Developmentally Effective Experiences for Promoting Self-Authorship

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Abstract

Many national studies have identified experiences that are associated with enhancing college students' learning and involvement. This study contributes to the small but growing body of research that attempts to ascertain why given experiences have a developmental impact on student learning. For a theoretical foundation, this project uses the constructive-developmental tradition, in particular the theory of self-authorship, to understand how students interpret their experiences. Based on interview data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, researchers determined that educational experiences are most effective when they are tailored to students' meaning making. Four overarching categories of effects are articulated for students who are externally defined, who use a mixture of external and internal meaning making, and who are self-authored.

Developmentally Effective Experiences for Promoting Self-Authorship

Providing educational experiences that assist college students to achieve their goals and the learning outcomes colleges have endorsed has been a high priority on campuses across the US. Indeed, many national studies (e.g., NSSE, 2005; Pascarella, Nora, Edison, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1995) have identified experiences that are associated with enhancing learning and student involvement in college life. For example, they have shown that substantive engagement in some aspect of college life (e.g., residence life, research experiences, service learning, participation in classes using active learning) can enhance or detract from students' engagement with the learning activities the institutions promote and support.

These studies report the activities of large groups of students and thus are able to map general trends across types of institutions, programs, and student subgroups. Studies designed to examine individual level experiences with such programs, and especially the developmental mechanisms that determine how students interpret and learn from these experiences, are rare. This study was designed to contribute to the small but growing body of research that attempts to ascertain <u>why</u> given experiences have a developmental impact on student learning (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 1999; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Mezirow, 2000). This will assist collegiate educators to be more knowledgeable about the developmental and educational impact of the programs and services they offer, and thus more intentional in their choices of which programs to offer and support.

This study was designed to discover the kinds of student experiences that are associated with the achievement of a range of outcomes associated with liberal arts education. The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE) draws

from the dual concepts of wisdom and citizenship that have both served as major

constructs defining the goals of liberal arts education. Wisdom focuses on the

accumulated knowledge and intellectual arts associated with being an educated person;

citizenship focuses on the responsibility to use one's knowledge and educational

advantages for the benefit of society (see Lindsay & Danielson, 2004). The following

learning outcomes are associated with "wise citizenship" and liberal arts education:

integration of learning, inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, effective reasoning

and problem solving, moral character, intercultural effectiveness, leadership, and well-

being. (For a description of the process and rationale for selecting these outcomes, see

King, Kendall Brown, Lindsay, & VanHecke [in press].) The broad purpose of the

WNSLAE is to identify critical factors affecting these outcomes by examining the kinds

of institutional practices and student experiences that are associated with the achievement

of these outcomes and with liberal arts education more broadly defined. The interview

portion of the study asked the following research questions:

1. How do students' entering characteristics affect progress toward wise
   citizenship?

2. What educational experiences do students regard as key to this development?

3. How do students make meaning of (i.e., interpret) these experiences?

   In this paper, we focused on only part of this larger study, looking in depth at

those experiences that had a positive impact on students' development. We wished to

identify those experiences that made this kind of difference, and to scrutinize this subset

of students' experiences to better understand why they were effective. This study was

built on a strong foundation of adolescent and adult development theories that describe

how various facets of development unfold over time, including such developmental domains as moral, ethical, and faith development, the development of various facets of students' social identities, and cognition. (For a compilation of major articles of theory and research of college student development, see Wilson and Wolf-Wendel, 2006.) These theories describe the manner in which developmental sequences unfold, that is, they map major features of the developmental landscape as students engage in their educational journeys. The features these theories map are those that are commonly experienced and observed as people continue to mature from adolescence into early adulthood and adulthood. Another dimension of the landscape associated with college students' developmental journeys that has not been as well mapped includes the mechanisms associated with movement along these developmental pathways. Toward that end, we sought to engage in theory building by identifying the kinds of experiences that trigger this forward movement, experiences we came to call "developmentally effective." Understanding how students interpret their experiences provides essential information to educators (faculty, student affairs educators, other administrators) when planning and providing learning experiences for college students.

Conceptual Foundation of In-Depth Interview

The WNSLAE is intended to identify the practices, conditions, and experiences that promoted growth on the seven liberal arts outcomes listed above. We grounded our understanding of how students achieve these liberal arts outcomes in Piaget's constructive-developmental tradition. This tradition holds that humans actively construct their perspectives by interpreting their experiences (i.e., constructivism) and that these constructions form meaning making structures that evolve over time (i.e.,

developmentalism). Numerous theories describe epistemological meaning-making structures of college students (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; King & Kitchener, 1994; Perry, 1970). Kegan (1982) conceptualized the integration of epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal meaning-making structures. Kegan (1994) portrays development as "the evolution of consciousness, the personal unfolding of ways of organizing experience that are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into more complex systems of mind" (p. 9). The interview portion of the WNSLAE aimed to trace this evolution of consciousness by listening to how students interpreted their experiences and how these interpretations led to more complex meaning making structures that supported our seven outcomes of liberal arts education.

We further grounded our understanding of this process in self-authorship theory (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994) because many of the desired outcomes of higher education require self-authored meaning making (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Self-authorship is the capacity to internally define one's beliefs, identities, and social relations by using one's own voice to critically choose from multiple possibilities. Self-authorship is not prevalent in U. S. college populations (Baxter Magolda, 1992; King & Kitchener, 1994; Perry, 1970) perhaps because of strong socialization toward authority-dependence in adolescent life and schooling. Theories of college student development suggest that students initially rely on external sources for what to believe, how to view themselves and how to socially relate to others (see Baxter Magolda, Abes & Torres, in press, for an integrated synthesis of this literature). Liberal education's core goal is "teaching students how to develop their own independent and evidence-based judgments about complex and contested questions" (Geary Schneider, 2006, p. 2). Mezirow calls this transformative

learning, which focuses on "how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). Moving from reliance upon what we have uncritically assimilated from others is a significant challenge; it is the challenge of replacing one's meaning making structure from one that relies on an external foundation to one that reflects the internal grounding of self-authorship. Below, we describe how this transformation is key to achieving the seven liberal arts outcomes listed above.

These seven outcomes by their nature require self-authorship (King, 2007). For example, effective reasoning and problem solving requires the cognitive maturity to view knowledge as complex and contextual, the intrapersonal maturity to view oneself as capable of weighing evidence to make wise knowledge claims, and the interpersonal maturity to consider but not be overwhelmed by others' perspectives. Similar analyses have been offered for two other outcomes, inclination to inquire (King, Kendall Brown, Lindsay, &VanHecke, in press) and moral character (Lindsay, Barnhardt, DeGraw, King, and Baxter Magolda, 2007). Kegan (1994) and King and Baxter Magolda (2005) have offered more detailed arguments showing how intercultural effectiveness requires cognitive maturity to shift perspectives and use multiple cultural frames, the intrapersonal maturity to engage challenges to one's beliefs and integrates one's social identities, and the interpersonal maturity to engage in interdependent relations with diverse others. Similarly, DeGraw, King, & Barber (2007) illustrated how students' meaning making orientations affected how they learned from interactions with diverse others. Collectively, these works show how understanding the practices, conditions and experiences that

promote these outcomes requires understanding the practices, conditions and experiences that promote self-authorship.

Incorporating the constructive-developmental tradition and self-authorship, our conceptual model (see Figure 1) recognizes that students enter college in general, and into their collegiate experiences in particular, with characteristics they have acquired from prior experience. These characteristics include personal history (e.g., family structure, schooling, health) and initial ways of viewing the world, themselves, and social relations. This combination of personal and meaning making characteristics mediates the experiences students choose in college and how they participate in chosen or required experiences. For example, an externally-defined student whose family and religious community take a strong stand against homosexuality is unlikely to elect a course on sexual orientation. Should this student be required to take such a course, we could expect she might enter it with some hesitation to consider multiple perspectives because they conflicted with her prior learning. By contrast, another externally-defined student whose family and religious community accepts homosexuality might seek out such a course and enter it ready to entertain multiple perspectives. Students who are less externally-defined are likely to be more open to entertaining multiple perspectives and engaging in diverse experiences regardless of the perspectives of others to whom they are close. Once students are in college, the college culture becomes a force that mediates how externally-defined students choose and engage experiences as well. For example, an externally-defined student whose family and religious community takes a strong stand against stem cell research might be reluctant to enroll in an embryology course that examines this topic. Should this student be required to take a course that included consideration of this

topic, she might enter it with some hesitation to consider multiple perspectives because they conflicted with her prior learning. By contrast, another externally-defined student whose family and religious community is supportive of stem cell research might seek out such a course and enter into it more ready to entertain multiple perspectives, but unsure of how to respond to those who disagree because she grounds her opinions in an external definition, which is based on the views of her parents. Students who are less externally-defined are likely to be more open to learning about many topics, entertaining multiple perspectives, and engaging in diverse experiences regardless of the perspectives of others to whom they are close. Once students are in college, the college culture becomes a force that mediates how externally defined students choose and engage experiences as well.

Students' meaning making also mediates how they interpret their curricular, co-curricular and personal experiences. A firmly externally-defined student might interpret the Socratic method as a way instructors make students learn content, whereas a student who recognizes the need to think critically might see it as a means to so improve her critical thinking skills. A student with little prior exposure to socioeconomic diversity might view those he meets in a service-learning project as exceptions to his stereotypes, might experience dissonance but not know how to respond, or might come away seeing the need to rethink his ideas. This latter response is the one that potentially leads to growth on the liberal arts outcomes because it leads students to question or see the limitations of their current meaning making structures; it requires varying degrees of support depending on the student's entering meaning making structure.

When students interpret an experience in a way that exchanges an earlier way of making meaning of the world, self or social relations for a more complex way of making

meaning, developmental growth occurs. Our recursive model suggests that as students adopt more complex meaning making structures, they develop broader perspectives that enable them to make progress on the liberal arts outcomes and the three dimensions of development simultaneously. This growth then alters their "student characteristics" which in turn mediates future experiences. The cycle continues until students have achieved the outcomes and self-authorship, which combined yields wise citizenship.

Methods

The data for this paper were taken from the pilot phase of the WNSLAE, which used a cross-sectional, mixed methods approach to examine the impact of liberal arts education on students attending four colleges that represented a range of institutional types. The quantitative portion of the study included an extensive survey of student experiences and quantitative measures of each of the liberal arts outcomes except integration of learning, for which no appropriate measure was available.[1] The qualitative portion of the study consisted of in-depth interviews with students, and is the focus of the present paper. These interviews occurred in the winter term of 2005.

Sample. A total of 600 students who were randomly selected from within their institutions participated in the quantitative portion of the WNSLAE. The sample for the qualitative portion was selected from this group of 600; we first identified those who had agreed to participate in a follow-up interview and then attempted to balance the sample by class year (first year and senior students) and gender, and to reflect in this sample

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[1] For details on the quantitative portion of this study, see

http://liberalarts.wabash.edu/cila/nationalstudy.

enough students of color to be consistent with the percentage in the institution or 10% of this sample, whichever was larger. Our goal here was not to generalize to the student population at any of the institutions, but to yield a sample that included sufficient numbers of men and women, first-year students and seniors, and students of color to allow for their voices and experiences to inform the analyses. This approach yielded 174 students in the qualitative portion of this study. Table 1 provides a breakdown of these demographic characteristics among the interview sample.

WNSLAE Interview. An interview protocol was specifically designed for this study using an approach that incorporated both the "informal conversation interview" and the general "interview guide" (Patton, 1990, p. 288). Trained interviewers followed a three-part semi-structured interview protocol (Baxter Magolda & King, 2006). The introductory segment asked students to describe their personal history as well as their expectations for college and how these were realized. The second component addressed the educational experiences students regarded as key to their experience and why these particular experiences were important. The third segment addressed how students made meaning of these experiences and integrated their learning across experiences. Recognizing that the content and nature of meaning was unique to the individual, questions were responsive to the students' stories and functioned "to discover the meaning individuals make of their experiences" (Ortiz, 2003, p. 36). Interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes, were digitally recorded, and then transcribed verbatim.

Through these three segments of the interview, the interview is designed to map onto the conceptual foundation, Journey toward Wise Citizenship, shown in Figure 1. That is, the foci in the interview on student background characteristics, educational

experiences, and interpretations of experiences in the first, second, and third sections of the interview (respectively) were selected to reflect the three adjacent geometric figures shown in Figure 1, the circle, the hexagon, and the pentagon. All these are assumed to affect the achievement of liberal arts outcomes, the focus of this project and the liberal arts outcomes triangle of the figure.

Analysis. We used a multi-step analysis process. In Step 1, we first reviewed the full interview transcript to create a summary that consisted of three major elements, starting with a description of the student's relevant background characteristics and an overview of the interview. The second element focused on the major developmental experiences the student reported; this section included a description of each such experience and how it contributed to the student's development (the developmental effect of the experience), The major criterion for inclusion of an experience as a "developmentally effective" experience (a "DE") was that it changed the way the student saw or thought about the world (the cognitive dimension), himself or herself (the intrapersonal dimension) and/or his or her relationships with others (the interpersonal dimension) in developmentally more advanced ways. In other words, if an experience was important to the student but did not result in the kinds of development leading to self-authorship as described above (e.g., if it was simply described as "awesome" or if it reinforced existing ways of meaning making), it was not considered developmentally effective. From the summaries of the 174 students in the interview sample, we identified 300 DEs for purposes of this analysis.

We relied heavily on students' articulations of the experience's developmental impact when coding the interviews for developmental effects. As noted above, not all

experiences students selected for in-depth discussion met our criterion for being developmentally effective (articulating an effect that revealed growth in the cognitive, intrapersonal, or interpersonal dimension). We acknowledge that the articulation of developmental impact is a high standard to use when selecting DEs. Some reported experiences might have been DEs, but were not coded as such if interviewer neglected to ask follow-up probe questions appropriately, if the student's verbal skills were not sufficiently developed to offer a coherent explanation, or if the occasion of the interview didn't prompt a student's retrieval and use of these skills. For these reasons, this approach may have led to false negatives, the exclusion of experiences that were actually DEs. However, setting this standard makes us more confident that the selected experiences should be considered as valid DEs, and thus that the subsequent analyses were well-grounded.

The third element of the summary was an assessment of the nature of student's developmental meaning making (use of predominantly external, a mixture of external and internal, or predominantly internal) orientations. Illustrative quotes were extracted from the interview to provide evidence of and detailed contextual information for each of the three elements of the summary. We then sorted the transcript summaries for each institution into three groups reflecting these three meaning making orientations. We used students' meaning making orientations as the first means of categorizing the responses. In doing so, we sought to better understand the characteristics students brought to their learning environments, and how they way they "approached the world" (decided what to believe, who they were, how they related to others) affected how they interpreted their

learning experiences and what lessons they learned from these experiences to use in the future.

Step 2 signified the beginning of the analysis phase. In this step, we examined the summaries for each campus separately to preserve the distinctive contextual differences across campuses and to report institution-specific findings to the participating campuses.[2] For each set of campus transcript summaries, we first organized the summaries according to the students' predominant approach to meaning making (external, mixed, or internal), then extracted the DEs from the summaries, noting both the experiences and their associated effects for each student. This yielded a group of DEs for each of the three meaning making approaches. We then organized the DEs by their effects, using the students' language whenever possible. For example, many students reported experiences that led them to evaluate the basis for their political beliefs; "evaluating basis of political beliefs" was coded as the effect. Information about the experience itself (e.g., whether it occurred as a result of a course assignment, participating in a campus debate, or discussing the presidential election with parents or peers) remained linked to the effect but was not coded separately for this purpose. We used a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2003; Patton, 2001) to categorize the effects, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than determining them a priori based on particular outcomes or expectations. We first clustered the effects by themes such as "developed a more questioning attitude," "saw basis for others' views" and "learned to draw boundaries when taking care of troubled friends." We then organized the themes into categories

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[2] Institutional agreements preclude us from reporting these findings here.

within institutions to examine clusters of effects across developmental levels. For example, at one institution the category, "Evaluated Life Priorities" was used to capture three themes by meaning making levels, as follows.

	Students' Predominant Meaning-Making Approach		
Category	External	Mixture	Internal
Evaluated Life Priorities	Reevaluate family-related experiences to take care of own needs	Balance academic and nonacademic needs & responsibilities to take better care of self	Deliberate decisions about how to live one's life, balancing self with others

This constituted one row (reflecting a category) among several for the table of effects for this campus. In this process, we continued to focus on the effects, noting how these differ by developmental meaning making levels within each campus context.

Step 3 involved merging the categories across the four campuses and identifying those categories with similar effects to create new overarching categories. This was done by examining the categories for each institution, noting similarities and differences among them, then clustering the similar categories and noting those that appear to be idiosyncratic to the students from one institution. The overarching categories then provided the basis to identify cross-institutional effects.

Findings

As noted above, we defined "developmentally effective experiences" as those that stimulated students to re-evaluate and let go of earlier ways of making meaning of the world, self, or social relations and embrace a more complex approach. After analyzing the interview transcripts using the methods described above, we identified four overarching categories of developmentally effective experiences across the four

institutions in this study. As shown in Table 2[3], the nature of the effects in each overarching category took on a different form for students who were externally defined, used both external and internal sources of definition, and those who were becoming internally defined. As a reminder, our assessments of students' self-definitions were based on our reading of the whole transcript, not just on quotes taken from these selected experiences. We identified four major overarching categories that reflected the effects of students' engagement in developmentally effective experiences. Each of these is described below across the three phases of development using student narratives to illustrate the effects.

Increasing Awareness, Understanding, and Openness to Diversity

Many students shared stories of how their interaction with diverse peers on campus introduced them to diverse perspectives. Encountering diverse perspectives was uncomfortable for externally defined students who often reported that they did not know how to respond. However, encountering this dissonance and sustained interactions with peers helped them feel more open-minded and begin to apply new perspectives to themselves and their culture. For example, a first year, first generation student's discussion with an Indian peer about the differences between Christianity and Hinduism helped increase her awareness of difference. She explained:

> S[4]: I have a friend who is Indian we just sit down, we talk, and we listen to the different things that have come from our different beliefs, different cultures. And

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[3] Of 174 interview transcripts, 167 contained sufficient meaning making or developmentally effective experiences to be included in this overall analysis.

[4] In the quotes that follow, S refers to student and I to interviewer.

we actually share those different beliefs, different cultures. It's interesting to see how [Indian] views and everything are a little bit different than ours.

I: And how do you make sense of those differences?

S: How do I make sense out of 'em? I just, ya know, I try to figure them out. I kind of put myself in her shoes type of a thing which makes me see things from a different point of view. And I can make sense out of it a lot easier. My friend from India doesn't believe in the Christianity…she's Hindu. So we have VERY deep discussions on what we believe. And ya know, our beliefs aren't the same and I think that's where we can get more from somebody else. And it's just, it gets really interesting, honestly. She'll say, "Sit and think about this. See what you think about it." I'll go home and I'll think about it for a day. And I'll come back and say, "Well, is this what you mean or is THIS?" I try to understand it more. And she does the same thing with me and Christianity. And it's like, so we just sit and we talk about the different religions. It's just like, COOL! I didn't know really all that much about her religion when I first came into it. I've actually learned a lot more about it, and I understand more about why Hindus do some of the things they do.

By reflecting upon the perspectives shared by an Indian peer, this externally defined student was prompted to consider alternative perspectives, especially those pertaining to religious differences between Christianity and Hinduism.

For students who relied on a mix of external and internal sources for their beliefs and values, encounters with diverse others helped them see the complexity of diversity issues and gain empathy and respect for different cultures. They also began to see the implications of their own backgrounds more fully. These insights prompted them to react more positively to diverse others. A white first-year student with a mixed framework for meaning making had a dramatic experience watching a black friend experience stereotyping, which triggered her own activism as an ally of students of color. She recounts her emotions at the time of her friend's incident:

S: I could tell she just felt slapped in the face … I just felt like that person had not been listening to a word that she said and just like the assumption just kind of shocked me because it was something that never would have occurred to me in a 100 years to think that that's why she supported someone was because of her race.

She had talked to me a lot about feeling, not necessarily her, but just throughout life just feeling kind of discriminated against or feeling like an outsider. And I think for that moment, I felt like one with her or I completely saw what she meant. Sometimes before that I kind of wondered if it was just you know if people were trying and she just wasn't you know close to them or just had different values and that kind of kept them apart. But just like for that moment I just I saw that she was hurt and I what that meant to her. So that was one of those experiences with, with a different culture that- you know when someone said that, I was just shocked honestly. So, not that they weren't willing to say that, but that they thought that, so…

As a result of this troubling experience, the student started participating at the multicultural affairs office, where she was the only white student. At college she felt free to speak out and investigate values different from her conservative upbringing, and was surprised by the lack of tolerance and sensitivity of some on the campus. Her initiative to learn more demonstrates that having some internal voice enabled her to move beyond a simple recognition of difference.

For the few students who were just starting to rely on their internal voices for beliefs and values, interactions with diverse peers helped them be more understanding of differences and more aware of how background affects social identities. They began to value people for their differences and worked hard to understand and respect differences. A senior described joining an organization that encouraged cross-cultural exchanges among countries, and how she was able to both receive and give in this context:

S: One of my most positive experiences has been being in [cross-cultural exchange organization] because it was a chance to finally be in that diverse group that I had, that had in part drawn me to coming to [institution]. And so as much as I believe in the work that we were doing and all that, like I was really passionate about that, and that was very important, like, it also at a very social level, was just really nice because it was kind of like I finally got to become friends with a lot of different people that had different backgrounds and really have that experience that I want to have of meeting people that you know had come from different places and knew different things and where I was actually different and could share something with them. Being surrounded by a bunch of people like me, there's nothing that I can offer you know.

This internally focused student was not only able to increase her own awareness and openness to diversity, but help others who were different from her do the same.

These stories illustrate that students' meaning-making mediated their reaction to interactions with diverse others. For those who were externally defined, these interactions opened the door to new ideas despite the fact that students did not process them deeply. Students who used both external and internal orientations were better able to think through the implications of these interactions and interpret their meaning for how to think about diversity issues. Students who were beginning to shift to reliance on an internal meaning-making structure were able to consider interdependent relationships with diverse others. These variations reflect varying degrees of growth on intercultural effectiveness and effective reasoning and problem solving.

Increasing awareness, understanding, and openness to diversity reflects growth on all three dimensions of development. Students' increasing openness to multiple perspectives is indicative of epistemological growth. Their ability to see how their own background affects their perspectives reflects intrapersonal growth, and their growing understanding of others' perspectives and cultures demonstrates interpersonal growth. Thus developmentally effective interactions with diverse others, which occurred primarily through friendships, living arrangements, and co-curricular activities, prompted growth on all three dimensions of development. Simultaneously, academic and political discussions were challenging students to consider the basis for their beliefs.

Exploring and Establishing a Basis for Beliefs, Choices, Actions

Encountering diverse perspectives offered students an opportunity to recognize and explore the basis for their beliefs and those of others. Many students shared stories of

classroom experiences and discussions of academic or current events with friends as developmentally effective experiences. For externally-defined students, this took the form of recognizing that there is some basis for beliefs and choices and becoming aware of the need to explore the basis of their own views. Some adopted a two-category belief system in the face of this challenge, such as opinions versus answers or humanities versus sciences as the basis for beliefs. These experiences also helped students begin to identify their personal and professional interests. A sophomore African American male described a philosophy course that prompted him to recognize that there is a basis for one's views:

> S: I could never be a philosophy major 'cuz [that just] I didn't understand a lot of it, and I think I probably would have understood some more if it wasn't so much just what we thought about stuff. There are like, there are no right or wrong answers so I guess I'm still confused about that part 'cuz I need something that's right or wrong answer and then I can do that. I need like objectives, I need something, something concrete. You can't think of why is this and why is that, and anybody can be right or wrong, I mean, or every answer is right. You know, it's like in philosophy, everybody sees something in a different way and you know, you either see it their way or you see it your way, or you see it someone else's way and that's it.

> I: So in philosophy do you think there are answers that are more right than other answers?

> S: Oh definitely. I do but everybody does, you know. I mean it's probably I think it's the most opinionated like field ever. 'Cause I mean you can have your own opinion and then you know, you have your followers. They believe what you believe and that's it. And everybody else is just wrong (laughs).

> I: So it's not objective at all?

> S: No, it's not at all, I don't think so.

> I: Interesting. So did that class change you at all?

> S: Um, a little bit. I viewed a lot of things differently and I think I think about some things that happened kind of like, you know, like instead of thinking of **how** something happens sometimes I'll think about **wh**y something happen. I guess that's the whole main thing of philosophy is the why, you know. It's more or less…

I: Have you had any insights thinking about the whys?

S: Um, a couple. (long pause) Um, I kind of think about why like uh, it's a hard question. Yeah. I might have to skip that one, I can't think of that.

While he is now aware of the importance of exploring why things occur, he is not yet able to think in these terms. He also interpreted the basis for beliefs in philosophy as opinions. His insight reveals the initial step toward exploring and establishing the basis of one's beliefs.

Students who had already begun to develop their internal voices reported that these developmentally effective experiences enabled them to be more comfortable with their own opinions. They recognized their responsibility to establish their own beliefs to guide decisions. These experiences helped them clarify and focus their interests and to make initial decisions accordingly. One senior explained how serving on the judiciary board increased his understanding of why certain cases are not made public:

> The other part of me that kinda opened up to viewing things was that a lot of things that people talk about were just like, oh, the school is hiding a lot of things, the school is like hiding all the bad things, you know how students are, and they're just like, oh they just don't want it to get around and they're just covering it up so nobody talks about it because it's bad publicity for the school. There's that whole thing and being in J-Board and seeing some of the cases that do come up that the people on campus would like to know about, I see now why they try to not share it just because of for the victims' sake and for their safety and to make them feel safer on campus especially when they do stay. So there was just that thing of sitting there and listening, and listening to their testimonies and being there and being a part of the decision-making was an eye-opening as to why certain things are done administratively that way, because I was always part of the group, oh, why aren't they letting us know about this stuff? You, know why are they hiding this? And the next thing you know there's this report about how schools are required to report about how many cases of some things they have to do every year. I was like, where did this come from? We didn't hear about this. Like, who was it? Who was involved? And so there was this part of me, oh, I see why they do this now. It made sense. It clicked for me, and so…

Recognizing that victims' concerns and safety were a basis for decisions about disclosure, this student expanded his understanding of the complexity of beliefs that led to institutional actions that heretofore had been uninterpretable to him.

Students who had begun to define their beliefs internally reported that these developmentally effective experiences helped them learn to think for themselves and to think critically. They began to embrace their own arguments and challenge those of others. They began to consider and value their ability as learners. This helped them gain perspectives on their career paths. A senior described the "long, long debates" she had been involved in during college as she argued with her friends about political issues. When asked how these political discussions affected her, she replied:

> S: Um, they challenged me, in a lot of ways into thinking of different (pause), different ways because having somebody that you know, and interact with daily, and respecting them in a sense, and then having them have completely opposite opinions—they just, it just makes you see the issue for a different way, you know, in a different way. And, so, you don't discard it as easily as you might otherwise. So, you have to reevaluate it—reevaluate your ideas (pause). And I think (pause) the political discussions have been very informative for me, because they help me flesh out my own political thoughts (pause), and ideas, and what I could do, and how to change society, and, I mean, like, ideologically (laughs).

By having her political views challenged, the student was able to reflect on the rationale for her beliefs. These experiences also motivated her to consider how to promote positive changes in society.

The effects students report here suggest that they experienced epistemological growth toward defining their own beliefs. They also became more complex intrapersonally as they valued their ability to form beliefs and act accordingly. Their increased understanding of others' views reflects interpersonal growth. As was the case in the "increasing openness to diversity" category, students' meaning-making mediated

their reactions to developmentally effective experiences in the "establishing a basis for one's beliefs" category. Externally defined students recognized that there is a basis for one's views, but were unable to move beyond that recognition to understand the basis for their views. Students using a mix of external and internal meaning-making structures began to actively explore and establish the basis for their views. Internally oriented students worked to refine the basis for their beliefs and consider choices and actions that implemented those beliefs. These varied reactions reflect degrees of growth in effective reasoning and problem solving and inclination to inquire.

Developing a Sense of Self/Identity to Guide Choices

Students reported a variety of developmentally effective experiences that helped them begin to develop a sense of self or identity. Although these experiences often involved learning from negative experiences and relationships, students at two institutions also found support for identity development through a sense of community. As might be expected, externally-defined students learned from others' mistakes how to avoid negative values and behaviors. They also learned from conflicts and challenges in relationships. This helped them recognize the need to attend to their own needs and assess their priorities. Some gained confidence in doing so through a supportive community of like others. One student who held a campus-wide leadership position shared a conflict that helped him begin to develop his sense of self. He found himself in a difficult position when a team got in trouble for hazing. To complicate matters, the athletic director was reassigned due to the handling of the case. The student was friends with many of the team members and the athletic director. He explained his dilemma:

> S: I was in a very, very, very tough position where I had a full report about what these [students] had done. I had to be a student and a friend at the same time as

being [name of his leadership position]. And that was tough because I had made very good friends with the athletic director. I liked him a whole lot. He respected me but from what I was hearing, you know, he might have done some things wrong. And that was extremely tough for me. To be in that position of you know can you go hang out with these people and be their friend and support them, but at the same time make the case that hey, wait a minute. The chancellor is not somebody you should hate. He's doing his job. We had to quickly call a meeting and we had to go to a press conference and during that entire press conference when they read a report saying the entire [committee] supports the chancellor, I knew that, I wasn't sure if I really did in this decision. And I stood in this press conference and I kept my head down. I stood there you know with my hands folded and just – I did not want to be there. And it was like I hope and I pray that it does not go any further because I know that in my heart I cannot – if I disagree I'm not just going to go along. But at the same time, I cannot, you know, ruin everything for personal reasons. I can't ruin everything I've done for the position; I can't ruin the respect level. I was already tearing myself apart. I was like what are you going to do. How are you going to be able to say hey I still support you team but you did wrong. So it was- that was when, you know, there was a very big difference between who I was inside the position and who I was outside the position and had to make that decision.

I: Did you learn anything from this experience?

S: Again it was more of asking, being able- telling yourself you got to ask these questions. And trying to explain to my friends- like after one of the things that happened, a few days later I was hanging out at some of the guys' house and they were just going off on this and that. And I said. "now what a minute, you know, it's possible that the [students] did wrong. And it was tough for me to say that sitting there as their friend. And so I learned how to-it was like I, "guys I know you want to support the [students] and I know you have all these- you know you don't like the person that turned them in and so on and so forth but you got, you got to look past that." And, you know, it was very hard to say because I felt like you have, you really right now have the potential to ruin friendship and you do not want to do that. But at the same time, you can't just sit back and let it go.

This student had built his identity around his leadership role and his friendships. When

they came into conflict, he was uncertain what to do. He wanted the respect of others in

his leadership role and he wanted to keep his friends. He felt the obligation to challenge

his friends based on the information he had even though he feared it would ruin his

friendships. The conflict he perceived between these two roles rendered him unable to

act, as he lacked a belief system that embraced these two role simultaneously or that gave

him a way of responding other than keeping his head down and wishing he wasn't there.

Students who had begun to develop some internal voice were able to develop it

further through developmentally effective experiences. They reported that these

experiences helped them re-evaluate life goals and values, reclaim their sense of self, and

take care of personal and academic needs. Again some were supported by a sense of

community with others like them and in some cases by diverse communities. A senior

reported making a very difficult decision to challenge her parents and the coach's wishes

and their vision of her and leave the basketball team and join the softball team. Her need

to make the decision stemmed from a growing sense of her identity:

> I: How did you make that transition (from basketball to softball)? It seems like it would be challenging.
>
> S: It was really challenging just because my parents made it hard on me. Um, I came here to play basketball, and that was it. And, I kind of had to make that, you know, that decision not to play basketball, which was a really, really hard decision.
>
> I: How did you go about making that decision?
>
> S: Um, a lot of talking to my parents. A lot of talking to the coach. Um, and if it wasn't the same coach, guaranteed I would have played all four years here. I mean, it was just, it didn't work at all. And I kind of just had to convince myself that I was doing the right thing, you know. When you don't want to [laughs].
>
> I: Can you talk to me more about what was not working? I mean you say you've—it's clear that is was something with the coach. But…
>
> S: Um, just—I don't know. I don't know if it was just the coach, or it was kind of the team dynamics that I didn't feel welcome. I didn't feel comfortable. Um, I was kind of an outcast. But, I don't know if it was just because I was an incoming freshman, or what not. Um, but when I met the softball girls, it was just automatic. I was just—I was talking and stuff, you know. And, so at that—I don't know, the coach made me feel like I was making the worst mistake of my life. That it—this was my life. It was a huge part of my life, but it wasn't my life.

I was here for an education, and I was just going to be happy to be able to play ball while I was here. It made for a bad time—that was probably the most challenging thing I had happen here. Just cause it was rough on the home front, and at school.

I: So, your—so tell me about how your parents were reacting to this.

S: Um, they flipped out. They really did cause, uh, like I said, basketball was huge part of my life. That's all I was, was basketball. I lived basketball at home. So when I came up here, my parents lived basketball, because I did. And they knew I had a talent, and that was their biggest problem, was that they thought I was throwing that away. But, um, I proved them wrong with softball. [laughs] It was really rough. It was dealing with disappointment, which I couldn't stand. I felt like I had disappointed everybody around me. So, that was a huge, huge, huge deal. [laughs]

I: So, what lessons do you take away from that whole thing?

S: Um, to realize there's more to life than, you know, [basketball]. And, um, that parents, they only want what's best. And they don't want you throwing away something—a talent. And, I, I mean I, I don't regret it, and I said I would never regret it. But, I do miss it. So, I don't know—make decisions you won't regret. [laughs]. Which is hard to do sometimes.

Although this student's identity included seeing herself as a basketball player, her experience at college led her to conclude that there was more to herself and her goals in college than playing basketball. Yet the decision to leave the basketball team was difficult as her parents' were initially unable to understand the wisdom in giving up something that this student excelled in and loved. Her growing internal sense of herself clashed with parental expectations and although she struggled mightily with disappointing her parents, she made a choice based on her growing identity.

Students who were in the initial stages of primary reliance on their internal voices (self-authorship) used these experiences to make deliberate decisions about how to live their lives and how to balance self needs and others' needs. They struggled less than mixed orientation students with weighing others' perceptions. For some, friendships were

an important source of support in this process. A non-traditional student who returned to

college looking for a career change described one how taking an art class affected her

sense of herself:

> S: My husband went to a lot of the things that we had to do for this class. We
> went to the music things and the art things and the architecture, and he thoroughly
> enjoyed it, and he learned along with me. So, now we have that base, now we
> found out we both love Frank Lloyd Wright architecture. With my kids, with my
> daughter, I mean, she knows everything about music, and now we can converse,
> and she'll tell me about classes or what she's doing and I have a better
> understanding. Um, my son is an art, he's very, very artistic, and so, I was able to
> point out to him some things, like about the Grant Wood paintings and look at
> this, and we could learn from each other, so that was really cool, so we've had
> some great experiences from that, just that one class. I want to tell you one other
> thing: I never was creative. I always told myself I wasn't creative. I flunked art
> in school. I got an F in eighth grade, only 'cause some boy took the picture I was
> working on, but I got an F, and I can't draw more than a stick man, but I
> appreciate art. So, I took this class thinking, oh boy, you know, this is going to be
> bad, but by the time I was done with it, it made me feel really good that you
> know, everybody has creativity in them. It might not be drawing, but there are
> other things that are creative. So that helped me understand.

During the class, she came to embrace her own creativity, a sense of herself that she had

never recognized previously. She integrated her class with her husband, daughter, and

son by taking them to class field trips and by engaging them in discussions. The

experience caused this student to re-evaluate her own assumptions about what creativity

is and her own ability to demonstrate it.

Developing a sense of self is primarily an intrapersonal task. However, many

students defined themselves in relation to others, either through negative experiences or a

sense of community. Balancing individual and other needs was a challenge for externally

defined and mixed orientation students and being faced with this challenge prompted

interpersonal growth. For externally defined students, gaining confidence in expressing

their feelings was a notable accomplishment. Those with mixed orientations built on their

feelings, took a stronger stand on who they were, and began to use that to guide their choices. By contrast, internally defined students integrated their whole sense of self with their life choices.

Increasing Awareness and Openness to Responsibility for Learning

A variety of curricular and cocurricular experiences prompted students' awareness of their role in their learning, in part because they encountered diverse perspectives and gained awareness of the need to establish a basis for their beliefs. Externally-defined students began to question what they heard, although they still valued direct advice for specific learning situations. They did begin to take responsibility to seek help for learning, manage their time, and set priorities. They reported learning skills for success such as people skills, organization, thinking, and writing. These skills stemmed largely from interacting with peers. A first-year female student reported having to relearn how to be proactive about her learning in college:

> I: Can you identify major things that you feel like you've learned, or kind of themes that you've gathered from this semester?
>
> S: Um (pause), you only get as much out of stuff as you put in to it. Um, that's one thing I realized too—that was one thing, like, academically, I realized, 'cause people always told me to go to office hours, but it really does help. Like, I feel— like, taking initiative is a big thing that, um (pause), I maybe had to relearn how to do, 'cause by the end of my high school career, it was like, I was in places where people would ask me to do things, 'cause like, you know, you build up a reputation after being with people for awhile—so they're like, "Ok, this is what you need to do. This is how"—and I guess, too, it's the structure of high school that, like, they tell you more.

The structure she had experienced in high school had failed to prepare her for the initiative needed in college. Her insight indicates the realization of the need to take responsibility for her own learning.

Students mixing external and internal sources for what to believe reacted to these developmentally effective experiences by taking more meaningful responsibility for their learning. They took intellectual risks in class and assessed their own abilities and choices. They exhibited empathy toward others and had a broader, more integrated perspective on issues. They reported gaining professional experience, handling crises, and making their own decisions. A senior about to defend her honors thesis reported gaining confidence over the years to take intellectual risks:

> I: I'd like for you to think back over the last year; what would you say that you've gained?
>
> S: The last year. Hmm, I've gained the ability to feel confident that, I've had this problem in chemistry that I always think that um, what I'm saying, or I've never thought that I grasp concepts. Like chemistry is kind of like out there and it's just like, like I can do the theoretical stuff, and you know write it on a test, but I've actually gained the ability to feel that I'm confident of what I'm saying, and I think that's huge, because for a long time I've been having the problem that like I know what I'm saying for the test, but then if I had to go outside and talk to somebody that wasn't in chemistry, I wouldn't be able to explain it so that it would make any sense to anybody, and like I haven't gotten the big picture I guess, and I think now I'm just starting to get the big picture and it's all coming together, which is great. Starting to feel good about it, so I'm not feeling – 'cause I guess I just felt not confident in what I was thinking or how I grasped things. I just didn't think that I understood anything, even though like I'd still get good grades, it didn't make any sense, and now it's starting to all come together.
>
> I: What do you think prompted that?
>
> S: I think it's the ability to just ask questions in the words that I need to ask questions, 'cause sometimes you'll ask questions that, like I can use my own words and then I can, and then I'll maybe get an answer and I can actually, "so does this mean blah blah blah," and I'll say what it means, and if it actually means the right thing, then I feel like I'm grasping it. So, I guess it's just lately I've been able to ask more questions and feel confident asking the questions and not feeling like oh my question must be dumb, which you're supposed to not feel like that from your freshman year, 'cause that's what all the professors say, but you still feel dumb if you ask a dumb question, so, I think that's been one [thing] that I've just been allowed, that I've just gotten the confidence up to say, "hey, I know this stuff, so I can finally ask questions."

This student's interest in genuinely understanding concepts and getting the big picture led her to take risks to ask questions and rephrase her understanding in her own words. Her growing confidence reflects an internal voice that allowed her to act on her concern that she was not grasping the concepts. Although she still uses an external orientation toward understanding chemistry, her growing internal voice enables her to take more responsibility for learning to understand rather than simply excel on tests.

Finally, students who were beginning to rely on their internal voices took an active responsibility for their learning and for applying learning to their lives and identities. This white senior grew up in a large city in the Midwest, and was dramatically affected by her opportunity to study abroad in England. When asked how the insights she gained in her classes affected her personal life, she responded:

> S: I mean, a lot of those things play out in my personal life, in the conversations I have…in the people I choose to spend time with, in the career I choose, and the path of the career I choose. The, the different interests of film that—the different topics of film that I would actually like to pursue. Um, I, I think those are all very—I mean, like (pause), I think every aspect of my life have been influenced by those, by those ideals, I guess. It was building of ideals for me, and it's, um, regulated every action I've taken…

> I: Do you feel like those, uh, ideals are things that you revisit, …that you're very conscious of…

> S: I think they're conscious, and, um, I try to—especially in the setting, I try to challenge myself, and challenge other people, and that's why I get into so many arguments. But, um (pause), and I try to make sure that I'm thinking of my ideals in every sense, and from every angle. And, and I do—I challenge myself in that way (laughs). And, um (pause), sometimes provoke people in the process, but, I mean, that—I've seen it through a lot of people in my life—especially my family, and, and their choices in their lives, and just how (pause) either unmotivated, or, or almost sociologically pre-determined they were, and that—having knowledge of them, you get to create your own pathway, and,—I mean, at least as much as you can. As much as opportunity allows you. But, to have that freedom to look at things more objectively, to have a lot more choice in it than a lot of people I've grown up with, or have known through my family—people who haven't gone to college.

As she nears graduation, it is apparent that this student feels prepared and responsible to chart her own course. In essence, she believes that coming to college has given her the freedom to make her own choices in life.

Increasing awareness and responsibility for one's own learning follows the same trajectory as the previous overarching effects. Externally defined students recognized the need to take responsibility for learning and sought help to learn the skills to do so. Students with mixed orientations began to take intellectual risks, generate a broader perspective, and use their experience to learn. Internally defined students took an active responsibility for their learning and routinely integrated learning with their beliefs, identity and relationships. These variations sketch the process of integration of learning and inclination to inquire and lifelong learning.

Interrelationships of the Four Overarching Effects

Although each of these four overarching effects clearly emerged as separate themes, they appear to be interrelated as opposed to stand-alone concepts. Encountering diverse perspectives among peers and recognizing that beliefs have some basis both served to open externally defined students' eyes to the existence of multiple perspectives. Developing a sense of self and an awareness of responsibility for learning further prodded externally defined students to consider their role in deciding what to believe, who to become, and how to relate to others. Similarly, all four overarching effects aided students with a mixed external and internal orientation to work on establishing their own perspectives, considering others' perspectives more carefully, understanding the complexity of knowledge, identity and relationships, and making choices accordingly. Internally defined students refined the basis for their beliefs and used them to choose

actions that were consistent with their identities and beneficial for them and others with whom they interacted. Thus assisting students in each of these four areas is important to promote their journey toward self-authorship.

Discussion

As shown in the examples presented here, the experiences found to be effective in promoting development varied widely in content, context and timing. The content ranged from dealing with relationships that had existed long before coming to college (e.g., negotiating relationships with overbearing parents), to those involving academic pursuits (e.g., trying to pass challenging courses), to being involved in campus organizations (e.g., attending diversity workshops), to trying to understand the beliefs and behaviors of peers (e.g., having discuss with friends about political an religious differences, and confronting moral dilemmas inspired by student subcultures that tolerated academic dishonesty and abusive drinking). With the important exceptions of references to the 2004 presidential election (which had just occurred at the time of this study) and opportunities to travel or study abroad, few of these experiences were triggered by students' involvement in addressing contemporary social issues, either domestic or international.

The contexts in which these experiences took place were also varied, occurring in many niches of the campus communities, but also in off-campus employment settings and at home with students' families and friends from high school. And although many of these experiences were academically related, a relative minority of these experiences took place in classrooms. Similarly, although many students reported DEs through their involvement in campus organizations, being a leader of a student organization did not seem to offer consistent advantages in terms of promoting development. On one campus

with a diverse array of learning communities, these settings were the sites for large number of DEs, especially for externally oriented students who could explore diversity issues from the safety of a group of like others. Developmentally effective experiences also varied in timing: they occurred throughout the time these students were enrolled, from the beginning of the first year through the last term of enrollment. Further – and more importantly for the focus of this paper – the same content, contexts, and timing had different effects on different students, depending on their approach to meaning making.

Students' meaning making orientation was the major student characteristic that affected how students responded to developmentally effective experiences. One of the most striking findings from these interviews was the prevalence of students who relied on external definitions of knowledge, self, and relationships. About two-thirds of the students, including many seniors, were externally defined. Few students (less than 10% of the sample) demonstrated an internal definition, and these tended to be at the very early levels associated with self-authorship. One finding is particularly important in this regard. Across interviews on all four campuses and by students across all three developmental phases, remarkably few students noted that an educator had been a partner to them in helping them make sense of their experiences (e.g., academic, social, political) and to sort through the choices they faced. This included faculty, student affairs staff, or other administrators with educational responsibilities. Indeed, students reported little positive adult involvement in their lives at all. When students did mention adults, they reported that adults tended to simply tell students what to do (e.g., what courses to take, not to drink, which job to apply for or accept), even when students were experiencing a great deal of conflict around these issues and seeking information instead of answers.

Instead, students relied heavily on their friends for advice, even when the friends had no prior exposure to the situation at hand (e.g., requirements for a major or how to deal with mental health issues). Clearly, a strong role for educators is to learn to listen better to students, understand the basis for the tensions they feel, and to help students learn to evaluate multiple sources of information so they don't default to the word of friends they trust.

On a related note, many students reported at the end of the interviews that this was the first time they had encountered the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and to explain to someone else what they were learning and how their learning had affected their thinking, being, and social relationships. Many reported that they enjoyed this process and were eager to engage in this kind of deep reflection, but that it was so unfamiliar that they struggled to convey the effects they felt. As students searched for words to express their learning, it was obvious that they were not accustomed to talking about their experiences in the language of learning outcomes. Even students who were interested in participating in a project with "liberal arts" in the title and who wanted to express their appreciation for the breadth of knowledge they had gained by majoring in a liberal arts discipline or attending a liberal arts college talked about getting their distribution requirements "out of the way," apparently not seeing the link between these courses and the breadth of their learning. Inviting students to reflect on how their general education courses or distribution requirements contribute to their breadth of learning and preparation for their majors would give students the opportunity to practice integrating their learning across contexts and articulating how they understood the purpose for these experiences and how well they served this purpose. Given our earlier argument that

liberal arts outcomes require the capacity to think about the world, oneself and others in more developmentally advanced ways, the lack of adult guides, lack of reflection opportunities, and lack of coherence in students' perceptions of their college experience offer additional impetus to focus educational practices in ways that promote self-authorship. To maximize the benefits of developmentally effective experiences, we advocate a developmental, sequential curriculum that both course-based and evident across courses, and is integral to both the academic arena and the co-curricular college experience.

Constructing a Sequential, Developmental Curriculum. The four overarching categories of effects (summarized in Table 2) provide the framework for creating a sequential, developmental curriculum for promoting self-authorship and the achievement of liberal arts outcomes. In other words, organizing these findings regarding the DEs across the three developmental phases served to identify the major features of a curriculum educators could use to create developmentally effective experiences. Further, our finding that that there is no "one size fits all" developmentally effective experience is reflected in this framework; instead, determining what is effective will take into account the varying ways in which students approach and interpret such experiences (their orientation to meaning making).

Educators who see the value of learner-centered education understand that student characteristics mediate which experiences they seek and how they interpret what they learned from them. Here, the kinds of educational experiences that were effective for externally defined students were those that both challenged their beliefs and provided a strong support structure for exploring new territory that was intellectually or emotionally

challenging. This support structure was often the company of peers with whom they shared a common background or particular experience, or the "permission" or encouragement from others who were important to them. For these students, watching other peers (e.g., how they defended their beliefs, how they got in trouble, how they managed their time) and being exposed to different life experiences, philosophies, and lifestyles was key to their development. Educators who work with such students can help them learn from their exposure to such complexity in the world by asking students to actively reflect on and articulate their learning from such experiences, both respecting their current ways of organizing meaning and inviting them to consider new ways of doing so.

Students who operated out of a framework that was a mixture of external and internal grounding were already aware of such differences in viewpoints and broader perspectives; the experiences that were effective for them were those that helped them practice, own, take responsibility for, and become more comfortable expressing their own opinions. Educators who work with such students will likely be frustrated if they expect a strong educational effect from simply providing exposure or "introduction to" experiences. Rather, these students will benefit from finding more effective and nuanced ways to evaluate the various perspectives they now discern more deeply, to assess the implications of their own background and life choices more fully, and to engage in more sustained and substantive interactions with diverse ideas and diverse others.

Students who are beginning to use a self-authored orientation are often aware of the tremendous strides they have taken intellectually, socially, and personally. And the realized benefits of this hard personal work are worthy of commendation. At the same

time, they are often tentative in their judgments, worried about how to fulfill the responsibilities they now feel, and nervous about finding ways to be successful applying what they have learned. These students seek experiences to resolve these issues and to develop a comfort level that is grounded in realistic appraisals and direct feedback, and in opportunities to continue to grow by challenging themselves and taking risks. In this sense, they exemplify lifelong learners, but without the satisfaction of accomplishment in this regard.

Educators interested in examining the alignment of their own practices with strategies for promoting self-authorship may find it useful to answer four questions posed by Baxter Magolda and Blaich (2007). They encouraged educators to ask a series of questions when identifying ways to link learner-centered practice in ways that promoted self-authorship: 1) Who are your students? What characteristics do they bring to your environment? 2) What experiences do you offer? 3) How can these experiences be tailored to students who are externally-defined to promote their growth? 4) How can these experiences be tailored to students who are in the crossroads [who use a mixture of external and internal self-definitions] to promote their growth? These questions can help educators identify ways in which their own practices may be particularly suited toward students with a given meaning making orientation (e.g., relying on personal analysis of complex, abstract, integrative questions that require complexity across domains) to the detriment of those who use other orientations. For example, courses or cocurricular activities focused on helping student appreciate diversity often require complex understanding of racial privilege, oppression, and multiple perspectives to achieve the learning goals. These are particularly suited to self-authored students but are often

occupied by externally defined students. Adjusting these experiences to retain the challenge of exploring these concepts but increasing the support necessary for externally defined students to struggle with intellectually and emotionally challenging concepts would help tailor these experiences to students' meaning making orientations. Subsequent courses or activities would then be tailored to students with mixed orientations as students move through the sequenced curriculum. This way of building a curriculum is similar to the common practice in academic coursework of beginning, intermediate, and advanced work in a subject area.

Organizing educational practices to promote self-authorship has been explored in a number of recent publications (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2004; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Meszaros, 2007; Pizzalato, 2003, 2004, 2005). The most detailed descriptions of such practices are found in Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) volume on the topic of learning partnerships. This volume includes chapters describing educational interventions in both curricular and co-curricular settings, along with evidence of their success in promoting self-authorship. The findings from this study complement and extend this prior work.

This study provides rich information about the nature of students' collegiate experiences, it shows how the effects of these experiences differ depending on the meaning making orientation and how they were engaged in and with the experience. It also provides the basis for building on existing theories that describe development in late adolescence and adulthood to theory development focused on explicating the mechanisms of development, such as those identified here as being "developmentally effective."

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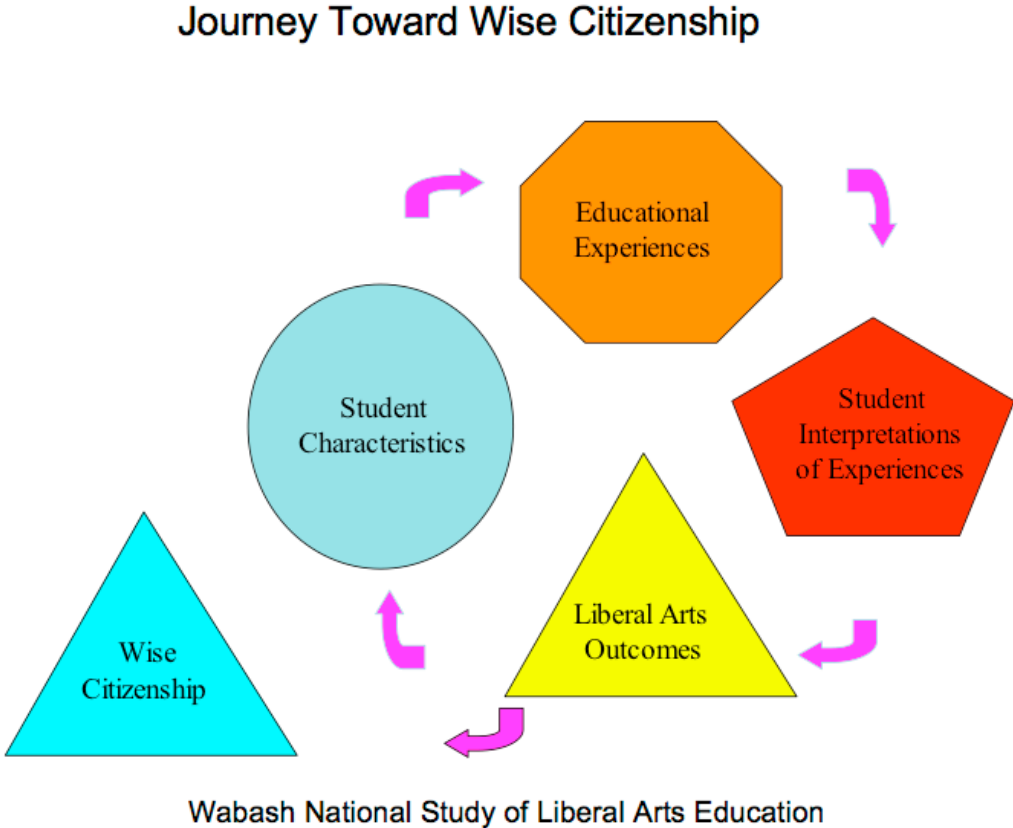Figure 1: Conceptual Foundation of the WNSLAE Interview

Journey Toward Wise Citizenship

Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education

Table 1

WNSLAE Interview Sample by Class Year, Gender, Race

	First-Year	Sophomore*	Senior	Total (%)
Gender				
Male	32	6	22	60 (34.9%)
Female	63	11	38	112 (65.1%)
Total (%)	95	17	60	172 (100%)
	(54.6%)	(9.8%)	(34.5%)	
Race/Ethnicity				
White	75	14	50	139 (79.9%)
African American	13	1	1	15 (8.6%)
Native American	1	0	2	3 (1.7%)
Asian	7	0	6	13 (7.5%)
Hispanic/Latino	4	2	3	9 (5.2%)
Pacific Islander	2	0	2	4 (2.3%)
Other	2	0	0	2 (1.1%)
Total (%)	97	17	60	174 (100%)
	(55.7%)	(9.8%)	(34.5%)	

* All sophomores in the interview sample are second-year community college students; gender was missing for two cases.

Table 2

Four Overarching Effects of Developmentally Effective Experiences by Meaning Making Orientation

Overarching Category of Effect	Students' Predominant Meaning Making Orientation		
	External (N=102)	Mixed (N=54)	Early Internal (N=11)
Increasing Awareness, Understanding, & Openness to Diversity	*Encountered* different perspectives & others' experiences; *Felt discomfort* about how to respond and think about diversity issues; *examined* basis for views; *felt* more open minded; *began* to apply concepts to self and own culture	*Saw* greater complexity in diversity issues; Gained *empathy* and respect for different others; *saw* own background more fully; *reacted* more positively to diverse others	Became more *open* & *understanding* of differences; more *aware* of how own background affects social identities; *valued* people for their differences; *worked hard* to understand and be respectful
Explore & Establish Basis for Beliefs/Choices/Action	*Recognized* there is a basis for beliefs/choices/actions; *Became aware* of need to explore basis for own views; *adopted* 2-category belief system (e.g., opinions vs. answers; humanities vs. sciences); *identified* personal & professional interests	*Became more comfortable* with own opinions; *recognized* responsibility for own beliefs, decisions; *clarified/focused* interests, made initial decisions	*Learned* to think for self, think critically; *embraced* own arguments, *challenged* others'; *validated self* as learner; considered own abilities; *perspective* on career path
Developing a Sense of Self/Identity to Guide Choices	*Learned* from others' mistakes, conflicts, challenges; *assessed* own priorities & *recognized* need to attend to own needs; *gained* confidence; for some this occurred via community (often with like others)	*Reevaluated* life goals & values; (Re)Claimed sense of self; *took care of* personal and academic needs & responsibilities; for some this occurred via community (often with like others)	Made *deliberate decisions* about how to live one's life, *balanced* self with others; for some via friendships

Table 2 (continued)

Four Overarching Effects of Developmentally Effective Experiences by Meaning Making Orientation

	Students' Predominant Meaning Making Orientation		
Overarching Category of Effect	External (N=102)	Mixed (N=54)	Early Internal (N=11)
Increasing Awareness & Openness to Responsibility for Own Learning	Developed a more *questioning* attitude; took responsibility to *seek help*, manage time, set priorities; *learned skills* (organization, preparation, thinking, writing, people); valued *direct advice* for specific situations	Took intellectual *risks* in class; *assessed* own abilities and choices; *developed empathy* for others; gained a broader, more integrated *perspective* on issues; gained professional *experience*, handled crises, *made own* decisions	Took *active responsibility* for own learning and for *applying* learning to life and identity