few others, experiential learning was related to the informal interactional diversity that was present (creating a link between experiential learning theory and the theory of campus diversity that will be discussed in Chapter 6). In addition to the trip being a chance to experience the outdoors with other students of color and the importance of having space to discuss diversity issues, Alayna spoke about the importance of having a role model in Ashley, the program founder. “If it wasn’t for Ashley, I don’t think that I would have stuck with doing outdoor education because I felt so othered,” she said, “and because I felt like I just that wasn't a space that was safe for me” (Alayna, Interview).

The significance of the trip experience for Alayna’s choice of career path is perhaps the most pronounced, but other examples among participants and trip leaders of that manifest the experiential learning process as well. Patterns of experiential learning were present for participants primarily in two different areas. The process of learning about the environment or outdoor recreation and using this learning in other contexts (named “outdoor experiential
learning” here) was experienced by nine of the participants in this study. There were also participants who engaged with their group and other individuals on their trip and experienced learning (titled “group and interpersonal experiential learning” below) that influenced future interactions, on campus and beyond. This pattern seemed to occur in a pronounced way for a smaller group of six participants in this study.

**Outdoor experiential learning.** The outdoor recreation aspect of the trip experience led to future outdoor opportunities for some, particularly those who were new to the outdoors prior to their trip. Sara said her trip was “life changing” (Sara, Interview) and, despite dismissing the allure of outdoor recreation previously, became an avid outdoor enthusiast following her experience. She recalled the DIVE trip being “a set of experiences that I don't think I would have had otherwise. And now I love nature. And I go camping all the time” (Sara, Interview). In terms of experiential learning, Sara used her DIVE trip experience and applied this love and knowledge of the outdoors to spending a year-and-a-half camping and living out of a jeep with her husband full-time. In this example, Sara not only went through the reflective observation (the initial stage of experiential learning theory following concrete experience) of realizing that outdoor recreation was something she could do, but also abstractly conceptualizing this to other opportunities (i.e., wondering how she could get more outdoor experience), and actively experimenting with this newfound passion by hiking more and camping with her husband as a lifestyle.

From my experience with the program, Sara is an outlier in terms of how much the outdoor experience of the trip influenced her future, but other participants noted that the trip led them to opportunities and realizations that would not have occurred without their trip. Like Alayna, Tonya’s trip experience led her to choose an outdoor-related job following her trip (that
coincided with her last semester before graduating). She attributed the self-efficacy she gained on the trip to this choice, noting that she would not have been comfortable living outside as part of the job requirements, but the DIVE trip gave her “the confidence and the inspiration to do so” (Tonya, Interview). There are multiple aspects of Kolb’s (1984, 2015) experiential learning theory present in Tonya’s experience. Tonya went through reflective observation when she recognized the self-efficacy she gained from the trip; abstract conceptualization was demonstrated by finding other opportunities like DIVE that she could potentially take on; active experimentation occurred by taking a job where she could comfortably use the outdoor skills that she gained on her trip.

Participants reported other ways that their DIVE trip led them to feel more comfortable with the outdoors and pursue outdoor recreation more often as a result of their trip. Melissa reflectively observed this when she recalled that the trip gave the group a chance to reconnect with nature, noting “being outside, we were able to reform relationships with the outdoors again, as people” (Melissa, Interview). Brandy had a very brief initial experience with outdoor recreation; her dad set up a tent for a night in their backyard and their family slept in it to satisfy her request to go camping as a young child. Following the DIVE trip however, she pursued additional outdoor recreation opportunities and noted the ways in which the DIVE trip helped her be “more comfortable with the outdoors,” “more into the outdoors,” and that it gave her a “greater appreciation for nature” (Brandy, Interview). This idea of the DIVE trip spurring future trips and adventures, a type of active experimentation in Kolb’s (1984, 2015) experiential learning theory, was evident in Michael’s experience as well. He found the DIVE trip created a sense of self-efficacy where he could pursue other outdoor trips and also other road trips with
long drives (as on his DIVE trip experience). “It kind of just opened doors for a lot of things that I now do and don't think about how I might not be able to,” he said (Michael, Interview).

Devin used the skills he learned on the trip to help others get outside and encouraged the same type of self-efficacy that he experienced on his DIVE trip. Following the trip experience, he founded a non-profit which provides trips for a variety of outcomes, including a program that targeted individuals with depression. He said that program was designed to give participants a sense of self-efficacy and the “idea was knowing that giving them something to fight for and overcome was going to give them a sense of confidence that they couldn't get anywhere else” (Devin, Interview). Devin discussed the ways he first saw this self-efficacy among participants on his DIVE trip, leading to the abstract conceptualization indicated when he recognizes that the self-efficacy gained through outdoor activities can be applied to mental struggles as well.

Other participants recognized the experiential learning and development of their fellow participants on the trip as well. Richard, from the Western North Carolina backpacking years of the trip, remembered a fellow participant who was not comfortable sitting on the ground at the beginning of the trip, but was able to have a valuable experience on the trip and abstractly conceptualize the outdoors as a more inviting environment afterwards. I interviewed the participant that Richard referenced in this anecdote and the participant’s own impressions of his experience are consistent with Richard’s observations. Richard recalled how this participant had never slept in a tent but the trip experience of learning to live for a week in the woods with fewer comforts of home created a sense of confidence and self-reliance. The trip changed this participant’s “perspective of what you need to be happy” (Richard, Interview).

While Richard was referring to a participant from the Western North Carolina backpacking years of the trip, outdoor experiential learning from challenge and discomfort was
present in participants from later years of the trip as well. As discussed above in the section on the emotional discomfort of learning about structural inequities, participant learning about the devastation of Hurricane Katrina or spoke with coastal residents who would be losing their homes to sea level rise caused them to reflect on the difficult emotions of this learning. In addition to the quotes shared previously, other participants also related this learning back to their lives at the university, in a form of abstract conceptualization (Kolb, 1984, 2015). Damon connected what he learned on his group’s trip to the Louisiana Gulf Coast to his academic studies and the interconnectedness of disciplinary fields. Noting that coastal land loss required professionals from a number of professions (e.g., environmental scientists, engineers, public policy experts), he recognized that “you can't just be an engineer because, if you're an engineer, your work has social implications” (Damon, Interview).

For other participants from the Louisiana years that learned from the hardships being experienced there, the visceral experience of being immersed in this environment brought about experiential learning that transferred back to campus and home. Lilly compared the humidity and heat in Louisiana to the weather she experienced at home as a way of abstractly conceptualizing and connecting to her experience upon reflection. She recalled how experiencing the heat of Louisiana and seeing the impacts of coastal land loss led her to “realize that we need to do something about it and take care of the environment more” (Lilly, Interview). Other participants during the Louisiana years of the trip experienced similar abstract conceptualization when they reflected on the environmental justice aspects of the trip. Miranda remembered learning about the cultures and lifestyles of people that she encountered on the group’s Louisiana trip and then shared the ways in which she had continued to apply what she experienced on the trip as she considered natural disasters. She recalled that, following the trip,
when she learned of hurricanes that were displacing communities on the North Carolina coast she wondered, “How is this affecting the people that are living there? And when are they going to get back to their homes?” (Miranda, Interview).

In all of these examples, participant learning went beyond the direct experience of the DIVE trip and was transformed by reflection and ensuing experiences. Not all participants in this section went through every stage of Kolb’s (1984; 2015) experiential learning theory and actively experimented with the new knowledge they gained, but there were indications that their trip experience would influence future thoughts and decisions. Both Lilly and Miranda spoke passionately about the environmental justice topics their groups learned about and I can imagine their new knowledge informing their future voting or community involvement. I can reflect on a number of other participants throughout the trip who listened intently as a Grand Isle resident described what coastal land loss was doing to their livelihoods. Based on these reactions, the discussions that followed, and interviews throughout this study, it was clear that program participants developed a connection with outdoor places and the people who rely on them in ways that they had not before.

**Group and interpersonal experiential learning.** Not all experiential learning related to the outdoor environment encountered by participants on the trip. The experiences of some participants interacting with their fellow group members led to an increased sense of self-efficacy for students to communicate across lines of diversity. In some cases, using the stages of Kolb’s (1984; 2015) theory of experiential learning, participants developed abstract conceptualization of their interactions on the trip resulting in active experimentation and increased interest in communicating with peers of difference following the trip. Michael spoke about experiences communicating with other participants on his trip and referred to it as a
learning experience of interacting with others who have different communication styles and backgrounds. He then went on to say that the trip experience made him “want to interact with different people more” and made him “less averse to interacting with people from different cultures” (Michael, Interview).

Like Michael, there were other participants who recognized other contexts beyond the DIVE trip to apply skills gained or perspectives learned. Participants relayed ways in which the group dynamic and the experience of making group decisions taught them skills they would apply later. For Deanna, this meant taking the lesson of vulnerability and applying it to future pursuits in the workforce. After she gave an example of being vulnerable and trusting fellow participants on her trip, she associated this learning with trusting colleagues in a work environment. “If you learn to trust those around you and trust the right people,” she said, “then you build a team, a relationship with those people” (Deanna, Interview). She went on to give hypothetical examples of both trusting other colleagues and also encouraging them to trust her in a helping capacity. June, who entered a graduate program in genetic counseling following her undergraduate experience, connected some of the concepts and learning from the DIVE program to her current academic pursuits. She said the DIVE trip experience affirmed her interest in diversity issues and gave her an additional lens through which to view, for example, “deconstructing race and medicine and health” (June, Interview).

Other participants recalled using the skills or comfort with group experiences from the trip more immediately when they returned to campus. Alexis spoke about being more comfortable after the DIVE trip finding things in common with other students back on campus, [The DIVE trip] helped in finding a group in whatever environment I was in. Something I learned from DIVE was that you don't really need to know people to start a conversation.
There's always something that you can find in common with someone to start a conversation. And so, with anything outside of DIVE that I did, it was easier to talk to people (Alexis, Interview).

DIVE trip influence on participants’ interactions with the campus environment was present in other interviews as well. Miranda found that she viewed her on-campus work environment, where she was an instructor for the campus recreation group fitness program, differently following her DIVE trip and interactions with diverse peers. She recognized that, while the participants taking group fitness classes were often visibly diverse, the instructors in the program were more homogenous and generally White women.

Following the trip and these realizations, Miranda worked with professional staff on strategies to diversify their student staff and identify “barriers that we could be breaking down in order to encourage more of a diverse staff” (Miranda, Interview). Through this anecdote, Miranda exhibited abstract conceptualization (Kolb, 1984, 2015) when she recognized the value of diversity within her trip group and then compared the group fitness staff and participant diversity. She then took it a step further and acted on these realizations by trying to create positive changes in the diversity of this campus staff group.

In addition to Deanna above, the interpersonal experiential learning extended beyond college for other participants as well. James, who was working as a community organizer and encouraging people to vote during the time period when I interviewed him formed abstract conceptualizations about the interpersonal interactions he had on the trip and those in his present-day work life. He said that, before the DIVE trip, he had an “inkling of political interest and I studied political science but the lessons I learned in that DIVE trip are pretty much the same lessons I learn when I interact with people in the community [where I do community
organizing]” (James, interview). For James, he contrasted the lessons of the DIVE trip with the “readings and lectures” (James, Interview) of classes in college. He said that both types of learning were useful but that conversations with peers, like he had on the DIVE trip, were more needed for current students to encourage civil dialogue around contentious topics.

**Theory of Experiential Learning x Theory of Campus Diversity Experiences**

Two participants experienced informal interactional or curricular diversity that did not seem to immediately produce cognitive disequilibrium or growth, but after going through the later phases of experiential learning, did attribute growth to their DIVE trip experience. These instances indicate a more distinct combining or melding of Gurin et al.’s (2002) and Kolb’s (1984, 2015) theories than previous examples (thus the “x” nomenclature used in the section heading). While curricular diversity was not the most significant aspect of participant diversity experiences on the DIVE trips, some participants did attribute growth resulting from it. This was the case for Derek, who found the “Steps to Privilege” impactful, not simply as a self-contained activity that created growth, but one that required further reflective observation in the years following his trip. As part of this activity, Derek, who had grown up with financial hardship in his family, came to recognize the ways in which he had privilege from his other identities (i.e., White and male). What he learned “definitely broadened my horizons as far as what privilege was” as part of a “dense week of personal growth that I continued to realize over the next couple years” (Derek, Interview).

In Derek’s story, he shared his personal background that informed his perspective on privilege and the newfound awareness gained through the activity (i.e., that privilege was not just about money and wealth). This is in line with Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory that diversity education can lead to cognitive disequilibrium and growth; Derek’s reflective observation led to
growth, a process that is an aspect of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, 2015). Derek saw that it was not simply the individual identities of those in his DIVE trip that had more or less privilege; he transformed this experience into a more abstract conceptualization that people more broadly have a diversity of struggles and challenges.

Learning about privilege was an important component of the trip for Brandy as well and, similar to Derek, reflected on this throughout college. Brandy participated in the trip as a freshman at the university and I interviewed her when she was a senior student. For her, learning about post-Katrina New Orleans led to reflective observation and growth. “It made me think a lot more about my own privilege,” she said, “because, even though I grew up in a pretty diverse area in terms of ethnicities, I definitely didn't grow up in an area that had a lot of socioeconomic diversity.” She said the trip led her to “reevaluate a lot of the privilege that I had grown up with” (Brandy, Interview). Brandy mentioned her previous content knowledge about privilege (e.g., “I knew that there were impoverished people”), but despite this awareness did not experience growth until she had the experience of the trip and opportunities to reflect and abstractly conceptualize these concepts. There is also the element of cognitive disequilibrium present when she came from a background without much socioeconomic diversity and was confronted with learning about peers and places that the group visited in Louisiana which had a broader variety of this type of diversity.

In summary, there is evidence in these findings that, for cognitive disequilibrium and growth to occur as part the DIVE program (that is the outcome component of Gurin et al.’s 2002 theory), participants in this study engaged in some or all of the phases of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, 2015). Also, the background characteristics and experiences of participants was often a part of how they reported encountering diversity (e.g., Derek’s background with
socioeconomic challenges influencing how he perceived privilege and learned about it on the trip). The following chapter will present a discussion of the study’s findings and how they relate to existing research literature and then expand the analysis of how the findings from this study have implications for both of these theoretical frameworks that were used.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) program at a large, research-intensive, public university in the Southeastern U.S. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of college students who participate in the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program outdoor adventure trip?

2. Which aspects of the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience program do participants, trip leaders, and program administrators perceive as most valuable for shaping openness to diverse attitudes and behaviors?

To address these research questions and the study’s purpose, I interviewed 24 previous student participants from the DIVE program, four previous student trip leaders, the professional staff program founder, had a colleague interview me (as the current program administrator), and held a focus group with nine participants from the most recent trip year. From these data, four themes and 11 subthemes emerged (see Table 5.1). The primary themes included trying something new; powerful personal connections; group bonding through challenge and adversity; and campfire spaces creating context for discussions and connections.

This study illustrates the potential for outdoor recreation activities and environments to be used as effective tools in diversity education experiences. The power of campfire spaces to bring together students from diverse backgrounds and facilitate deep interpersonal connections is a new contribution of this study. There are implications of these findings for higher education faculty and staff, policy makers, and outdoor recreation professionals. The DIVE program was a week-long adventure, but there are lessons from this study that point to the potential for shorter experiences that create similar conditions for effective diversity learning. This chapter will first
connect findings from this study to existing literature and will then provide implications for policy, practice, and future research.

My findings both reinforce and challenge existing literature; I will summarize the major points of this discussion prior to providing more detail throughout this chapter. When compared to other campus diversity interventions, the DIVE program participants experienced similar themes and self-reported outcomes. Sense of commonality to other groups and perspective-taking, both previously researched outcomes of intergroup dialogue (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Gurin et al., 1999; Gurin et al., 2004), were well-represented among findings from participants in this study. In contrast, there was not the same common finding of increased civic engagement and interest in politics, with one notable participant exception. Another facet of intergroup dialogue outcomes that was supported by this study were the themes of student identity development and student perception of campus as a whole following a diversity intervention (Ford & Malaney, 2012), as participants spoke about questioning their beliefs and previously held assumptions about identity groups on campus following the DIVE trip.

Investigating how these outcomes of diversity programs are achieved, findings from this study support the frequency, duration, and quality of diverse interactions as important to participant experience, similar to findings related to diversity workshops (Cole & Zhou, 2014). Although participants reported that the diversity curriculum and activities on the trip was limited in their impact on diversity attitudes and beliefs, the structure of the trip and the introduction of diversity topics was crucial for participants. This supports the importance of creating effective contexts for diverse interactions, rather than simply putting diverse students in the same place and relying on chance to bring them closer together (i.e., campuses requiring random roommates without creating programs that will facilitate the positive interactions of these new roommates;
Hudson, 2018). The effectiveness of novelty and mediating an experience that is unexpected (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012) were both reinforced by this study as well: most students interviewed knew that they would be going camping, but only had a vague idea of what this (and other activities on their outdoor trip) would entail. Participants were often surprised by how close they became with their group and the challenges the group overcame together.

Findings from this study support the efficacy of the outdoor environment for group outcomes and fills some of this gap in the outdoor recreation literature (Andre et al., 2017). In particular, this study supports the sense of community and enhanced group work of outdoor recreation found in previous studies (Breunig et al., 2010; Cooley et al., 2016) but strengthens this connection by providing evidence based on a group of largely beginner outdoor participants, not outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Additionally, this study adds to the literature (Seaman et al., 2010) that supports outdoor recreation encouraging increased comfort with differences, but does so with a college student population (in comparison to studies on younger children). Findings from this study also reinforce the role of the outdoors in helping facilitate interpersonal connections and prompting perspective-taking experienced by Loeffler’s (2004) participants.

The theoretical frameworks of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) and experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) were well-suited for this investigation and findings largely validated the components and stages of these theories. In particular, the importance of informal interactional diversity over classroom diversity, stressed by Gurin et al. (2002), was found in almost every participant experience in this study. Participants spoke about the importance of informal moments with other participants, in contrast to the formal diversity curriculum (i.e., “classroom diversity” in Gurin’s theory). The stages of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) were present for many participants in this study as discussed in
Additionally, Gurin et al.’s (2002) importance on student background characteristics and the institutional environment provided an important lens through which to view the experiential learning cycle: much of how students engaged with the direct experience of their trip related to their previous experiences with the outdoors, diversity, and being students at a predominantly White institution.

**Diversity Curriculum was Foundational but Secondary**

The most salient diversity experiences of students involved in the DIVE trip were conversational and informal, rather than curricular and heavily facilitated. While Ashley and myself both designed diversity curriculum and progressions that would deliver content knowledge about social justice and facilitate students learning about each other’s backgrounds, these activities primarily set the stage for what participants would share later, rather than serve as self-contained activities. The more important moments for participants to learn about each other occurred during interactions with peers in their tents, in the van, or around the campfire after formal discussions. The facilitation by trip leaders provided a catalyst for these moments of peer interaction, but it was important for the group to have time and space after facilitated activities for meaningful interactions.

Participants viewed the diversity curriculum as helpful, but it was the informal interactions that were remembered to greater effect. This reinforces the findings of Bowman and Brandenberger’s (2012) study on a service-learning course; while not an outdoor recreation course, it included curriculum and then opportunities for informal interaction to occur. The same dynamic seems to be present for DIVE participants: students need guidance on what topics to discuss, knowledge of privilege and societal inequities, and facilitation in examining their own identities and privilege, but then they need space and time to have informal interactions. This
includes opportunities for reflection that were encouraged by trip leaders throughout their trip and an essential part of service-learning and experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015).

Like Bowman and Brandenberger (2012), the memorable settings for participants were novel and unexpected. There were numerous DIVE participants who recalled important moments in unfamiliar environments: Jasmine learning about her tentmate’s Muslim American experience at night and considering how it impacted their trip experience; Thomas learning about the experience of being gay on campus from his two tentmates; and Camille learning around the campfire about the struggles of a fellow participant who had been adopted. Moments like these also occurred in formal activity settings, but still included aspects of novelty and the unfamiliar environment of outdoor recreation. In particular, multiple participants recalled the impact of having a fellow participant come out as gay to their group around a campfire during the “If You Really Knew Me” activity, for example. The end-of-day campfire discussions were a memorable setting for participants across all years of the trip.

Even in the case of facilitated activities, the memorable aspect for participants was more related to being in this unique setting and witnessing the emotional struggles of their fellow participant, than it was about the curricular aspects of the activity. This underscores the potential impact of co-curricular experiences (in contrast to academic coursework diversity learning) that is supported by this study’s findings. Consistent with findings on diversity workshops (Bowman et al., 2016), students did not need to have academic background in diversity and multiculturalism for the trip to have lasting perceived impact. The outcome of learning about structural inequities and unequal opportunities for success was also consistent across the DIVE trip and diversity workshops. The vivid memories of DIVE participants who interacted with individuals impacted by coastal land loss or learned about the personal stories of Hurricane
Katrina survivors challenges the conventional design of diversity workshops (which often take place in classroom settings over short periods of time, Bowman et al., 2016). If content knowledge was less important for DIVE participants than learning about individuals and their stories, diversity workshops may want to prioritize more interpersonal learning opportunities over curricular content.

Findings from this study are consistent with the outcomes of other diversity interventions, but also challenge the design of certain intervention types. Participants from the DIVE program reported many similar themes as those found in the outcomes of intergroup dialogue courses (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Gurin et al., 1999; Gurin et al., 2004). In particular, the “sense of commonality regarding the other groups” (Dessel & Rogge, 2008, p. 224) was a common outcome of intergroup dialogue courses, based on a meta-analysis of studies on these programs, and was present for participants in this study. Rather than directly addressing commonalities with diverse peers, participants in this study recalled learning about peers with different identities and considering the ways in which these individuals were part of their community. For example, Brianna (who spoke about a fellow participant who was in the military and married) expanded her concept of who was a member of the university community. She felt like she belonged to the university community and realized the diversity of identities with whom she shared this common bond.

This challenges the design of intergroup dialogue courses, where students of diverse groups are brought together in the formal environment of the classroom (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009). Participants in this study did not recall pivotal learning moments when engaged in formal curriculum on the trip. Instead they found informal moments learning about peers of difference more powerful. While intergroup dialogue seeks to form personal
connections between diverse groups that could extend beyond these courses, given the large student bodies of many college campuses it is not enough to simply hope that students will interact regularly beyond the classroom setting. Findings from this study suggest that there is a need for a more deliberate informal space that is not completely informal, but is also outside of the confines of the formal classroom setting. On the DIVE trips, these settings included tents, meal preparation, and the campfire but there are certainly options for non-outdoor trip settings that will be discussed in recommendations below.

The DIVE experience seemed to influence the perception of the university campus for other students, in addition to Brianna. This was consistent with qualitative findings from Ford and Malaney’s (2012) investigation of an intergroup dialogue course. Other participants in this study also reported having a different perception of campus after their DIVE trip. Participants noted a positive impression of the institution that it would sponsor a diversity program like DIVE. Assumptions that were challenged about identities on the DIVE trips translated back to how students considered others on campus. This was present when James spoke about considering the complexities of others’ backgrounds and seeing beyond surface-level identities. Brandy reported a similar theme as well when she spoke about considering the experiences of students beyond those with college-educated parents and educational trajectories similar to hers. As a trip leader, Alayna had felt othered in recreation settings previously, but the trip showed her the power of a diverse community in the outdoor setting.

The theme of perspective-taking that was found as an outcome in one intergroup dialogue study (Gurin et al., 2004) was present in findings from this study as well. The example experiences of Jasmine, Thomas, and Camille all learning about an identity and peer experiences that were unfamiliar to them speaks about the ways in which learning about these identities
influenced their perspective in some way. In some cases, this included participants who expressed a deep level of empathy with their fellow participants, indicating that they had considered the perspective of fellow students to a great extent.

Political involvement and interest was one facet of intergroup dialogue outcomes (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Gurin et al., 1999; Gurin et al., 2004) that was largely not present in the findings from this study. One notable exception to this was the experience of James, who was working as a community organizer when I interviewed him and drew direct connections from his trip to his current work. He described his work encouraging new voters to become politically engaged and found that he was more interested in understanding their opinions and why they do not vote following his experiences with the DIVE trip. He also spoke about being more open to considering their perspectives and past experiences, reinforcing the theme of perspective-taking above.

Numerous participants spoke about the amount of time spent with their fellow group members and how this impacted the closeness of the group as a whole and the personal connections they formed with peers as individuals. This reinforces the importance of frequency of diverse interactions which Gurin et al. (2002) prioritize in their theory. Participants in this study noted long amounts of time in the van, the length of their trip overall, and engaging in daily routines with fellow group members all as dynamics that contributed to their group becoming close. This closeness set the stage for individuals to share private details of their diverse identities and backgrounds, that were discussed above, with a group they had just met for the first time.

Some themes of the DIVE program were experienced similarly by participants across demographic identities. Perspective-taking by students occurred across racial and ethnic
identities and was not experienced more often by White students, as in some findings on intergroup dialogue courses (Gurin et al., 2004). In contrast to examples of Black students taking on the role of educator for White students, for instance, there were a number of participant experiences that indicated reciprocity in majority and minoritized students learning about each others’ identities (see the “Assumptions challenged” subtheme in Chapter 5): Deanna, a Hispanic/Latino female, being pleasantly surprised to learn more about a fellow participant who was male and of Middle Eastern descent; Jasmine, an African American/multiracial female, finding common ground with a politically conservative male she expected not to get along with; and Carla, a Hispanic female, being surprised to have similar family experiences with her White, male trip leader.

This reciprocal learning between students of different racial and ethnic identities could be due to the DIVE program design and curriculum, but it could also be due to the composition of the groups themselves. DIVE trip participants were often students of color and some years White students were in the minority in their trip group. As Brianna’s quote in Chapter 5 on other diversity programs recounted, some campus diversity programs are comprised of primarily students of color or, conversely, single out students of color to educate their majority identity peers in issues of social justice. The DIVE program’s focus on creating diverse groups may have led to a balance of diverse identities on trips and participants having the opportunity to learn about each other without the burden of educating falling only on students of color.

There were instances, however, when there seemed to be differences in the way participants experienced the trip based on their race, gender, or other identities. These conditional experiences (Mayhew et al., 2016) of participating in the DIVE program came up particularly in relation to race and gender identities and the extent of participants’ previous
outdoor experience. Participants across identity groups reported similar themes of learning about the personal backgrounds of their fellow participants, but some examples indicated that majority identity participants were more likely to have previous assumptions challenged about other individuals. This occurred for two White male participants, Derek and Thomas, who learned about the backgrounds of fellow participants who were gay and both reported how impactful these connections were. Particularly for Derek, who recalled his conservative Christian upbringing and limited exposure to peers who were gay, this indicates the power of unexpected experiences leading to cognitive disequilibrium (Gurin et al., 2002). This also highlights a break in a segregation cycle: whereas Derek had limited interactions with gay people in previous school environments, his experience on the DIVE trip gave him an increased sense of openness to this diverse identity.

Three female students of color (Alexis, Deanna, and Jasmine) recalled surprising and positive interactions with Middle Eastern peers on their trips. This highlights the importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) when considering student experiences: despite the marginalization of being women of color, these three students had previous assumptions about, and experiences with, Middle Eastern or Muslim individuals. Given the hostility towards people of Middle Eastern descent in the U.S., there were certain privileges that these women had that their Middle Eastern peers did not. They did not carry the same burden of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997) that these students did (e.g., the stereotype by some Americans that all people of Middle Eastern descent are terrorists). This put them in a position to learn about these new friends, but might have created a burden of education for the individuals who were open to discussing their experiences as Middle Eastern students. This highlights another way that a
majority identity group (i.e., U.S. citizens not of Middle Eastern heritage) may have had greater benefits from their DIVE experience.

There were a few conditional experiences that seemed to be driven by gender on the trip. Female participants had more to say about the experience of bonding with their group and outcomes of the trip that was driven by the group experience. For some participants, this intersected with being new to the outdoors. Jasmine and Miranda, who remembered the discomfort of camping driving their group together, are two examples of this dynamic. In some trip years, there were more female participants on the trip than males, creating tent groups that included four female students in a tent, in comparison to two or three male participants in a tent. This could have created a different sense of community for female students on the trip. This dynamic also creates questions about gender norms and whether female participants felt an expectation or pressure to bond with their group, whereas male participants might have felt more pressure to be self-reliant.

The male participants who expressed more self-reliance on the trip (and minimized the physical discomfort that they experienced) were often the participants who also had previous outdoor experience. These participants seemed to gain less from the outdoor components of the trip. For instance, participants who had previous outdoor experience and were involved in the Louisiana years of the trip might not have considered camping at a state park campground particularly interesting, whereas those new to the outdoors found this to be a very outdoorsy experience. This may have created the freedom for male participants with previous outdoor experience to focus on learning about peers’ identities, but female participants without previous outdoor experience needed to devote more attention to learning outdoor skills, relying on each other through challenging circumstances, and focusing more on the bonding experience with
their group. This highlights the privilege of previous outdoor recreation experience and the ability for those with this background and skills to hone in on the other elements of the trip (rather than focusing on just being comfortable outside).

**Outdoor Recreation was Foundational but Secondary**

Outdoor recreation was often a setting or a catalyst for group and individual outcomes, but was also secondary to the informal interactions participants had with each other. When I first thought of undertaking this study, I considered two possibilities regarding the role of the outdoors in the DIVE program. First, I thought that possibly DIVE participants were already interested in outdoor recreation and the combination of the outdoors with diversity drew them to participate. Secondly, I wondered if students that were already interested in diversity education would attend the DIVE trip because it offered this type of education in a different setting. For the most part, I was wrong on both counts. Participants, on the whole, wanted to try something new and largely did not have a background in outdoor recreation or a background in diversity education. Although most participants did not have previous outdoor experience, they wanted to try this different activity and step out of their comfort zone.

**Outdoor Recreation as an Incentive to Diversity Education**

Most students came on the DIVE trip due to the outdoor recreation nature of the experience. Some participants mentioned that it being combined with diversity made the trip more attractive (i.e., they felt like the trip was especially for underrepresented groups and those new to outdoor recreation), but no participants in this study described coming primarily for the diversity education component of the program. While a number of studies (Andre et al., 2017; Breunig et al., 2010; Cooley et al., 2016; Seaman et al., 2010) have considered how outdoor
recreation can help facilitate outcomes among participants, very few studies have considered the role of the outdoors as an incentive to participation in diversity education.

From my experience as an outdoor recreation professional staff member, higher education professionals (including those in campus recreation) view college outdoor adventure has an activity area for certain types of students. The stereotype seems to be that some students grew up experiencing the outdoors as children and are more predisposed to nature and outdoor recreation activities. The findings from this study soundly refute this idea. While a handful of participants had previous outdoor experience (and most of this small group was White, fitting with historical outdoor recreation participation patterns), the majority of participants in this study had no outdoor recreation experience and were students of color. In spite of this, the motivator and incentive for them to come on the DIVE trip was the outdoor recreation aspect of the experience and trying something new.

**Outdoor Recreation as a Catalyst**

In addition to the outdoor recreation aspect of the trip creating an incentive for students to participate, findings from this study demonstrate the varied ways in which outdoor recreation can be a catalyst for diversity experiences. In contrast to Loeffler’s (2004) study, some of the traditional themes of outdoor recreation (i.e., nature as a space for spiritual connection and self-discovery) were not present, but this study reinforces the theme from that study of connection with others through outdoor experiences. Similar to diversity curriculum, the outdoor recreation activities were not self-contained and impactful by themselves, but created a context or a starting point for informal and formal interactions. These included facilitated discussions around the campfire, but also included informal moments of personal connection in canoes, tents, meals and food preparation, on the backpacking trail, or in the van between trip destinations.
In terms of outcome, this study reinforces the sense of community that can be strengthened through outdoor recreation activities (Breunig et al., 2010). Findings from this study strengthen this connection by studying a group of non-recreation majors or outdoor enthusiasts (participants in Breunig et al.’s study were recreation major, some of whom were pursuing outdoor education as a career). This study adds to the literature by identifying the specific outdoor activity components that created community for participants: meals, canoeing, time in tents, and other contexts for informal interactions. This study challenges the findings of Cooley et al. (2016) in which outdoor adventure experiences were studied as self-contained and facilitated interventions to provide positive outcomes for participants. Rather than the curriculum and activities being the important aspects of this program, these elements were secondary to the unstructured times participants shared. While this study did not investigate outcomes from shorter experiences like Cooley et al.’s (2016) study, findings from this study suggest that the informal moments rather than curricular moments are most important. Future studies should account for the downtime and non-activity time that participants spend interacting and whether these moments are providing the outcomes that are attributed to facilitated outdoor recreation or diversity education activities.

**Context and Role Modeling were Key**

While diversity curriculum and the outdoors set a foundation for pivotal moments among the DIVE trip groups and individuals upon reflection, the informal interactions that participants recalled as valuable were driven by context and often vulnerable role models. These components address the second research question of what aspects of the program are most valuable for shaping diversity attitudes and behaviors. Not all participants I interviewed attributed attitude or behavior change to the DIVE program, but there are a few notable examples of this occurring.
Possibly most striking is Derek’s story of witnessing a fellow participant come out as gay to the group around the campfire during the “If You Really Knew Me” activity. This experience partially led Derek to examine his religious beliefs and choose a different faith orientation later in college.

Although a formal diversity activity prompted this participant to share their private identity with the group, the context of being in an intimate setting removed from campus created an environment for this to happen with group members that he had grown to trust. Additionally, this group member (who was interviewed as part of this study, but their pseudonym will not be used here to protect their confidentiality) recalled Ashley’s role modeling as important for them to be open with the group. They recalled Ashley displaying vulnerability and sharing her sexual orientation with the group, but also remembered other members of their group sharing personal things. These dynamics created comfort on the trip for them to share their sexual orientation and other details about themselves.

A participant from a different trip year recalled Ashley displaying vulnerability about rock climbing and sharing her story of an injury, but still loving rock climbing. For this participant and others I interviewed, they found this vulnerability and role modeling to be empowering. Participants seemed to rise to the occasion of their trip and be more open with the group, given the courage of Ashley and others to share themselves. This underscores the need for staff and facilitators to bring their whole selves to working with groups (Palmer, 2007), rather than simply sticking to lesson plans and concealing personal details about their lives and values.

The context of the outdoors as a space to disconnect from technology and the routine of daily life came up multiple times for participants and trip leaders. Rather than mentioning dramatic and beautiful outdoor scenery, it was the idea of being “in the bayou” (Andrew,
Interview), even when this meant car camping at a state park 30 minutes from the French Quarter in New Orleans. The location did not need to be exotic for participants to experience a sense of removal and being “out there.” Participants across all trip years spoke about spending the week outside and how different this was, even though participants from the last four years spent little time in true wilderness locations and often had the option of using their cellphone (even if they chose not to).

This disconnection from technology came up in multiple interviews and, ironically, came up more often for students from the last four years of the trip when cell service was more available. While some students had trouble keeping their devices charged and limited their use so as not to drain the battery, more often it was just less socially desirable to use technology and it seemed more appropriate for students to engage with their fellow group members than be glued to screens. This included times in the van where students got bored with devices and felt like speaking to other trip participants was more interesting. If a sense of escape from daily routine can come from a long van ride, this raises questions about how important the outdoor settings are for trips like this. More often though, participants felt removed from daily life when they were going to sleep in a tent every night for a week and not having the comfort of their residence hall room.

**Theoretical Implications**

The diversity experiences of students in this study provide additional evidence that simply attending a university that is structurally diverse does not mean that students will interact across lines of diversity, which is consistent with Gurin et al.’s (2002) theory. Specifically, the findings reinforce the part of this theory that stresses the importance of informal interactional diversity (i.e., informal conversations) over classroom diversity (i.e., curriculum). The findings
from this study suggest a possible third place in campus diversity experiences that could be added to Gurin et al.’s (2002) model. In addition to informal interactional diversity and classroom diversity, there are also informal interactions that are part of structured experiences: the campfire spaces referred to previously. The campfire represents a third interstitial space where the structure of the overall trip created an informal context for deep interpersonal engagement to take place.

**Experiential Learning and the Learner’s Frame**

The stages of Kolb’s (1984, 2015) theory of experiential learning (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation) were well supported by findings from this study. In some participant cases, this full cycle of experiential learning was present, whereas in others, participants seemed to still be processing the experiences of their DIVE trip and ways to apply this learning a number of years after their trip was completed (e.g., participants who were still working through the emotional learning about environmental justice in Louisiana). Findings from this study suggest that the learner’s existing perceptions and background with diverse experiences need to be more strongly represented as part of experiential learning theory. Whether it was the outdoor recreation components or the diversity aspects of the trip, the newness of these experiences and participants stepping out of their comfort zones was salient to the ways in which they perceived the concrete experience itself.

Part of the impact of the campfire discussion setting or sharing a tent with a fellow participant was based on the novelty of this experience (i.e., Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012). The theory of campus diversity experiences (Gurin et al., 2002) accounts for this by including student background characteristics as a component of the model. For example, students growing
up with diverse neighbors or attending schools with peers from varying socioeconomic statuses are influenced in the ways they interact with diversity in college. Experiential learning theory does not include the learner’s background and relationship to an experience as part of the model. Research on experiential education generally (and outdoor recreation, specifically) would be strengthened by including the learner’s background and pre-existing relationship with an experience to contextualize the concrete experience they are having with it. This experiential frame is represented in Figure 6.1 as a circle bounding the experiential learning cycle.

![Figure 6.1. Kolb’s (2015) experiential learning theory with added learner frame.](image)

In the context of this study, this learner frame in relation to outdoor recreation would include the aspects of students being new to outdoor recreation, having considered trips previously but not feeling welcome, and not having outdoor recreation as a cultural value. The experience of being in a diverse group would also influence the learner frame. In line with Gurin
et al.’s (2002) theory, some students grew up in racially diverse neighborhoods and school environments, but others largely interacted with peers of the same race and socioeconomic status. This frame influenced how participants engaged in the group experience and their reflections about it. For example, Deanna had pre-existing experiences with men of Middle Eastern descent and came into her DIVE trip with ideas about how her fellow participant would interact (or not). This frame of Middle Eastern men having certain characteristics led to the impact of experiential learning for Deana after interacting with this participant who challenged her assumptions.

Educators and scholars need to consider the frame of learners when designing educational experiences and researching them. This study explored a diversity-focused outdoor adventure trip program, so it was a necessary line of questioning to explore participant’s past experiences with diversity and outdoor recreation. For programs that do not have a diversity component, it would be incumbent on the educator or researcher to recognize that participants may have background or sociocultural perspectives on an experience (e.g., outdoor recreation) and find out what those backgrounds are before addressing the topic area itself. For outdoor programs, this could mean giving participants the opportunity to share their previous experience with camping or if they have preconceived notions about sleeping outside. If students have experienced homelessness in their past, for example, sleeping outside may involve traumatic memories that could influence their experience on a weekend backpacking trip.

**Recommendations for Higher Education Staff and Faculty**

A number of findings from this study can be used by higher education staff and faculty, including those who are not outdoor recreation or experiential education professionals. Many of the aspects of the DIVE trips that students found most valuable could be facilitated in non-
outdoor environments (or outdoor environments on campus). Given the importance participants placed on non-familiar settings and being outside of the campus routine, college and university educators need to consider how to disrupt the traditional learning environment to encourage authentic interactions among students. This could be accomplished by literally leaving the classroom or by creating opportunities for higher order learning where students do not feel like they are simply memorizing knowledge for tests or engaging in co-curricular opportunities that feel like a classroom (i.e., a number of diversity programs take place in classrooms or meeting-like spaces). This idea is not new and is consistent with long-held concepts on effective educational practices (e.g., Bloom, 1956; Dewey, 1938; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010).

**Campfires in the Classroom**

Higher education faculty and staff should consider what opportunities they can provide for students to engage with diverse peers in campfire spaces, where students can communicate informally but in contexts that have defined learning outcomes and ground rules. Participants on DIVE trips often had powerful moments with their peers in spaces that were not high adventure outdoor environments: gathered in a circle at the end of the day, making meals together, or talking in tents at night. Although the tent setting would be difficult to replicate in the classroom, faculty and staff can create other conditions that parallel the contexts of powerful moments for learning and diverse interactions found within this study.

First, as on the DIVE trips, students need to have skills to work with each other towards common goals. During the DIVE trips, this meant learning to live outside, including putting up tents and making meals together. In the classroom, this could entail teaching students the skills necessary for completing project-based learning assignments (Bell, 2010) or designing service-learning projects in groups, as part of the course. As part of this process, the instructor can
engage the group in a discussion of ground rules for discussions and model interacting with
civility during conversations around sensitive topics. This group engagement could occur
through formal activities, like “Identity Trees” or the “Superhero Cape” (which can be completed
in a classroom environment). It is essential that the instructor in this process model the
vulnerability that they expect of their students. Both of these activities provide structured ways
to do this: if the instructor puts their racial identity on their identity tree and discusses it in an
open way, this models the opportunity and expectation for students to talk candidly about race.

Faculty and staff need to take care to assess their group and the extent to which the class
can engage in deeper topics. Part of the impact for participants who recalled learning about their
peers in the “If You Really Knew Me” activity was due to the trip leader gauging the progression
of the group’s trust with each other. Assessing the group’s trust level is more difficult in the
classroom, where instructors might not able to see how students interact while making meals or
engaging in outdoor activities together. Fortunately, campuses often have resources to make
 experiential education environments available that are ideal environments for encouraging
authentic (and trust-building) interactions.

The outdoor recreation program I administer often works with faculty and staff to create
short outdoor recreation activities for pre-existing groups and classes. For example, instructors
schedule high ropes course activities at our challenge course, group climbing at our indoor
climbing wall, and afternoon kayaking excursions at our on-campus lake. Although higher
education professionals might perceive these activities simply as chances for building teamwork
among their group or giving students an opportunity to relax and have fun, this study
demonstrates that these activities can be part of a comprehensive diversity progression. For
example, taking a class canoeing for an hour or two could give students a chance to have one-on-
one conversations and share personal backgrounds, similar to participants in this study. Outdoor recreation professionals are generally open to adapting activities to the specific needs of groups and instructors should inform outdoor recreation facilitators of these needs (e.g., time together to share personal backgrounds).

The availability of college outdoor adventure programs often means that faculty and staff do not need to have outdoor recreation or group facilitation skills. The difficult part may be finding the office or program that can assist with this type of activity. I often meet with campus partners at my home university who are unfamiliar with our outdoor program and collaborative opportunities, even when faculty or staff have been on-campus for five years or more! While outdoor program staff often reach out to initiate collaborations, staff in traditional student affairs program areas and faculty might also take the first step to discover what their campus has to offer (often just by searching for the university name and “outdoor program” on Google, for example).

Findings from this study also highlight the importance of food, not just in eating meals together as a group, but also preparing them and using this time to have meaningful discussions. Rather than ordering pizza and eating together as a class, an instructor could purchase the ingredients to make a basic meal (e.g., pasta with sautéed vegetables is a manageable and affordable option) and support the class cooking together while having time to chat. Thinking of the importance of unexpected experiences (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012), students would certainly be surprised if they walked into a classroom to find a small kitchen setup with induction burners, pots, and groceries for making a meal together! A number of campuses are installing teaching kitchens in new campus recreation facilities and student centers and this could be a more convenient way of providing this setting for a class. Preparing meals together can also help
educate students about wellness through healthful eating. Additionally, the instructor can encourage the group to put aside the distraction of technology while they engage with each other throughout this mealtime, which was appreciated by participants on the DIVE trips.

After the group has developed sufficient trust and rapport with each other, the instructor needs to provide the space for students to share their identities and diversity experiences more deeply. The activity “If You Really Knew Me” could be a late semester activity for a class group that has developed this sufficient level of closeness with each other. This activity could be facilitated within a classroom environment, but given the importance placed on non-school environments by participants in this study, a context outside of the classroom may be more effective. Some campuses have on-campus gardens or nature areas where students can gather for an activity like this. My outdoor recreation program rents camp chairs that make it comfortable for students to sit on the ground in this type of setting, but an instructor could also simply bring blankets to have this type of group activity in a picnic-like circle. Campuses may also have environments where space for these campfire discussions is already present: my own home university has a literal fireplace in a room in the student center, which is designated as a cultural hearth for diversity discussions. Findings in this study point to the need for these spaces to not only be programmed formally or left open for informal student interactions, but also to foster times for conversations when students are engaging with diverse peers while being supported by faculty and staff. This could be as simple as facilities staff making gardens or outdoor areas reservable by instructors and landscaping them in a way to provide a semi-secluded conversation space (i.e., installing bushes or trellises to provide some privacy for groups to have intimate discussions).
If these options for getting out of the classroom are infeasible or not available, faculty and staff can consider ways to make the classroom environment more conducive for campfire-style diversity conversations. This could involve turning off the overhead lights of the classroom and putting a warm light in the center of a discussion circle, mimicking a campfire (there are many battery-powered LED lights which offer much warmer lighting and more soothing colors than the traditional fluorescent bulbs of the university classroom). Putting on calming music or nature sounds could create white noise for students to feel safer while sharing personal details and experiences. These strategies might seem strange or uncomfortable to students initially but, as the participants in this study demonstrated, groups can adapt to unfamiliar environments and engage in self-directed conversations about diversity in these settings.

A number of participants in this study drew contrasts between their DIVE experience and that of traditional, classroom-based, diversity education (if they had participated in diversity programming previously). Students who compared these types of programs seemed to think of on-campus diversity education programs in the same way they thought about class and the routine of being a student. For a number of reasons (e.g., traveling to distant places, trying new activities, being removed from the comforts of their residence hall) DIVE was a change from that routine and facilitated a different way of interacting with peers. In addition to the classroom suggestions provided here, higher education faculty and staff should consider ways to modify existing diversity programs based on the findings of this study. If the program is overnight, for example, try to find accommodations where participants will prepare meals together, complete other tasks together, and have shared sleeping space. Hotels or other private room settings too closely mimic the university environment (as noted by one participant in this study who
contrasted the DIVE program with an overnight diversity retreat that included hotel accommodations).

Getting students out of the traditional campus environment often involves travel over breaks in the academic schedule and faculty need to continue using this time for these types of experiences. Some of the participants in this study needed something to do over break and did not have anything planned. While there are a number of opportunities offered for students during academic breaks (i.e., study abroad, alternative service breaks, outdoor trips), I had the sense that students in this study did not find many that appealed to them or could not afford them. One participant spoke about finding the DIVE program by Googling the university name and “spring break.” This indicates that campuses can be doing more to engage students over breaks or better connect them with opportunities that will be meaningful during these times.

**Resist the Urge to Over-Program and Fill Time**

As a higher education administrator and programmer myself, I understand the desire to “fill the time” whenever programs are arranged for students. With limited resources (time being the most prominent), faculty and staff often need to squeeze in as much content as we can to maximize the experience that we are delivering. I encourage higher education staff and faculty to resist this inclination and include unstructured time in their programs, particularly multi-day programs like DIVE (i.e., overnight retreats, study abroad experiences, alternative service break trips). Participants in this study placed strong value on unstructured time and on instances when the group was working on camp tasks (but had meaningful interactions with peers).

With this in mind, educators should find ways to keep students engaged with their peers, rather than retreating to phones, hotel rooms, or other methods that students might use to withdraw from interactions. Participants on DIVE trips found time stuck in a van, preparing
food, and being crammed into a tent with their peers as optimal times for creating personal connections and learning about each others’ backgrounds. The extent to which non-outdoor educators can simulate these situations will vary, but there is nothing about them that requires extensive training in risk management or advanced outdoor recreation skills (i.e., these are not whitewater kayaking, rock climbing, or other technical outdoor recreation settings).

Recommendations for Outdoor Recreation Practitioners

Findings from this study support the college outdoor adventure trip as a valuable context for diversity education. This study helps fill the diversity and inclusion gap in outdoor recreation outcomes literature identified by Andre et al. (2017): while there are studies that have investigated the efficacy of college diversity programs (e.g., Bowman et al., 2016) and studies that have documented using outdoor recreation for diversity education (e.g., Seaman et al., 2010), this study may be the first of its kind which documents diversity education on college outdoor adventure trips. Given the need for openness to diversity in college environments that was discussed at the beginning of this manuscript, outdoor recreation professionals have an opportunity to produce impactful experiences that are sorely needed on college campuses. While outdoor recreation trips for college students hold a number of other important potential benefits (i.e., mental and physical wellness, environmental appreciation, opportunities for applied learning), creating more inclusive campuses is a pressing need worthy of greater attention by both academic and co-curricular outdoor adventure programs.

Incorporate Diversity into Routine Outdoor Trips

Short of creating a full diversity-focused outdoor adventure program, like DIVE, outdoor adventure practitioners can consider other ways in which to apply findings from this study. Participants mentioned the value of discussions held around the campfire and in tents, which are
common components of most outdoor trips. Practitioners should find ways to integrate diversity-oriented topics into these settings and routine discussions. This could be as simple as inviting participants to share important parts of their identities or engaging groups in discussions about how they experience campus climate and inclusiveness. This seems to occur on outdoor orientation program trips and other niche programs like DIVE, but is not commonplace in routine college outdoor adventure trips from my experience.

As a field, college outdoor adventure lacks targeted focus on engaging underrepresented student populations in outdoor experiences. Participants in this study were interested in the outdoors (and, in some cases, were familiar with the trips offered by their university’s campus outdoor recreation program), but had not engaged in outdoor recreation for the most part. Some participants questioned the requisite skills needed to participate, even when they had seen other trips advertised for beginners. Other participants reported seeing “diversity” in the name of the trip and that this made them feel like the trip was for them. It is a sad state of affairs if underrepresented students (in this case, students of color) need to see diversity advertised to assume they are welcome on an outdoor recreation experience. Could this mean that other non-DIVE trips advertised felt exclusive to students with previous outdoor experience or that they would feel unwelcome for other reasons? Discussing the barriers to participation for underrepresented groups in the outdoors is beyond the scope of this study, but if offering diversity-focused experiences can help attract students who would otherwise not participate, it is a worthwhile investment for outdoor recreation programs.

Even if outdoor education professionals are not personally interested in diversity education, the inequities of access to the outdoors and the barriers to participation for certain groups make it incumbent that more is done to engage diverse communities. If outdoor
recreation continues to be a predominantly White space and the U.S. continues to become predominantly less White, this field will become less relevant as a result. While outdoor recreation access and participation barriers has not been a formal part of group discussions on DIVE trips, there have been opportunities for this topic to come up. If outdoor education professionals foster diverse trip groups and leaders, conversations about reducing barriers to access may naturally occur.

For college outdoor recreation staff who are not prepared to create a program like DIVE, there are a number of less time- and resource-intensive ways to incorporate diversity and social justice into programs and trips. Rather than outdoor recreation staff waiting for multicultural student affairs offices to approach them about creating custom trips or other types of programs, outdoor recreation staff can be the first to make the introduction to staff who most often communicate with students of minoritized identities. This can be as simple as setting a short meeting with staff in multicultural student affairs and engaging in a conversation about existing programming for both offices and where intersections and collaboration may occur. In my experiences at large, public universities, staff in multicultural student affairs may not know that an outdoor recreation program exists on their campus and are open to learning about it (particularly if the outdoor recreation professional is open to learning about the multicultural student affairs office).

As with any university staff member, campus outdoor recreation staff should perform a self-assessment of their own diversity and inclusion knowledge, awareness, and skills as another initial step. Given the wide array of degree programs and professional backgrounds of outdoor recreation professionals, all staff have not necessarily had coursework in these topics and may need to self-initiate their diversity learning journey. Most campuses offer resources and
workshops to encourage staff to advance their social justice and diversity competencies; it is often solely incumbent on the staff member to take advantage of these opportunities (and their supervisor to encourage it). Educating student staff and trip leaders in these areas as well is necessary to ensure that both participants and staff of minoritized identities experience inclusive work and trip environments.

In all of these potential learning opportunities, outdoor recreation staff must be open to making mistakes and learning from them. Highly-publicized gaffes involving people using offensive racial terminology or ignorantly committing micro- and macro-aggressions may scare off professionals from talking about race or other diversity matters. In particular, outdoor recreation professionals may have work experiences that have mostly been with White participants and colleagues, given the prevailing demographics of these activities. Instead of staying in a comfort zone of avoiding engagement with diversity, outdoor recreation professionals need to use university resources to work through their fears of offending others and develop greater confidence and comfort in discussing social justice topics. College campuses provide a number of learning contexts where professionals can develop trust with colleagues and practice talking about race and other types of diversity.

**Make Trips More Affordable or Free**

In addition to the perception of a trip being approachable or not, removing the barrier of cost made a difference for many to come on the DIVE trip. Outdoor adventure and higher education professionals need to continue to find ways to reduce the barrier of price in order to broaden diversity of participation. Campus recreation programs generally charge students to go on outdoor trips and should consider ways to make trips free or provide scholarships for those that need it. For some reason, campuses provide a number of other valuable programs for small
numbers of students at little or no cost (e.g., student government, leadership education, student organizations who receive university funding), but this is not usually the case for outdoor recreation. Higher education professionals need to make use of outdoor programs for impactful student outcomes and outdoor adventure professionals need to find ways to advocate for funds based on the value they deliver for students.

There are a number of ways that campuses can offer these experiences at reduced cost or free for students. In the case of the DIVE program, the program founder took advantage of a campus diversity grant in the first year. Just as importantly, the founder also advocated for the importance of the trip being free to leadership within the campus recreation department (not just the outdoor recreation program area). This combination of advocacy combined with resources from multiple campus sources, in addition to the donation of outdoor equipment from a local business, were all necessary for the DIVE program to get off the ground. The lesson from this is that there might not be a ‘silver bullet’ for offering more affordable programs for students, but instead a collaborative initiative which is pieced together from a number of organizational contexts. There are also funding sources which can be tied to specific groups of students which could be utilized for outdoor trips. At my home university, I developed a relationship with the campus TRIO program (the federally-funded program which provides resources for students from disadvantaged backgrounds). I provided the TRIO office our trips schedule every semester and their program staff identified certain opportunities which they could offer to TRIO-supported students at no-cost, using funds earmarked for supporting student success. This was the type of collaborative opportunity that was not an obvious connection between programs and depended on proactively reaching out to create a unique partnership.
Meals Matter

Both the group task of making meals and the time that groups spent together eating were important for participants in this study. I have worked in a number of outdoor program settings where food and mealtime are not given a lot of thought and outdoor educators may just stick to easy-to-prepare and boring meals. On the flipside of this, I know of some outdoor professionals who bake on trips and enjoy keeping menus fresh and mealtimes interesting. If we want to create the most impactful experience for diverse groups on our programs, we need to be investing time and forethought into meals. Findings from this study suggest that participants notice and appreciate when meals taste good (and are often surprised and seem to expect that meals on camping trips will not be good).

This does not mean that every meal should be worthy of a Yelp review, but practitioners can do a few basic things to make meals effective. Purchasing vegetables from a local farmer’s market or campus farm can create an interesting connection for participants to experience food (and learn about campus resources). Taking spices or preparing meals that are regionally known can provide fun chances for conversation and education (DIVE trips to Louisiana have included red beans and rice as a meal and Tony Chachere's Creole seasoning as a requisite part of every spice kit). Ensuring that everyone spends time in the kitchen on trips (rather than letting certain people always cook because it is familiar to them) will give participants opportunities to work in small groups and have more intimate conversation time. All of these components may not only bring participants closer to a location and get more out of the trip, but also create conversation in which participants have opportunities to share more of their backgrounds.
Consider Academic Content and Destinations You May Find Boring

Participants in this study were emotionally affected by learning about environmental justice tied to coastal land loss and Hurricane Katrina. In addition to diversity outcomes, college outdoor adventure professionals need to tie environmental stewardship to their programs, particularly in light of the climate change crisis. Professionals might be hesitant to include academic content on trips (i.e., “students come on our trips to get a break from school”), but participants in this study found this type of content compelling and seemed to appreciate the ways in which it broadened their perspectives.

From my personal experience, outdoor adventure professionals and student trip leaders are often hyper-focused on the type of activities they offer or visiting exotic destinations that will be most attractive for students. Assessment of outcomes and providing trips that will positively impact their own campus are frequently afterthoughts and part of annual reports, rather than guides for strategically planning activities. Given that a number of participants in this study reported visiting fairly unexotic locations (i.e., participants who just wanted to visit a new state or go further west of the Mississippi river than they had ever been) as a draw for them to attend the trip, outdoor adventure practitioners may consider how to make longer journeys cost-effective (rather than cost-prohibitive) or conduct needs assessments to determine what locations are desirable among their own study body. This might not mean the most attractive locations from an outdoor recreation perspective, but may simply be opportunities for participants to go somewhere new and appealing.

Foster Diverse Student Leaders

In addition to creating more diverse populations among participants, we need to also think about how we’re engaging future trip leaders and the type of experiences they are having in
the outdoors. While we may have trip leaders or other staff who are from marginalized populations, retaining them and keeping them engaged in outdoor leadership needs more attention. The experience of Alayna, the trip leader who had been involved in outdoor recreation but had decided it was not for her until her DIVE experience, is instructive and outdoor adventure professionals need to consider ways in which our programs may be marginalizing diverse leaders. Simply recruiting trip leaders of diverse identities is not sufficient to ensure that they will feel included in an outdoor program.

Implications for Policy

The connections of findings from this study to higher education practice lead to broader implications for policy. For faculty and staff to incorporate the recommendations of this study, higher education policy needs to do more to incentivize innovative teaching practice. Faculty who have tangible incentives (i.e., tenure) for completing and publishing research (Love & Kotchen, 2010) may not have the same rewards for incorporating experiential and diversity education into courses. In the face of diversity incidents reviewed at the beginning of this study, higher education policymakers need to invest resources into proactively encouraging faculty to facilitate diversity education in the classroom. Rather than relying on multicultural student affairs staff and faculty charged with diversity education to teach these topics, all instructors need to infuse diversity and inclusion in coursework. This can be done effectively with the experiential education strategies documented in this study if policymakers prioritize and provide resources for faculty to augment their courses with these recommendations.

As a place to start, policymakers can place higher value on innovative teaching (including at the undergraduate level) in the tenure process. The activities and unconventional pedagogical strategies discussed in this study require time to plan and possibly additional investment in
professional development for faculty and staff. Given that new assistant professors may be spending the most time in the classroom (depending on the disciplinary field and institution type), embedding value on teaching within the tenure process is key. Use of experiential education strategies could be a part of teaching evaluation to ensure that faculty are not simply presenting slides, but engaging students in meaningful, growth-oriented content. At my home institution, there is a section of the tenure process regulation which requires faculty to be evaluated for teaching effectiveness (North Carolina State University, 2015). An institution could embed experiential education requirements in this type of policy and work with academic departments to advise them on strategies that might best fit their discipline.

Experiential education strategies are certainly not limited to the diversity and inclusion outcomes that were discussed in this study and that were part of the DIVE program. The importance of educating students on diversity and helping students be more open to diversity is important enough, however, that it warrants consideration for the type of institution-wide policies I am suggesting. Promoting experiential education-based diversity teaching can benefit students themselves and also lead to new professionals who are more open to, and appreciative of, groups they will interact with in the global workforce they are entering. Creating spaces for students to interact and develop friendships with diverse peers not only encourages diverse interactions, but it may also contribute to appreciation for the group with which the peer identifies (i.e., when a student develops a close friendship with a student who is gay, they are more likely to appreciate that group generally; Rockenbach, 2017) as well as other diverse groups (Hudson et al., 2019; Rockenbach et al., 2019).

Policymakers should also provide funding to encourage faculty and staff to develop innovative experiential education diversity programs and to collaborate with outdoor recreation
programs. The founding of the DIVE program relied on a university-wide diversity grant to start. The award of this grant was only $3,000, but it led to an institutionally-supported program which has been in operation for seven years (this return-on-investment seems high!). Policymakers need to ensure that these flexible funding mechanisms remain available and are widely promoted on campus. While this particular grant award led to a new program, a faculty member could use a grant program like this to work with an outdoor recreation program to infuse experiential education opportunities into their courses. This could also be a worthwhile use of educational and technology fees (e.g., North Carolina State University, Division of Academic and Student Affairs, n.d.) if policymakers ensure that experiential education opportunities are an allowed use of these types of fee sources.

None of the meaningful student interactions in this study could be replicated without the presence of structural diversity on campus. The DIVE program relied on a pool of diverse students to draw from in creating the small groups that shared their personal backgrounds and beliefs over so many campfires. This makes practices such as affirmative action necessary for ensuring diverse student populations in higher education. As a prerequisite to using affirmative action to provide diverse campus populations, this strategy must remain legal (which is far from assured, given the many legal challenges which have faced universities over affirmative action policies). If policymakers expect universities to produce students who are open to diversity and skilled in engaging with diverse peers, they must protect the use of affirmative actions by higher education institutions and administrators.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This exploratory case study uncovered a number of important themes that students experienced during the DIVE program and, upon reflection, following this meaningful
experience. These findings contribute to the literature on how students experience diversity interventions that has been needed to complement existing quantitative studies. With these elements of the DIVE program distilled into fundamental components (i.e., the conditions that created campfire spaces), future research is needed that replicates these conditions and tests for outcomes, both in other outdoor recreation settings as well as classroom and other on-campus environments. If an instructor uses the unconventional experiential education-based strategies discussed here in the classroom and students experience similar results as the DIVE program, this could provide guidance for how this curriculum could be implemented more widely. The DIVE program has traditionally taken 9-11 students on these trips, but possibly the concept of campfire spaces could be scaled to reach a wider audience of students who need this type of diversity programming.

To investigate these conditions in varying environments, both qualitative and quantitative research is needed to further explore the diverse interactions of students and resulting outcomes and reflections. Future researchers could create an instrument which measures diverse interactions in experiential education-based diversity interventions and whether there are resulting quantitative outcomes of these interventions. This could lead to further evidence of the extent to which openness to diversity can be changed in these intervention types. This type of instrument could also help illuminate the aspects of frequency and quality of diverse interactions that are necessary for student attitude change to occur. Does a student need to be engaged with diverse peers for a few hours, a few days, or a full semester for greater openness to diversity to be facilitated? The DIVE trip is nine days, but the pivotal moments for participants on these trips (i.e., challenge, informal interactions with peers, campfire spaces with meaningful discussions) were all shorter periods of time.
Most participants in this study spoke about the value of informal interactional diversity over formal diversity curriculum. This raises questions about the role of curriculum in diversity interventions in general and warrants further study. Are diversity workshops effective, for example, due to student participation in them or because students meet diverse peers in workshops which leads to future informal interactions and greater openness to diversity? It might be the shared group meal after a diversity workshop that is more impactful than the workshop curriculum itself. Additionally, if outcomes of diversity interventions are occurring well past the intervention itself, researchers would do well to use mixed methods to investigate distal outcomes in attitude change. Interviewing students who experienced quantitative changes in attitudes following diversity interventions will help determine whether the outcomes occurred as a direct result of curriculum or if attitude change was due to post-intervention diverse interactions.

The relatively minor role of diversity curriculum in participants’ experiences in this study leads to the question of whether diverse participant groups in other outdoor recreation settings need curriculum to have meaningful diverse interactions. Some participants in this study discussed the ways in which diversity curriculum led to deeper interactions about personal backgrounds, but would these interactions have happened regardless without the curriculum? Qualitative research into outdoor trips (and similar group settings like alternative service breaks) that are comprised of diverse groups is needed to determine whether diversity outcomes are being achieved by programs even without a diversity curriculum. This would help determine if there are other campus programs where students have meaningful interactions with diverse peers that are different than their on-campus groups. Given the resource limitations discussed in the recommendations section, optimizing existing programs for maximum impact on student
diversity learning and engagement may be more feasible than creating completely new programs like DIVE.

**Conclusion**

This study fills a gap in the higher education diversity literature by revealing how college students experience diversity and diversity education from a qualitative lens. Findings from this study support using experiential education-based diversity activities to facilitate student openness to diversity. Students who participated in the DIVE program were from a diversity of genders, races, ethnicities, and outdoor experience levels, but all found value in these diverse group experiences in outdoor recreation settings. College outdoor adventure programs provide a promising vehicle for facilitating meaningful interactions across diverse student identities. In addition to the actual outdoor spaces of the DIVE program, higher education faculty and staff should consider approximating the conditions of campfire spaces in classroom and other on-campus environments. Findings from this study also support the importance of ensuring structural diversity on college campuses; facilitating educational experiences with small, diverse groups relies on there being a diverse campus from which to draw participants.
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Appendix A: Program Founder Recruitment Email

Dear (Program Founder),

As we have discussed previously, I am conducting a dissertation study on the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) as part of my doctoral work at North Carolina State University. The purpose of this study is to collect an in-depth case analysis of the DIVE program, including its history, curriculum, the experiences of previous participants, and the experiences of previous student trip leaders. As part of this study, I am asking you to participate in an interview due to your extensive knowledge of the program’s inception and be interviewed, so that I may learn more about your founding the program and your experiences on these program trips.

If you are interested in participating, I anticipate this interview lasting between 1.5 and 2 hours in length in June of 2019 at a time and location which are most convenient for you. I will ask questions related to the beginning of the program and subsequent years in which you managed the program. I will also ask questions related to observations you had on the program trips and subsequent interactions with program participants and student trip leaders.

I have attached the consent form for this study, which I will be requesting you sign as part of your involvement in this study. The consent form describes the details of this study and specifies that your participation is optional. Should you choose to withdrawal from the study at any time, there will be no consequences. An identifying information we discuss will be kept confidential. During the reporting of this study, your name and the names of any participants you discuss will be given pseudonyms.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email so that we can schedule a time for you to be interviewed. Please let me know any questions you have and have a great day!

Nathan
Appendix B: Program Founder Interview Protocol

Introduction: Thank you very much for agreeing to be part of this study. This study is exploring the experiences of participants, trip leaders, and professional staff with the DIVE program.

This interview should take between one-and-a-half to two hours. I’ll be recording the interview and I will be the only person with access to the recording. When I analyze this interview, I will be using a pseudonym instead of your real name as I take notes, in order to protect your identity. Are you still interested in participating?

Also, I want to acknowledge that I’m a staff member with Outdoor Adventures and am currently administering this program. Please do not make your reflections on the program overly positive due to my affiliation with the program. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and I want to know your honest responses. If there any questions that you don’t feel comfortable answering, feel free to ask to skip them. Do you understand?

1. Please tell me the story of how you created the DIVE program.

2. Can you summarize the experiences of the initial trip groups that you took on DIVE trips during the first, second, and third year of the program?

3. Are there any formal activities or discussions which you feel especially contributed to the outcomes of participants?

4. What were the informal interactions of participants like on the trip? Do you remember interactions between diverse individuals that stand out in your memory?

5. You mentioned that previous trip participants and trip leaders have been in touch with you since their trip. Can you summarize the reflections of participants and trip leaders on the DIVE program and any of the communication with them that stands out?

The interviewer will end the interview by saying:
Thanks very much for taking the time to discuss your experiences. I may follow up with you after I analyze this interview to see if I correctly captured what you shared here (i.e., if I understand what you’re trying to say). May I follow up with you at a later time for a brief discussion to do this?
Appendix C: Previous Participant Recruitment Email

Dear (Participant First Name),

Greetings! I am conducting a dissertation study on the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) as part of my doctoral work at North Carolina State University. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of previous participants. As part of this study, I am asking you to participate in an interview due to your participation in a DIVE trip.

If you are interested in participating, I anticipate an interview about this lasting between half-an-hour and one hour in length in September or October of 2019 at a time and location (or online via Skype or Google Hangout) which are most convenient for you. I will ask questions related to your experience on the DIVE trip, in addition to other experiences with diversity programming you had during college (if any), and any reflections you have had on the trip experience since you participated.

To be considered for participation in the study, please visit this survey <insert link to survey>. As a thank you for participating in this study, you will receive a $20 Amazon gift card.

Thank you very much for considering this and please let me know if you have any questions. Have a great day!

Nathan Williams
Appendix D: Previous Participant Recruitment Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in the DIVE research study! Please reply to the questions below so we can select a group of former DIVE participants who represent a diversity of trip years, in addition to individual identities. If you are selected to participate, you will receive an email to schedule a time for your interview and details on receiving a $20 Amazon gift card to thank you for your participation.

Name *
[Open text response]

Email address *
[Open text response with email address verification]

Cell phone number (optional, only if you would like to be reached via text for this study)  
[Open text response with valid phone number verification]

Year you participated in the DIVE trip *
[Drop down menu with years 2013-2018 listed]

Gender with which you identify *
[Open text response]

Race/Ethnicity with which you identify *
[Open text response]

If you are selected to participate in this study, interviews will be conducted either in person or virtually. Please select how you would like to participate: *
[Drop down menu with the following options listed:
In-Person Interview in the Raleigh, NC Area
Virtual Interview via Skype
Virtual Interview via Google Hangout
Virtual Interview via Phone
Other- open text response]
Appendix E: Focus Group Recruitment Email

Dear (Participant First Name),

Greetings! I am conducting a dissertation study on the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) as part of my doctoral work at North Carolina State University. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of previous participants. As part of this study, I am asking you to participate in a focus group due to your participation in a DIVE trip in the spring of 2019.

If you are interested in participating, I anticipate the focus group lasting between one hour and 1.5 hours in length in September 2019. Lunch will be provided as part of this discussion. I will ask questions related to your experience on the DIVE trip, in addition to other experiences with diversity programming you have had during college (if any), and any reflections you have had on the trip experience since you participated.

To be considered for participation in the study, please reply to this email. As a thank you for participating in this study, you will receive a $20 Amazon gift card and lunch during the focus group.

Thank you very much for considering this and please let me know if you have any questions. Have a great day!

Nathan Williams
Appendix F: Previous Participant Interview Protocol

Introduction: Thank you very much for agreeing to be part of this study. This study is exploring the experiences of student participants on DIVE trips.

This interview should take between half-an-hour and one hour. I’ll be recording the interview and I will be the only person with access to the recording. When I analyze this interview, I will be using a pseudonym instead of your real name as I take notes, in order to protect your identity. Are you still interested in participating?

Also, I want to acknowledge that I’m a staff member with Outdoor Adventures and may have been the leader on your DIVE trip, but please don’t make your answers overly positive because of this. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and I want to know your honest responses. If there any questions that you don’t feel comfortable answering, feel free to ask to skip them. Do you understand?

1. Why did you apply to participate in the DIVE trip?

2. Please tell me your initial impressions or memories about being on the DIVE trip.

3. What aspects of interacting with other group members stand out in your memory?

4. Do you recall any of the formal activities or discussions you engaged in with the group (that were facilitated by trip leaders)?

5. I’m going to ask a few questions about your interactions with other students on the trip, partially based on diversity among the group (i.e., different race/ethnicity, gender, social group, socioeconomic status, etc.). How does the diversity of other participants on your trip compare with your previous experiences interacting with people of different identities? In other words, did you consider your DIVE trip group to be diverse?

6. What opportunities did you have for informal contact and conversations with other group members (i.e., not formal discussions).

7. What aspects of the trip did you find the most valuable (either formal activities, places that the trip visited, or people you interacted with throughout your trip)?

8. Did you have other experiences with diversity education or programs in college? If so, how do the compare with your experience on the DIVE trip?

9. Since the trip, can you describe any reflections you’ve had on it or any ways in which you’ve used what you learned on the trip?

The interviewer will end the interview by saying:
Thanks very much for taking the time to discuss your experiences. I may follow up with you after I analyze this interview to see if I correctly captured what you shared here (i.e., if I
understand what you’re trying to say). May I follow up with you at a later time for a brief discussion to do this?
Appendix G: Previous Trip Leader Recruitment Email

Dear (Trip Leader First Name),

Greetings! I am conducting a dissertation study on the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) as part of my doctoral work at North Carolina State University. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of previous participants and student trip leaders on these trips. As part of this study, I am asking you to participate in an interview due to your serving as a student trip leader on a DIVE trip.

If you are interested in participating, I anticipate an interview about this lasting between half-an-hour and one hour in length in September or October of 2019 at a time and location (or online via Skype or Google Hangout) which are most convenient for you. I will ask questions related to your experience on the DIVE trip and your observations and interactions with student participants. In addition, I will ask about any reflections you have had on the trip experience since you participated.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email so that we can schedule a time for you to be interviewed. As a thank you for participating in this study, you will receive a $20 Amazon gift card. Please let me know any questions you have and have a great day!

Nathan Williams
Appendix H: Previous Trip Leader Interview Protocol

Introduction: Thank you very much for agreeing to be part of this study. This study is exploring the experiences of student participants and student trip leaders on DIVE trips.

This interview should take between half-an-hour and one hour. I’ll be recording the interview and I will be the only person with access to the recording. When I analyze this interview, I will be using a pseudonym instead of your real name as I take notes, in order to protect your identity. Are you still interested in participating?

Also, I want to acknowledge that I’m a staff member with Outdoor Adventures and may have been the leader on your DIVE trip, but please don’t make your answers overly positive because of this. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and I want to know your honest responses. If there any questions that you don’t feel comfortable answering, feel free to ask to skip them. Do you understand?

1. Why did you choose to be a trip leader on the DIVE trip?

2. Please tell me your initial impressions or memories about being on the DIVE trip and what you observed of the trip group.

3. What aspects the group members interacting stand out in your memory?

4. Do you recall any of the formal activities or discussions that seemed to be effective for the group?

5. I’m going to ask a few questions about student interactions, partially based on diversity among the group (i.e., different race/ethnicity, gender, social group, socioeconomic status, etc.). First, can you describe in what ways the trip group was diverse or wasn’t?

6. What opportunities did participants have for informal contact and conversations with other group members (i.e., not formal discussions)?

7. Did you have other experiences with diversity education or programs in college? If so, how do the compare with the experiences you saw participants have on the DIVE trip?

8. Since the trip, can you describe any reflections you’ve had on it or any ways in which it has influenced your life?

9. Have you stayed in contact with any participants or staff from the DIVE trip? Can you describe your interactions with them since the trip?

The interviewer will end the interview by saying: Thanks very much for taking the time to discuss your experiences. I may follow up with you after I analyze this interview to see if I correctly captured what you shared here (i.e., if I understand what you’re trying to say). May I follow up with you at a later time for a brief
discussion to do this?
Appendix I: Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Participants

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<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
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Introduction: Thanks very much for agreeing to be part of this study. This study is exploring the experiences of participants on DIVE trips. As I mentioned in the email about this focus group, this discussion will be concentrating on the experiences your group had on the DIVE trip in the spring of 2019.

This discussion should take between one and 1.5 hours. I’ll be recording the interview and I will be the only person with access to the recording. When I analyze this interview, I will be using a pseudonym instead of your real name as I take notes, in order to protect your identity. Are you still interested in participating?

Also, I want to acknowledge that I’m a staff member with Outdoor Adventures and was the trip leader on your DIVE trip, but please don’t make your answers overly positive because of this. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and I want to know your honest responses. Also, you don’t need to answer all of the questions I ask if they don’t apply to you or make you uncomfortable. Do you understand?

1. Each of you has a nameplate with a pseudonym. Could you please each (individually) state the pseudonym listed on your nameplate?

2. Please share why you chose to apply for the DIVE trip?

3. Please share your initial impressions or memories about being on the DIVE trip.

4. What moments do you recall standing out when the group was interacting well with each other or had meaningful discussions?

5. Do you recall any of the formal activities or discussions the group engaged in (that were facilitated by myself or the other trip leader)?

6. Please raise your hand if you would describe the trip group as diverse. For those of you who raised your hand, can you describe in what ways the group was diverse? For those of you who didn’t raise your hand, can you explain in what ways you didn’t see the group as diverse?
7. What group discussions (either the whole group or a smaller group) stand out in your memory that were not part of facilitated activities?

8. I’m going to spread out some pictures from our trip to Louisiana. I’d like you to pick one that resonates the most with you and each of you will have a chance to share what about the picture stands out. (If none of the pictures stand out, you don’t need to pick one.) [Facilitator spreads out 20-30 printed pictures from the DIVE 2019 trip on a table.]

9. Have you had other experiences with diversity education or programs in college? If so, how do the compare with your experience on the DIVE trip?

10. Since the trip, can you describe any reflections you’ve had on it or any ways in which it has influenced your experiences in college or thoughts about diversity?

The facilitator will end the focus group by saying:

*Thanks very much for taking the time to discuss your experiences. This will help improve future trips and also contribute to research knowledge about these types of programs. Please let me know if you would like updates about the status of this research project.*
Appendix J: Program Administrator Interview Protocol

Introduction (from myself to the colleague interviewing me): Thank you for agreeing to interview me as part of my study on the Diversity and Inclusion adVenture Experience (DIVE) program. I have provided you an introductory list of questions to ask me about the DIVE program, but I encourage you to ask questions that come to mind even if they are not on this list.

1. Please tell me the story of how you came to become involved in the DIVE program.

2. Can you summarize the experiences of the DIVE trips that you led during the past four years of the program?

3. Are there any formal activities or discussions which you feel especially contributed to the outcomes of participants?

4. What were the informal interactions of participants like on the trip? Do you remember interactions between diverse individuals that stand out in your memory?

5. If you have had any contact with previous participants or trip leaders, can you summarize the reflections of participants and trip leaders on the DIVE program and any of the communication with them that stands out?

I will conclude the interview by saying: Thanks very much for taking the time to interview me. Would you mind sharing any impressions you have of what stood out about my responses? How would you summarize my experiences with the program?
Appendix K: DIVE Curriculum Guide

This curriculum guide was developed by program staff, based on North Carolina Outward Bound School curriculum. Many of these activities are diversity activities that were developed by other organizations or individuals and have become commonplace in diversity education. The curriculum is printed as is without corrections or edits to accurately reflect the materials that trip leaders and program staff were working with.

Color Me Human

Developed by Dave Genova and the North Carolina Outward Bound School

Objective: Participants will get their Trail Names. Participants and have the chance to explore the social construction of race and color.

Materials Needed

- Paint Chips of different colors- if you get colors like “true white” or “deep black” the better the activity.

Length and Itinerary (25 minutes)

- Scatter a bunch of Sample Paint Chips On Ground
- Have participants pick a paint chip that most closely resembles their skin color
- Have folks read out loud their “color”. (A lot of times this results in laughter)
- After the initial read, inform participants that this will be our trail name, then give them a chance to change their name.

Debrief

- This activity is meant to be light-hearted. To hopefully laugh at the idea that the names given to colors are essentially made up- let the experience speak for itself feel free to connect the activity with the ideal of social construction
• What is social construction?
• How is Color a social construction?
• What implications does “color” have in our lifes?
• Race vs Color?

Tent Lesson and Access to Resources

Objective: To gain a deeper understanding how both support and resources are needed for success; To give an opportunity to explore the “meritocracy myth”; To have all students be able to construct a stellar tent by the end.

Materials Needed:

• Tents
• White Board
• Dry Erase Markers

Length and Itinerary: (45 mins)

• Divide the Group into 3 smaller groups
• Instruct the Group that they have 15 minutes to set up the “perfect tent”
• Group One will have all parts of the tent and some extra steaks, They will also have 2 instructors.
• Group Two will have all parts but no instructors.
• Group Three will have half the steaks, only one pole and no instructors.
• At the end of 15 mintues walk around the group and see who has the “best Tent”
• Debrief the Activity
• Finally have folks from Group 1 teach those from the other groups so that everyone has a stellar tent by the end.
Debrief:

- Whose Tent was the “Best”, Why
- What was the point of this activity?
- Define Meritocracy Myth
- Frame that we will give both support and resources to succeed. Eventually we will stop supporting as much but only after they have been introduced to all the resources they will need for success.

**Safe Space**

Objective: To get participants to agree to community norms that foster a safe enough space to share and be open with one another.

Materials Needed:

- White Board
- Dry Erase Markers
- Crew Journal or someplace to write everything down.

Length and Itinerary: (25mins)

- Ask participants what they need to feel ready and inspired to share- write on board. Add the following if you see fit and participants don’t address them.
  
  Be honest at all times.
  
  Treat all shared information as confidential.
  
  Listen to everyone, even if you disagree.
  
  Do not interrupt.
  
  Avoid oppressive slurs and trigger words.
  
  Speak from your own experience “I” statements.
Participate in your stretch zone

Use “both/and” instead of “either/or”

Be o.k. with ambiguity- we are not solving the worlds issues- just trying

Replace guilt with responsibility

- Have all folks agree on these “safe space norms.”
- Develop a “signal” if norm is unintentionally broke (I find that a funny action is more useful and assumes positive intent of person who may not know that have broken a norm)
- Revisit the safe space norms before every activity that requires folks to be vulnerable.

**Trigger Words**

Objective: To identify words and/or actions in a group that illicit a negative emotional response from a person.

Materials Needed:

- Pens
- paper

Length and Itinerary: (30-45 mins)

- Have participants write down in their journals a word or phrases of words that have elicited a negative/emotional response in their lives
- Have participants close their eyes and remember that time. Then when they feel ready have them speak the word or words. Have the speak them one at a time (in a circle)
- Then have the participants open their eyes and on the count of three start chanting their word/words
- Gradually grow the volume in the room by increasing the loudness of the chant.

OR
• Have participants write down their trigger

• Place the trigger words in a hat

• As a facilitator pull the words out one at a time and read them

• After each word as the group as a whole- Is this a trigger for you, Why is it a trigger

• If time or need be you can do this activity again with “Positive Triggers” (ie. Do the same thing but instead have participants think of a word or phrase that elicits a happy, positive emotional response in their lives.

Debrief

• Where is everyone at? What emotions are around?

• What was said that you didn’t expect?

• How did speaking the words versus writing them down differ for you?

• How many of you have said one of these triggers during this course?

• Triggers are often times unintentional, how can you speak up on course when triggered?

“I Was”, “I Am” “I Am Becoming” and Balanced Person

Objective: To give participants the opportunity to explore who they were and where they are going. The Balance Person Activity gives participants a chance to explore ways their life is “off balanced” and how to identify when their lives are not balanced.

Materials Needed:

• Pens

• Journals

• White Board

Length and Itinerary: (20 minutes daily for 4 days)
• Have participants journal. The only instruction is that every statement must start with “I Was”.

• Then have participants journal with “I Am” and then “I Am Becoming”

• Spreading this activity over three days is preferable.

• Have student share their “I was, I am and I am becoming poems”

• The Balance person speaks to a tradition in Malaysia that states that we have three main line of energies:
  One that runs from our feet to our head: this represents humility and pride
  One that runs from left side to right side of our body: this represents giving to community and taking from community
  And One that runs from our front to back: this represents the past and future

• At any point in our lives we are pulled in energies that get us off balanced for example we are being pulled by the past. This affects the way we live in the world and can even manifest physically.

• For the Balanced Person activity, let inform students of this concept and ask them to explore their balanced.

Debrief:

• In doing the “I Was”, “I Am” “I Am Becoming” activity where there anything values/characteristics that are consistent

• What has changed the most

• What are you hoping to change?

• For Balance Person “where does your energy lie”- have them physically show you.

• How can you become more balanced?
**Life Stories in the Dirt**

Objective: To give participants the opportunity to share with each other their “life story”

Materials Needed:

- None, well the outdoors

Length and Itinerary: (45mins-1.5 hours)

- Have students take 20 minutes and visually represent their life story.
- If students do not do well with ambiguity role model your life story
- After they are done, walk around to each person’s life story and have them share with the rest of the group
- As a facilitator, you can choose to share first to set the tone of the activity

Debrief:

- You can choose to either leave time for questions after the end of folks presenting or choose not to. Choosing to let people ask questions takes up significantly more time

**Iceberg**

Objective: To Identify ways that we judge people in the first 10 seconds of meeting them and to identify ways in which we would like to be judged.

Materials Needed:

- Dry Erase Board
- Markers
- Picture of Iceberg (optional)

Length and Itinerary: (30 mins)

- For the Hook talk about the “Up, Down” when you meet people in the airport and you give folks the “up- down” what do you notice in the first 5 seconds of knowing them
• Write down the answers people come up with- you may have to prod folks to be honest by saying things that you noticed- for example I notice the color of someone’s skin, their dress, their voice, etc.

• Show the picture of the Iceberg “90%” is below the surface-

• Ask students what things truly define them as a person.

Debrief:

• Why is it that we judge by “up, down”? What barriers are there to truly getting to know a person (ie time, vulnerability, taboo, etc.

• How can a group go deeper?

• What are the benefits of getting to know a person?

Identity Tree

Objective: To explore our personal identities and how these identities

Materials Needed:

• Sharpies

• Journals

Length and Itinerary: (45mins-1.5 hours)

• ** Depending on the group you may need to do an activity to get people on the same page with language by defining terms of Sex vs. Gender, Race vs. Ethnicity, Identity, Sexual Orientation etc.

• Have students draw a tree with the following branches

  1. Gender Identity

  2. Race

  3. Religious background
4. Geographic origin
5. Ethnic background
6. Family role
7. Sexual orientation
8. Other?
   - Each person shares their branches……note any similarities or differences-
   - Journal and Share some responses to:
     Which of these identities do you (choose to) share most readily? Why?
     Which of these identities are you most proud of?
     Which of these identities do you guard the most? Why?
     Which of these identities do you think about the most on a daily basis?

Debrief
   - Is there anything you would like to share with the group?
   - Folks may need a little time to transition from serious space into the rest of the night, have a game or dance party type activity in your back pocket to lighten up the mood.
     Cinnamon hug works great.

**Voice Own up eMpathize Plan (VOMP)**

Objective: To give structure to conflict resolution

Materials Needed:
   - Whiteboard
   - Sharpies
   - Prepared scenarios

Length and Itinerary: (45mins-1.5 hours)
• Hook- “Itchy Sweeter”- Feedback. Have the group in a circle with your favorite outdoor layers (the older it is the better, talk about how often we get gifts that may mask themselves as something we don’t want to hear but if we hold on to it just long enough we might start to like it. Take Away- Only after trying on feedback can we determine if we really like it or not.

• Have folks brainstorm things that are important for “Resolution” to take place
  - Buy-in
  - Time
  - Facilitator?
  - Process?
  - Ground Rules

• Explain Voice, Own up, eMpathize and Plan

• Have folks role play scenarios

Debrief

• How can we use VOMP method with folks who don’t know how to VOMP?

**STINKY FISH**

Objective: To give folks the language and ability to recognize different types of communication, including Passive, Passive Aggressive, Aggressive and Assertive

Materials Needed:

• None

Length and Itinerary: (30 mins)

• This is a “theater” lesson

• Create a stage and role play the following scene, the more you ham it up the better:
One person comes in and orders a Fish Sandwich

The Cashier provides them with a burger sandwich

- Role play the scenario with the customer acting passive, passive-aggressive, aggressive and assertive

- The Cashier should respond in the following ways to the customer
  
  Passive- Gives the customer back the wrong order
  
  Passive- Aggressive- Gives the customer back the wrong order and is confused
  
  Aggressive- Gives the customer back the right order but spits in the sandwich
  
  Assertive- Gives the customer back the right order and extra fries to boot.

- Take away:
  
  Passive- don’t get what you want
  
  Passive-aggressive- don’t get what you want
  
  Aggressive- Looks like you get what you want but you don’t
  
  Assertive- Get what you want and some good

Debrief

- What is your preferred style when you get aggravated

- What does assertive communication look like?

**Take A Stand**

Objective: To give people the opportunity to self-identify where they stand on certain controversial issues and to talk about their beliefs.

Materials Needed:

- Nothing

Length and Itinerary: (45mins)
• Have a clear line and designate two spots on opposite sides of the line as “Aggree” and Disagree
• Read the following statements and have folks stand on either the “Agree” or “Disagree” side
• They can stand close to the middle but not on the middle.

Debrief- N/A

**Action Continuum**

Objective: To introduce the concept of the Action Continuum and have folks identify where they are in their own process to stand up against injustices

Length and Itinerary: (30 mins)

Action Continuum (Source: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Mr. Adams et. Al. 1997)

• Actively Participating
• Denying, Ignoring
• Recognizing, No Action
• Recognizing, Action
• Educating Self
• Educating Others
• Supporting, Encouraging
• Initiating, Preventing

Supporting Oppression

Confronting Oppression

• This is a useful activity that can be an easier model to follow for students than the Oppression Model
• The continuum above shows different stages one can choose to “participate” in when dealing with oppression. There are many ways you can use this on course, to presenting this continuum on the ground with cards marking each stage, or use some of the following ideas

• Make up definition cards for each stage of the oppression continuum, then divide students into pairs and have them design a role play for 1 or more cards (give them all the same scenario, or let them come up with their own).

• Draw out the continuum, and have students place themselves for different themes, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, weightism, etc. Be sure to phrase it so there is not guilt, but that this where they have been up until now, or how they were raised.

• Talk through what it takes to move up the continuum, at home, in school, as an individual.

Actively Participating: Telling oppressive jokes, putting people down from target groups, intentionally avoiding or discriminating against target group members, verbally or physically harassing target group members.

Denying, Ignoring: Enabling oppression by denying that target group members are oppressed. Does not actively oppress, but by denying or ignoring oppression, allows the oppression to continue.

Recognizing, No Action: Is aware of oppressive actions by self or others and their harmful effects, but takes no action to stop this behavior. This inaction is the result of fear, lack of information, and confusion about what to do. Experiences discomfort between awareness and action.
Recognizing, Action: Is aware of oppression, recognizes oppressive actions of self and others and takes action to stop it.

Educating Self: Taking actions to learn more about oppression and the experiences and heritage of target group members by reading, attending workshops, cultural events, talking to people of groups, participating in discussions, joining groups or organizations that oppose discrimination, attending social action events.

Educating Others: Moving beyond only educating self to questions and dialogue with others, too. Rather than only stopping oppressive comments or behaviors, also engaging people in discussion to share why you object to a comment or action.

Supporting, Encouraging: Supporting others who speak out against oppression or who are working to be more inclusive of target group members by backing up others who speak out, forming an allies group, or joining a coalition group.

Initiating, Preventing: Working to change individual and institutional actions and policies that discriminate against target group members, planning educational programs or other events, working for passage of legislation that protects target group members from discrimination, being explicit about making sure target group members are full participants in organizations and groups.

Debrief

- In Small groups have folks share where they were in each area
- Brainstorm ways to move “up” in the continuum
- Brainstorm Resources in each area
**MLK and Malcolm X Leadership Styles**

Objective: To compare and contrast two different styles of leadership and how we identify with these two powerful leaders

Materials Needed:

- Note Cards with MLK Quotes and Malcolm X quotes on them

Length and Itinerary: (40 mins)

- Hand out quotes on note cards
- Divide the group into folks who believe they have MLK quotes and those who have Malcolm X quotes
- Once folks have self-selected inform the group of the correct groups
- In their groups have them brainstorm:
  - Message of these leaders based on their quotes
  - Characteristics of these leaders
  - Public perception of these leaders
- Get back together as a big group share and debrief.

Debrief

- What are the similarities and differences in these leaders message, characteristics and public perception?