SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY: A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Steven Ray Wise
University of Kentucky, stevewise978@gmail.com

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Steven Ray Wise, Student
Dr. Kelly D. Bradley, Major Professor
Dr. Jeffrey Bieber, Director of Graduate Studies
SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY: A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By
Steven Ray Wise
Lexington, KY

Director: Dr. Kelly D. Bradley, Associate Professor of Educational Policy Studies & Evaluation
Lexington, KY
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SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY: A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

One of the goals of college student development professionals is to help undergraduate students develop a meaningful sense of personal identity. Early in the history of the profession, practitioners borrowed freely from related fields such as sociology and psychology to guide their practice, but beginning around the 1960s, scholars began in earnest to develop their own unique body of literature. In this work I examine the development of that scholarly work as it relates to identity development—specifically the evolution of understanding around the issues of sex and gender identity development.

Beginning with William Perry, whose work has impacted so many theories that followed his, I review the work of Nancy Chodorow, who was among the first to note that student development theory based on male samples disadvantaged women, Marcia Baxter-Magolda, Carol Gilligan, Ruthellen Josselson, Mary Field Belenkey, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule…and…. I discovered that each of these scholars approached sex and gender from a binary, essentialist, deterministic position which served to limit the understanding of sex and gender issues in the field of college student development. During the same period, work in the fields of anthropology, gender studies, psychology, sociology, and women’s studies were greatly expanding their understanding of sex and gender as components of identity.

In this work I identify the deficiencies and limitations in the research in the field of college student development related to sex and gender identity development; note the challenges to our work with college students because of those deficiencies and limitations, and make practical recommendations to three groups of professionals who operate in the field of college student development— theorists and scholars, practitioners, and educators and provide a model for efficiently effecting change in the field.

KEYWORDS: Gender Identity Development, Sex Identity Development, Androgyny, Personally Meaningful Sense of Identity, College Students

Steven Ray Wise

December 5, 2014
SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY: A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

By

Steven Ray Wise

________________________________________
Kelly D. Bradley, Ph.D.
Director of Dissertation

________________________________________
Jeffrey Bieber, Ph.D.
Director of Graduate Studies

________________________________________
December 5, 2014
I dedicate this work to my colleague and best friend of over 42 years—my wife Becky. You have lived with and shared each challenge I have faced with grace, courage, and faithfulness. Your enduring and unfailing faith in me and my dreams have given me courage, strength, and confidence to pursue each one. When we were just kids you rescued me—and you have been rescuing me ever since. Just like everything else we have shared over the years, this work is ours.
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When reflecting back over almost forty years of professional work there are many people who come to mind that have made significant contributions to my personal and professional growth. I’ll begin by naming Dr. Larry Pusey, a college friend of mine who first suggested that I owed God my best work—“He requires it of us,” he said. Though I have since come to understand that God does not require it of us—that He really just wants us to know the joy and deep sense of satisfaction that comes from doing our best, Larry’s admonition was an important part of my beginning to set higher standards for myself. Because of his statement, the idea of doing my best has informed and inspired everything I have done.

Though he passed away many years ago, I want to thank Dr. Jerry Saddlemire for allowing me to take classes as a special standing student in the summer of 1975. During that summer I was able to prove my ability to do graduate school work in a highly regarded graduate program which resulted in my admission to that program. It was a kind and generous thing—the sort of thing that a college student development professional should do—look at the whole person and encourage them. I trust that I have honored him over the years and that I thanked him sufficiently before he left us.

My thesis advisor, Dr. Hal Marquardt inspired and encouraged me and was among the first to make me feel like a scholar and a true professional. The high standard for performance he set in his gentle way provided the context for confident growth for myself and my classmates. Though he died many years ago, his spirit continues to guide me as a professional. I know I did not thank him sufficiently while he was alive. I hope he knew then, as I am sure he knows now, how valuable he was to me.

I walked into my first doctoral-level classroom in the fall of 1986. A slim, energetic, red-headed, woman from the south (the great and sovereign state of Alabama, thank you very much) greeted us in a classroom on the 7th or 8th floor of the university library with this statement: “It is altogether appropriate that our class is meeting in the library as this is where you will be spending
the majority of your lives for the next several years.” From that moment, Dr. Martha Wingard Tack both scared and thrilled me. I was scared that there was no way I would be able to match the energy, excitement, and commitment to learning that emanated from this woman. I was thrilled to think that if I could just come close—I would be a better professional and scholar that I ever imagined possible. I enjoyed several years of studying with her before her professional pursuits took her to another university. She is one of a very few people in my life who set a high standard and lived it. She made me believe that I could do the same and her example and spirit has been a constant driving force in my professional life.

“What would Dr. Tack expect?” has been an oft asked question as I have sought to be a good professional over the years. In a recent meeting of college personnel and legislators, several of our college leaders were asked to make brief presentations. I was not scheduled to present that day, but noticed that none of our leaders stood as they addressed the legislators. When they asked a question that I was uniquely qualified to answer, I quietly rose to my feet to speak—“Martha would expect me to do so”—I thought quietly to myself as I stood to respond. Thank-you Martha, for giving so freely of yourself to me and the scores of other students who have been privileged to know and learn from you. You have lighted my professional path since that very first day all those years ago. Though I’m sure that I have fallen short of the mark many times, I know that I am a better scholar, practitioner, and person because of you and your influence.

Dr. Richard Angelo was one of the first people I met at the University of Kentucky. I spoke with him about the possibility of being admitted to the doctoral program there. He was warm and engaging and I felt very comfortable with him from the start. Richard, I want to thank you for the many times you gave so freely of your time to listen and share thoughts. I was intentional about scheduling time with you because I always found our conversations stimulating and informative. I will always be in your debt for your willingness to step in to serve on my dissertation committee. You are a scholar and writer I hope to emulate and your assessment of my work will always be highly valued.
My research interests were formed in my mind over many years. As I was discussing them with a professor, she told me that there was a class I must take—it was EDP 604, Lifespan Gender Development with Dr. Sharon Rostosky. On the first day of class I walked into an undersized classroom with more students than seats. Obviously, this professor had a reputation. As we moved through the syllabus I experienced some of the same fear I experienced with Dr. Tack some 25 years earlier. Dr. Rostosky was clearly a committed scholar and educator. The work she described on that day, though very interesting to me, seemed way beyond my abilities. This was a person I wanted to study with but I was not at all certain I could keep up with her. I mustered the confidence I needed to stay in this class only by reminding myself that I had been in similar situations before and was able to meet the challenge. I expected to learn a lot in that class—I did not expect to be changed in some very fundamental ways.

Dr. Rostosky, thank you for pouring yourself into that class. You demanded a level of both quantity and quality of work that brought me a real sense of accomplishment when I finished the semester with you. But way beyond that, you were vulnerable in a way that made issues of sex and gender development and sexuality and identity very personal and real. Because of you, my research interests moved from a topic to be studied to a desire to know and understand a whole bunch of people who, prior to your class, I had only observed from a distance and I had determined to be safe. Because of you, my scholarly interests began to make the long and difficult journey from my head to my heart, and my desire to understand the unique challenge that we each face as we seek to develop a personally meaningful sense of identity was transformed from something I do to someone I am. You have changed my life and I sincerely hope that I have honored you through this work.

I am grateful to Dr. Katie Akers for stepping in to help me with this project in the middle of it. I believe that took courage and I thank you for that. Ms. Amberly Warnke has been a constant source of help and support throughout my studies at the University of Kentucky. You never failed to provide clear direction as I negotiated the policies and procedures required by the
University and the Department. When I was not sure what to do, I turned to you and always knew you would be able to point me in the right direction. Very often you just did things for me which I knew was above and beyond your job description. I thank you for your consistent support and help.

Dr. Bradley, I met you when you visited our Proseminar class in the fall of 2007. Your comments on that day indicated that you were one who invested a significant amount of energy in your students. I made a mental note that day and hoped that I would have the opportunity to have you as an instructor. That opportunity came in the fall of 2008 when I was enrolled in EPE 619, Survey Research Methods in Education. My impression of you as a student-centered educator as well as a highly skilled scholar were confirmed in that class however, it was in private meetings in your office that I began to understand the depth of your commitment to students. You challenged me each time we met, but you also encouraged me to pursue my research interests. You asked difficult questions and demanded that I think more carefully about my project, but you never tried to take it from me or change it in ways that would make it other than mine—even when it was perhaps in my best interest to do so.

I am certain that without your support and careful guidance, this project would not have been completed. Given some of the challenges we have faced, I am also certain that you advocated for me and my project in ways that I will never know. I always believed that you were in my corner and that if I just trusted you and continued to be faithful to my work, you would be there to guide me through.

You have been a model of academic integrity, student advocacy and support that I hope I can emulate in my own work with students. I am certain that without you as my chair, I would not be anticipating successful completion of my degree. I thank you for your commitment to me and my work.

I gratefully acknowledge the immeasurable value of a brief email exchange between myself and Dr. Linda Sax very early in this process. You graciously took time to respond to this
graduate student, who you did not know, from half way across the country and provided encouragement when it was very hard to come by—especially from a scholar of your stature. In addition, you made time for me to visit with you in your office at UCLA—responding so kindly to my simple request for some of your time. Your initial email and subsequent visit several years later provided great encouragement just when it was most needed. Thank you for the gift of your time and your thoughts concerning my work. Your words, “This could be groundbreaking” and “You are on the right path with your research,” sustained me through many moments—sometimes hours or even days of self-doubt. Thank you.

I must acknowledge my friend and colleague, Ken Lester, whose graphic skills so beautifully translated my thoughts and a rough sketch into an amazing graphic representation. Your skill will enable me to communicate the concepts in the Student Development Knowledge Community model in ways beyond my imagination. Thanks for taking the time to “get inside my head” so you could understand the ideas I wanted to communicate.

At last I come to my family. Each of our three daughters contributed to this work in unique ways. Daughter Stephanie demanded that I think in ways that were way beyond my traditional, fundamental, conservative ways of thinking. She carefully challenged things I would say that revealed my very narrow views and provided a seemingly endless flow of reading materials that have served to enlighten and informed me over many years. She and her husband, Jeremy have participated in countless extended conversations in which thoughts were presented, challenged, re-thought, and presented again. Together they have shaped my thinking and my work in invaluable ways and I thank them for investing in me in this way.

Leslie’s role has been to encourage and challenge. She and her husband Josh, strategically asked about my progress over the past few years. I always believed that they were very careful to ask when it was the right time to ask. I thank them both for their sensitivity to those issues. When I needed to share some of my writing with someone, I called on our daughters. I trusted their scholarly ability and knew that any critique would be mellowed by their
love for me. Their words of encouragement and criticism I trusted. Leslie was especially valuable as she carefully read and made invaluable comments that provided guidance for me as I moved forward. As a fellow academic, we spoke the same language. I thank Leslie for her gentle pushes.

Kelly cheered me on and I always knew that her assumption was that I would finish—it was only a matter of time. If I told her I was making good progress, her response was, “of course!” Our children never doubted my ability to finish this project and that’s a great gift for which I thank them.

Finally, Becky. Thank you for walking with me through this entire project. Thank you for never asking about the money we were investing; thank you for never asking for my time when I was trying to move forward; thank you for being patient when we both knew I should be writing and I was doing other, much less important things; thank you for creating an environment that was so conducive for me to finish this work; thank you for believing—always believing in me and in the potential value of this work. When I was not sure of its value, you always seemed sure.

Thank you for helping us find a balance between living our lives as husband and wife, father and mother, grandma and grandpa, son and daughter, friends, and all the other parts of who we are and this work. No one ever had better support than I. Thank you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................ii

List of Tables..................................................................................................................xi

List of Figures..................................................................................................................xii

Chapter One: Introduction............................................................................................1
  Statement of the Problem..............................................................................................8
  Six Fundamental Ideas About Identity Development That Should Guide Our Work.....13
  Why Is This Work Important?....................................................................................15

Chapter Two: Review of Literature.............................................................................22
  Defining Identity.........................................................................................................30
  Defining Sex and Gender............................................................................................33
  Sex and Gender—What’s The Difference?.................................................................35
  Conflation of Terms....................................................................................................37
  Deconstructing the Binary..........................................................................................38
  The Challenge of Essentialism..................................................................................41
  The Challenge of Determinism..................................................................................43
  Moving Forward: What Will It Take?.......................................................................44
  Sex and Gender Identity Development Theory.......................................................48
  What Does This Mean for College Student Development Professionals?..............52
  Challenging the Scholarship.....................................................................................68
  What Have We Learned?..........................................................................................69
  Does It Matter?..........................................................................................................71

Chapter Three: Methodology.......................................................................................73

Chapter Four: Application............................................................................................76
  Scholars and Theorists: A Critique of Current Work...............................................78
    Linda Sax—The gender gap in college.................................................................78
    Susan Jones’ Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI).........................83
      What Should be Changed in this model?...............................................................88
  Practitioners: A Critique of Current Practice............................................................88
    Ludeman—Arrested emotional development: Connecting college men, emotions, and misconduct...............................................................88
      The prevailing assumptions in this program....................................................89
      Alternative perspective on the prevailing assumptions: What would make this program better?..............................................................90
    Daughter Leslie—Housing Office, University of California-Irvine......................90
      The prevailing assumptions in this program....................................................92
      Alternative perspective on the prevailing assumptions: What would make this program better?..............................................................92
    Ehrmann—What is false masculinity and its negative consequences?.................93
      The prevailing assumptions in this program....................................................94
      Alternative perspective on the prevailing assumptions: What would make this program better?..............................................................94
  What Educators and New Professionals Should Know..........................................95
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1, Bem’s Sex and Gender Identity Options.........................................................27

Table 2.2, Combining Bem’s Sex Role Identity Options [gender] and Fasto-Sterling’s Sex
Identity Options..............................................................................................................28
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1, Visible Spectrum ................................................................. 24
Figure 2.2, Feminine-Masculine Continuum ........................................ 25
Figure 2.3, Bem’s Continua ................................................................. 26
Figure 3.1, The College Student Development Knowledge Community .... 74
Figure 4.1, Jones’s Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity ............... 85
Chapter One--Introduction

The seed of my current research interest was planted in a graduate school classroom in the spring of 1986. It was a typical day that began with a 20 minute drive south on I-75 to work, followed by five hours of work, and a 75 minute drive north to class. In class that day, several classmates were scheduled to make presentations. I always looked forward to time in the classroom because the discussions were stimulating and interesting and I always came away with new ideas to consider. Work was tedious, predictable, sometimes boring, and always without intellectual challenges. I anticipated a good day in class but I did not anticipate that I would gain insight into my own psychological make-up that would provide a new lens that would allow me to see myself in a new and deeply meaningful way.

I do not remember all of the topics that were presented that day—just this one. My classmate distributed a short survey that was designed to provide a cursory assessment of one of the ways we view the world. The general question was, “Do you view the world from a traditionally feminine perspective or a masculine perspective or some combination of the two?” I had never heard the word androgynous before that afternoon but, after answering a dozen or so questions, a brief analysis of my answers revealed that I was, indeed, androgynous. I did not know what being androgynous meant but as my classmate continued her presentation I learned that I had some characteristics that had been traditionally ascribed to men—masculine characteristics and some characteristics traditionally considered to be feminine. Most importantly I learned that day that I wasn’t just weird.

A researcher somewhere had given a lot of thought to this and determined that there were many people like me who did not fit neatly into the then prevailing paradigm of male=masculine; female=feminine. I was thirty-four years old, happily married with three daughters and I generally liked the person I was, but I had known for a long time that there was something different about me—not necessarily better or worse, just different.
I was born into what was, in the 1950s, considered a typical family. I was the second of four boys and my mom did not work outside the home. Dad was a pastor for two small fundamental churches who also drove a school bus and did a variety of other jobs to supplement our family income. Dad was a kind man who, in addition to his regular duties as a pastor, often “ministered” to the local farmers by helping them with a variety of chores and other work that needed to be done on the farms in the community. He hunted pheasant and rabbit when in season and saved quarters so he could take an annual trip with his brother to hunt deer in Pennsylvania.

Dad liked cars and was handy with mechanical things. I don’t really know if he liked to fix things or if he fixed things because it was cheaper to do that than pay someone else to do it. He was always clean, neat, well-groomed and professional looking at church or when he went to visit people in their homes or the hospital but he never seemed to mind getting dirty when a job required it. Getting dirty as a result of work seemed like some kind of badge of honor for him. For as long as I can remember, Dad served the small communities where we lived as a volunteer fireman and he seemed to enjoy that as much as anything else he did in life. I never thought about whether Dad was masculine or not—he was a man.

Mom was like all the other kids’ moms—always there to send us off to school; always there when we came home. She made all our meals, cleaned the house, washed our clothes, but it was not unusual to see Dad helping her. They often did dishes together. I never thought about whether Mom was feminine or not—she was a woman.

I don’t remember thinking of myself as being different when I was a kid. I did things that every kid did. I played ball, ran around town, made up games with friends, fixed things (mostly tore things apart which Dad helped me fix later), played outside as much as possible until called home. I also liked to sew and mess around in the kitchen and talk with Mom about life, but that never seemed odd to me. I was just a kid doing whatever I felt like doing. I don’t ever remember thinking about what was “girl stuff” or “boy stuff”—it was all just stuff.
In the third grade I joined the Cub Scouts. Joining sounded like fun to me but I probably joined mostly because all my friends were joining. It was fun—weekly meetings, a special salute and handshake, projects to work on—I had a good time but it was in scouts that I had my first experience of not being like all the other guys. We were planning to go to scout camp in the summer and, during our meetings, our leaders talked about all the neat things we would do at camp. It all sounded great, but after our meetings some of the guys who had been scouts for a few years talked about how much fun it was to de-pants the new scouts at camp. They talked about this activity like it was the greatest experience of their lives and that they could not wait to get to camp and de-pants some guys.

I don’t remember if I laughed with them as they told their stories that night or not. I just remember thinking that there was no way I was going to go to camp and have a bunch of guys take my pants off. I quit Cub Scouts before it came time to sign up for summer camp—no one knew why except me.

Over the years I occasionally noticed situations where I did not seem to be like the other guys. I had a lot of things in common with guys—I liked guns and sports. I played competitively at the high school and college levels. Throughout these experiences there were times when I just did not fit in. For a long time I thought it was my commitment to Christian values that made me different. I liked girls, but I did not want to talk about them in the ways other guys wanted to talk about them. I wanted to win games, but I did not want to “crush” my opponent or hurt him emotionally or physically in the process. Happily, I did not grow up in a home where anyone demanded that I be a “man’s man” or, for that matter, be anything other than who I was (or was becoming). Sadly, this was not true for many of my friends. Fathers and mothers often outlined expectations for their sons and daughters that were often very hard for them to live up to. Guys who were not “tough” were expected to act tough. I knew guys who seemed to be genuinely relieved when an injury ended their sports season prematurely. Girls who were too tough were routinely labeled “Tom-boys” and everyone knew what that meant.
Figuring out who one is or who one hopes to be is hard enough without having to try to live up to the expectations of so many others. As I reflect back, I believe I hid all of my personal identity challenges behind a cloak of being a Christian. It really was pretty easy to do that. With a pastor for a father it really was almost universally expected in our small community that I would not smoke, drink, cuss, or talk dirty about girls. On those relatively rare occasions when I did not quite live up to their expectations of the “preachers’ boy,” I was often brought up short with, “What would your dad say?” So I could be different without having to acknowledge or reveal or, in many instances, even think about why I felt different. I was just being a Christian—and that made me different.

But this level of understanding was not available to me then and in fact, laid dormant for many years until that day in a graduate school classroom in 1986 when I found out what I was—I was androgynous! Now, dear reader, before you get your anti-androgyny or anti-labeling flag out and start waving it wildly over my head, note the date—1986. In 1986 there were lots of people—smart people, who were very excited about Sandra Bem’s (1974) work. We know so much more now, but for me, at 34 years of age, to have lived with and exhibiting what everyone knew were traditionally feminine characteristics like caring, nurturing, sensitive (Pomerantz, Fei-Yin Ng & Wang, 2004), affectionate (Bussey and Bandura, 2004), etc.—I liked to babysit children and rock my little brother to sleep, it was life changing to find out that who or what I was could be named!

Since that day I have paid much closer attention to issues of personal identity. Not just my own, but in others too—especially in the students I work with every day. I began to informally gather anecdotal evidence from daily experience as well as from memories that served to inform and form my thinking about issues of identity. I recall, for example, a classmate in college who tried to convince all of us that he played football in high school and also played in the marching band at halftime. His trick? He wore his band uniform under his football uniform so he could change quickly enough to be on the field for the half-time show. Everyone knew better—even he knew that no one was buying his story, but he stuck to it. He had to—it had
become part of the new identity he was trying to create for himself in college. The guy who lived
next door to me in the dorm had pictures of Charles Manson pasted all over his walls. He told us
he was fifth cousin to Charles Manson and tried to get us to agree that he looked like him! This
may be an extreme example of trying to use the college experience to create a new identity but it
is by far not an isolated example or rare.

Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper (2003) reported that a central notion of college
student development has always been that the college years are critical for the development of
identity. It is likely that college was (and still is) an opportunity to exchange one’s identity that
may not have worked out very well in high school for a new identity that, at least in the students’
mind, would be better. Josselson (1996) suggested that modern industrialized societies allow
young people a period in which they are granted permission to rework their identities. College is,
perhaps, one of those times.

As a professional I have observed countless new college students trying to carve out a
new identity—“Mike” becomes “Michael;” a kid from Alabama who let it be known on the first
day of orientation that he was a Crimson Tide (University of Alabama) fan became “Bama” for
the next four years; the guy who showed up for orientation wearing soccer shorts and shoes
became “Soccer.” (I have to wonder what identity might have been ascribed to him if he had
decided to wear jeans and a t-shirt rather than his soccer gear.) According to the Digest of
Educational Statistics (nces.ed.gov, 2013) there were 21 million new freshmen in college in the
fall of 2010. Of that number it is likely that almost all of them do some significant identity work
in their first semester.

Many college student development professionals agree that achieving a meaningful sense
of personal identity is an important developmental task for college students. Josselson (1987)
suggested that “college may be the critical period for identity formation to begin” (p. 64). The
desire to be known—to be somebody—to have a personally meaningful sense of identity is
ongoing and pervasive. We all want to be someone—someone we recognize and are comfortable
with and, we all want to be known; not known on just a superficial level, but genuinely known, understood, accepted, valued by others. We are, as human beings, most happy when we know ourselves and can present ourselves to others without filters or masks. Sadly, in the first hours and days in a new situation such as college, I have noticed that in their desire to be known, students will often sacrifice a complimentary desire--their desire to be authentic. They will say and do things to be noticed—for good or for bad—just noticed, and by being noticed, known on some level.

The evidence proves the desire to be known is all around us. Among the most prominent evidence are the garments we wear with printed messages on them. On a college campus there are seas of t-shirts and sweatshirts with what seems like an infinite number of messages that announce our affiliations with groups—colleges and universities, musicians, and causes. There are vanity license plates, bumper stickers and countless other ways individuals employ to make a statement about themselves to those around them. Students join clubs and organizations that support issues that are important to them. Often they will join an organization to test their own sense of identity wondering, “Do I really believe this or not?”

In my field, college student development, we acknowledge and embrace the belief that for college students, a significant developmental task is moving toward a personally meaningful sense of identity (Torres, et al, 2003). Not only do we recognize the development of identity as a significant task for students, we accept professional responsibility for assisting students with the task.

Among the earliest examples of student development staff willingness to intervene is the ubiquitous new student orientation program. New student orientation programs are designed to quickly and efficiently help new students get to know other students. New students are routinely divided into smaller groups to share personal information with each other. While the questions seem innocent enough—they serve to force participants to begin to identify themselves without time for thoughtful consideration. “Put your first name on the nametag in big, bold letters” the
leader says. “Should I put my full legal first name?” The new student wonders, “Or my nickname? I never really liked my nick-name, maybe I should just put my first name.” (Maybe we should give students time to think carefully about this decision.) “Put your nametag on your shirt,” The leader instructs. Some students put it on their chest, over their heart; some put it on their sleeve or shoulder, while a few put it on the leg of their jeans or shorts. These decisions, by themselves, suggest the desire to be unique—to be noticed. “I’ll put this tag where I want to put it!”

Then other opportunities for sharing follow: Where are you from? What is your intended major? What are your career goals? What is your favorite sports team, drink, color, food? All of these questions, designed to help the new student fit in also serve to begin to define the student in this new environment and unintentionally put a level of pressure on the new student to become or continue to be someone they may prefer not to be. Many believe we know something about people just because we are able to label them—Oh, she’s from the south, he’s a jock, she’s from a wealthy neighborhood…

I participated in an icebreaking exercise once in which I very innocently was labeled as the father of twin boys. (I am the father of three daughters—no twins.) I struggled to correct the misimpression without success. I accepted this false identity for the balance of the exercise and spent the rest of the workshop worrying that I might have to, in some very public way, acknowledge that my identity as the father of twin boys was false. I am happy to report that once the conference ended I never had to face those people again—my true identity was intact and my false identity, inadvertently created during a fast-paced icebreaker exercise faded, though obviously not entirely since I am remembering now some ten years after the event.

The development of a personally meaningful sense of identity is a complex and arguably, a never ending task. Some people seem to move through childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood with relative ease, while others struggle at every turn. Likely, being a part of a culture and community where this path is well defined and expectations are clear, makes this task easier
for the individual. But while the task of developing an identity may be easier, options for
developing a personally meaningful identity may be limited. The Amish community, for example,
is a group that offers members a well-defined path with clear expectations albeit limited options.

**Statement of the Problem**

In a multi-cultural environment such as is available in the United States of America,
young people are offered almost limitless identity options—though unquestionably some identity
options are more accepted than others. To the extent that young people are exposed to a variety of
identity expressions, they face greater challenges to find their own way. For each person, identity
challenges wax and wane with changes in internally realized pressures often beyond the control
of the individual. One example of such changes are chemical changes, like the testosterone rush
commonly experienced by adolescent individuals which initiate physical changes that demand
attention. External pressures from family, friends, and the larger society also call for a response
from the individual. The seemingly uncontrollable rush of hormones in the early teen years bring
about physical changes that cannot be denied or ignored—facial hair and lowering of the voice
for males; rounding of the body for females and the maturing of sex organs for both.

There are times when the work of identity formation demands a great deal of time and
attention. These times can be initiated by internal forces (physical or psychological), external
forces (social), or, more likely, a combination of both. The time and energy expended by identity
development tasks takes time from other developmental tasks such as intellectual development,
social development, and emotional development. There are times, however, when “living our
identities is much like breathing. We don’t have to ask ourselves each morning who we are. We
simply are” (Josselson, 1996, p. 29).

I believe that helping students uncover or create a personally meaningful sense of identity
is one of the most important tasks that college student development professionals undertake.
Moreover, this task is generally acknowledged and embraced as a significant, profession-defining
task (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). However, I believe that our profession has failed to clearly
define the task—how, where, when is this work done? Who does it? How do we know we are making a difference? And, very fundamentally, what are the key components of identity and which of these are most important for college students? When we have not asked students which components of identity are most important to them we superimpose our personal identity agenda on them. Without these fundamental definitions, professionals are operating without agreed upon theory to guide practice. This results in individual professionals developing their own practice independent of the profession.

While I acknowledge both the right and the responsibility each professional has to develop a personally meaningful approach to their work, that individual work is best developed in the context of a sense of professional standards. Indeed, an important part of the definition of a profession is the development of a body of literature which allows members of the profession to collectively move the knowledge base forward in a responsible way.

The problem that I have identified can be expressed in several areas. One problem is that college student development professionals have not been faithful to our stated objective of assisting college students to develop a meaningful sense of personal identity. This failure is not due to a lack of activity on the part of professionals. Indeed, one must acknowledge that the effort put forth by practitioners is evident throughout the field. Theories of identity development abound. Among them are: Racial and Ethnic Identity Development (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989), Phinney (1990), Cross (1991), Helms (1990); Gay, Lesbian, and BiSexual Identity Development (Cass, 1979), (D’Augelli, 1994), McCarn and Fassinger, 1996; Gender Identity Development (Bussey and Bandura, 2004); Sexual Identity Development (Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, & Vernaglia (2002). Annual professional conferences are full of programs in which practitioners share new theory and their application of theory to their work with college students. This failure is likely more because of the second part of the problem. That is that college student development professionals may not know enough about the task of identity development to assume the role of helper.
Historically, college student development workers borrowed freely from related fields of study—psychology, sociology, organizational development (Torres, et al, 2009). Over time, professionals in the field developed our own body of scholarship to guide our work. The importance of creating a body of scholarship cannot be overstated. This literature creates the fundamental understanding and a common language from which both seasoned professionals and new professionals may operate. However, every profession exists in the context of all other professions and, on some level, inform each other. New professions, eager to build a body of professional literature and professional identity may not look outside themselves as much as they perhaps should. This kind of myopic tendency may have resulted in our failure to track developments in other fields that could have, perhaps should have, guided our work. It seems that the field of college student development has ignored or somehow missed the identity development work done in other fields such as anthropology, gender studies, women’s studies, psychology and sociology. Scholars in these fields were struggling too, to understand more of how individuals develop a meaningful sense of personal identity.

Our work should have been--could have been, informed by the work of scholars in these fields but it seems it was not. As a result, it is possible that many of the questions raised by scholars in the field of college student development who were addressing differences between men and women might have been reasonably answered had we considered the difference between the concepts of sex and gender that these scholars had identified.

We sometimes think of identity development work in ways similar to the way Michelangelo described sculpting the statue of David—as finding the marble that contains David and simply chipping away anything that is not David. The notion that college student development professionals know what needs to be “chipped away” or that we know what an individual should be, is highly problematic to say the very least, yet college student development professionals often develop programs with a specific agenda in mind. Most often those agendas include sexual and racial identity challenges. The caution here is, college student development
professionals could do significant damage by imposing their personal agendas on unsuspecting students.

The focus of this work is on one particular component of identity development—gender identity development; particularly how gender identity development differs from sexual identity development—i.e., how does one identify themselves psychologically, socially, emotionally, etc. and how one identifies themselves biologically, anatomically, etc. I will examine how gender, as a component of identity development, has been defined and operationalized in the field of college student development and compare that with how sex has been defined and operationalized.

The challenge of developing a personally meaningful sexual and gender identity is a significant one. The complexity of the challenge is exacerbated by the intersections of these two components of identity. Further complicating the challenge is the propensity for linking who we are with what we do. The prevailing paradigm is to move at lightning speed from sexual identity (female, male, or some other personally meaningful sexual identity) to sexual behavior. I believe this propensity to link who we are with what we do complicates our understanding of sexual and gender identity. For this reason I will focus on understanding sexual and gender identity separately from sexual activity.

Unlike students of a generation or so ago, college students today are exposed to multiple models of sexual and gender identity. Many identity options that were presented as undesirable or even deviant within the last fifty years are now routinely seen in movies, on television and in the national news. Highly respected and high profile individuals declare identities that only a short time ago would have damaged or possibly ended their career. In spite of these significant changes in our culture, sexual identities that transgress traditional heterosexual norms are still challenged making it difficult, at best, for college students to feel free to acknowledge or grow into the identities that are most personally meaningful.

A recent review of literature (by this author, unpublished) in the field of college student development clearly suggested that these two terms—sex and gender, are routinely used
interchangeably and rarely defined. That is, scholars have routinely purported to study gender differences without defining gender, or sex differences without defining sex. This review of the literature in the *NASPA Journal* and the *Journal of College Student Development* from the decade 2000-2010 showed that researchers in the field of college student affairs/development did not generally define the terms *gender* as different from *sex* nor did they attempt to operationalize the concept of gender. In 82% of the articles the terms were used interchangeably. In only one of the fifty-six articles did the author specifically define gender as different from sex.

Although sex as a variable is routinely understood as biological differences between females and males, gender is not so clearly defined—yet only one author from this sample employed a technique specifically designed to identify responders’ gender. Linda Sax (2008), for example, in her highly regarded book, *The Gender Gap in College*, identified numerous “gender differences” using the terms sex and gender interchangeably without defining either term and without attempting to define or operationalize the concept of gender. It seems clear that gender is not currently understood as a component of identity unique from sex in the field of college student development.

Defining terms and describing how they are being operationalized is an essential part of doing responsible research (Nardi, 2006). By conflating these two components of identity development, which I believe are unique from each other, college student development professionals have created high levels of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that thwart efforts to effectively help college students develop a meaningful sense of personal identity. Indeed, the often reported “mixed results” in the literature reaching back to the early 1980s might well be explained by the failure of the researcher to clearly define variables or because researchers used sex as a variable to examine differences between women and men that could more appropriately be explained by using gender as a variable. It may be that a persons’ psychological makeup may be the more salient variable than a persons’ sex.
A third part of the problem is that it is possible that college student development professionals have chosen to emphasize certain components of identity development which has caused college students to do identity work that they might not otherwise do, were it not for the attention given it by student development professionals.

**Six Fundamental Ideas about Identity Development that Should Guide our Work**

First, the development of a meaningful sense of personal identity is a dynamic, life-long task. While, from time to time, individuals may enjoy a sense of a pretty well defined and embraced sense of personal identity, we never arrive at a final destination called personal identity—the work continues throughout our life (Beall, Eagly, & Sternberg, 2004; Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012; McEwen, 2003).

Second, identity is a complex, multi-faceted construction. Much has been written about the many facets or components of identity development. Among those components are: gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion (Jones, et al, 2012 and Stewart, 2008); core identity (Jones, et al, 2012); occupational (Bussey and Bandura, 2004 and Josselson, 1987); ascribed identities such as social class, whom one must live with and get along with, what school one attends, what religion one practices (Josselson, 1987) and sexuality—behavioral, affective, and cognitive (Welch, Rostosky & Kawaguchi, 2000). Jamil, Harper, & Fernandez (2009) simply noted that identity includes “multiple areas of self-identification” (p. 203). In addition, emotional identities, intellectual identities, geographic and psychological identities might also be reasonably included.

One way to think about the multi-faceted nature of identity is as an electronic spreadsheet with multiple imbedded formulas and reference cells in which each change in data results in multiple changes throughout the spreadsheet. Torres, et al (2003) offered a frequently used metaphor for explaining the complexity of an individual’s identity—a radio dial—“we all have many stations (identities) available” (p. 67).
Third, nature interfaces with nurture at multiple points in the identity development process to bring about an individual’s response to the question, “Who am I?” Kenrick, Trost, & Sundie (2004) reported that while some traits may be fixed at birth, “many inherited tendencies affect development in more flexible and environmentally contingent ways” (p. 68). Moore and Travis (2000) agreed with Trotman Reid and Bing (2000) that social definitions and expectations can result in behavior that is inconsistent with chromosomal makeup. Fasto-Sterling (1985) supported the notion of nature/nurture interaction—“Biology may, in some manner, condition behavior, but behavior, in turn can alter physiology” (p. 8). Fasto-Sterling (1985) further characterized identity development as a “web of interaction” (p. 8) between biology and social environment—connecting threads move in both directions. Each facet influences and impacts all others. Schwartz and Rutter (1988), Barnett and Rivers (2004), Hampton and Moffet (2004), would agree with White, Bondurant, & Travis (2000), who said, “Biological and social factors cannot be separated” (p. 26).

While constructivists that begin from a behaviorist perspective may believe that identity formation begins with a random act to which the environment responds to begin the process, I believe that individuals begin with something—most likely something physical, that informs our very first action (stimulus) to which our environment responds—thus, a lifetime of interaction between the biological and the social begins.

Fourth, the development of a meaningful sense of personal identity is an important life task—perhaps the most important life task. Astin (as cited in Stewart, 2008) noted that among college students, “commitment and expectation to develop a ‘meaningful philosophy of life’ including reflection on the meaning of life, the construction of a meaningful existence and existential ponderings about the self and identity” (p. 183) are important tasks. Chickering (1974) and Chickering and Reiser (1993) (as cited in McEwen, 2003) reported that identity development is a “central part of adolescence and early adulthood but also a life-long task” (p. 205) Jamil, et
al. (2009), called identity development “a critical task of adolescents” (p. 203). While Torres, et al (2003) noted, “Answering the question ‘who am I?’ is paramount” (p. 68) for students.

Fifth, the work of creating a meaningful sense of personal identity is not always in the foreground of an individual’s ongoing psychological work. Josselson (1987) characterized identity as “largely unconscious” (p. 13). Depending on immediate life challenges, a student may or may not spend psychological energy on a particular task. This is also true for the various components of identity. There are times when a student’s life situation demands that they attend to their social identity and insists that they come to some resolution before they go on with other important life tasks.

Sixth, perhaps the most professionally challenging and humbling understanding regarding the development of identity is that an individual will develop a meaningful sense of personal identity with or without our help. Humans, after all, always seek to make meaning of life. This means that our role as professionals in the process should be to support and facilitate—not author a meaningful sense of personal identity for students. Further, it means that in what might be considered professional zeal to help students with this task, we must proceed with extreme caution. The students we seek to help must be allowed to set the agenda. While we may recognize the value of resolving identity development issues early in life, we dare not rush the process or, more importantly, define the process or the result.

**Why is This Work Important?**

I believe this work is important because developing a meaningful sense of personal identity may be the single most important task in which humans engage. As a professional who has had the pleasure and privilege of working with hundreds of college students over three decades, I have actively participated in helping many as they struggled with questions of identity and meaning. I embrace the stated goal of my profession of helping students work through the challenges of identity work—particularly through the college years. We just need to make sure we get it right.
Modestly, this work has the potential for redirecting the research agenda in the field of college student development for the next generation. For several decades a relatively large volume of work has been done that I believe has stalled because of misunderstanding the difference between gender and sex. Done well, this work will provide important insights, clarify definitions, and expand understanding that will inform both theory and practice.

Beyond the field of college student development, the conflation of the concepts of sex and gender and the misunderstanding that follows has impacted virtually every area of modern society. As Barnett and Rivers (2004) noted, we see sex and gender differences “in management texts, newspapers and magazine articles, best-selling books—maybe even in chats with your best friend over coffee” (p. 31).

Beginning with interpersonal relationships, the highly popular book (New York Times #1 Best Selling Book of the Last Decade), *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* by Dr. John Gray (2004), offered sweeping generalizations about both men and women and suggested that only when people understand what the author offered as clearly defined differences between the two sexes will they have any hope of a good relationship with a member of the opposite sex. *All* men, according to Dr. Gray, approach life and relationships from a similar perspective and *all* women from a different perspective. Note that he made no room for more than two sex categories much less the wide variance within those categories or individual differences. What happens to a man, like myself, who reads Dr. Gray’s work and cannot find himself in his definition of a man? More importantly, what happens to an 18 or 19 year old college student who cannot find themselves in hegemonic definitions of female or male; masculine or feminine? How is their identity work impacted?

Barnett and Rivers (2004) described Gray’s book as “the acknowledged kingpin of the gender-difference screeds” (p. 3). That this book is the New York Times #1 Best Selling Book of the Last Decade clearly suggests how desperate we are to have meaningful relationships. What a shame that those readers were asked to believe that all men are different from all women and that
once they understood those differences and responded to the opposite sex based on that understanding, all will be well.

Every man was once a boy. And every little [boy] has dreams, big dreams, dreams of being a hero, of beating the bad guys, of doing daring feats and rescuing the damsel in distress. Every little girl has dreams too: of being rescued by her prince and swept up into a great adventure, knowing that she is a beauty (Amazon.com).

The preceding paragraph summarizes the premise of John Eldredge’s, (2011) *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secrets of a Man’s Soul*. Like Gray, Eldredge suggested that there is a clear definition of what a man should be and what a woman should be. He further suggested that men need to understand and pursue what he called, *Authentic Masculinity*, which he described in this book using the book of Genesis from the Bible as a basis for his definition.

…the second chapter of Genesis makes it clear: man was born from the outback, from the untamed part of creation. Afterward he is brought to Eden. And ever since then boys have never been at home indoors, and men have an insatiable longing to explore (Eldredge, 2011, p. 4).

I remember starting to read this book some seven years ago. I read a dozen or so pages before I had to put it aside. Eldredge’s description of a man—his *authentic masculine man* did not include me and I could not help but wonder how many men had read this book and were struggling to make themselves fit into his description. Like Gray, Eldredge made no room for individual differences. He demanded that *male* be defined as masculine and *female* be defined as feminine. He knew what David was *supposed* to look like, declared it to all, and expected that those who desired to be *authentic masculine men* would chip away everything that was not David. (Did I mention that this book was a New York Times bestseller too?)

The belief in essential differences between men and women (and boys and girls) permeates popular relationship literature. Unfortunately this perspective has overwhelmed those who suggest a much greater flexibility in the construction of both sex and gender (Amott and
Matthaei, 1988; Barnett and Rivers, 2004; Caplan, Crawford, Hyde, & Richardson, 1997; Fausto-Sterling, 1985; Hampton and Moffat, 2004; Hines, 2004; LaFrance, Paluck, & Brescol, 2004; Moore and Travis, 2000; White, et al, 2000; Elliott, 2009, and many more). I hope this work will contribute to the work of those who have been calling for more comprehensive, inclusive, and diverse definitions of sex and gender identity.

A second area where this work may be valuable is in the workplace literature. The renewed push for greater opportunities for women in the late 1950s and early 1960s resulted in more women gaining access to the highest levels of leadership in the business world. As women struggled to pushed through the challenges to their professional achievement, many reported that advancement to higher levels of leadership within an organization often meant that they had to “act like a man” to move forward. To the extent that this was true, they paid a high psychological price for professional advancement. While there is likely a bit of acting that we all do to advance career or relationships or to simply get along with others on a daily basis, to do so on a regular basis is difficult at best. The freedom to be oneself at work and in relationships is essential to one’s ongoing psychological health. Everyone can perform a role for a while, but no one should be expected to perform a role over an extended period of time.

I found a comic strip years ago (sadly now misplaced) in which the CEO of a company was explaining to his company’s newly hired diversity officer that his job was to find employees that did not look like the CEO, but thought exactly like him. This pseudo diversity has likely hurt many individuals who thought they were hired for the unique skills and perspectives they could bring to a company only to find out that their real value to the company was something much less.

Through the 1970s and into the 1980s some companies discovered newly valued leadership characteristics that more women than men seemed to possess. For the moment I will define them as those characteristics that were considered traditionally feminine characteristics. Those characteristics were, among others: caring, empathy, collaboration, listening, cooperation,
consensus seeking, and stood in stark contrast to the traditional masculine leadership characteristics of competition, authoritarianism, centralized power, etc. Indeed, the ways of the organization, generally modeled on a military style of organization, was found to be less effective than the emerging style of leadership that tended to value individual contributions throughout the organization—not just at the top. This realization played a significant part in opening opportunities for women. The newly valued leadership paradigm created room for women and the more traditionally feminine approach to leadership they offered.

Unfortunately, the decision-makers of the day made a very poor—albeit common assumption (supported by pervasive popular belief) that all men were alike and all women were alike. If a woman brought a new and fresh leadership style to an organization, then all women would bring that same perspective. They did not understand that it was the psychological make-up (read, gender) of the individual—whether female or male, that made the real difference. A woman who “acted like a man” brought no more value or new perspective, than a man who “acted like a man!”

Surprising to most, hiring a woman did not always result in accessing these newly-valued leadership styles or characteristics. Some women brought with them more traditionally masculine leadership styles. These organizations failed to understand that human characteristics can, and often do, transcend sex—that men can possess traditionally feminine characteristics and that women can possess traditionally masculine characteristics. To tap into specific desired human characteristics, one must do more than check the sex of the individual.

This lack of understanding continues. Scores of books and workshop experiences are available to help people understand the differences between the sexes (often referred to as differences between the genders). Understanding these differences, we are told, is essential to ensure that men and women can work effectively together (Gurian & Annis, 2008). Most generally, as noted above with respect to relationships, these differences are recognized and operationalized as sex differences even when calling them gender differences. That is, there is
rarely, if ever, an attempt to determine the gender of an individual—only their sex. Failure to recognize a wider possibility of sex differences beyond the historic binary of male or female and gender differences beyond the historic masculine or feminine, or that men may possess traditionally feminine characteristics or women traditionally masculine characteristics, or the possible impacts of the intersection of these identity components, results in significant misunderstanding in the workplace generally and individual frustration specifically. With the variance within these components of identity that we know exist, it is likely that many of the people who read these books or attend these workshops would also have a difficult time finding themselves in the descriptions.

It is likely that anyone who is reading this has said or heard others say, “That’s a man for you!” or “That’s a woman for you!” Grouping all men together and all women together is a very common practice in our culture. The belief that men and women are fundamentally different is ubiquitous. If we want to create an environment in which there is room for the uniqueness of each individual to flourish, this strict binary must be challenged and deconstructed. I hope this research will help in that deconstruction process.

Ultimately, this work is important because every individual should have the right to be who they understand themselves to be. While post modernists theory would have us deconstruct all categories for sex and gender (Bettie, 2003; Dillabough, 2006; Walkerdine and Ringrose, 2006 and White, et al, 2000, I believe the road from where we are currently as a culture to that place (worthy as it might be) is a very long and likely treacherous one. I believe we should head in that direction—that each individual should be free to respond to their own sense of personal identity without being restricted by socially constructed categories. However, the pragmatic part of me demands that I consider the first steps on that road and address those initial challenges. For me, those first steps do not include the leap from our present [mis]understanding of identity categories like sex and gender to a world without categories.
I believe our understanding of the human potential for being unique must be broad enough to make room for everyone. To begin that journey requires that we challenge several fundamental beliefs: 1) We must acknowledge that the binary understanding of sex as either female or male is inadequate to describe all of human kind; 2) We must acknowledge that the binary understanding of gender as masculine or feminine is inadequate to describe all of human kind; 3) We must acknowledge that the determinists’ belief that sex (biology) determines gender (psycho or socio) is simply not true; 4) We must acknowledge that one’s identity is dynamically constructed over a lifetime—not pre-existent and waiting to be uncovered or discovered.

In this research I will trace the history of key identity development research in the field of college student development and highlight the points of possible misinterpretation and the limitations on methodology that lead to the misinterpretation and misunderstanding. I will suggest an alternative way to interpret research results and suggest an alternative way to structure future research projects to take into account the differences between the variables of sex and gender. I will also suggest an alternative way to interpret relationship challenges. Finally, through this effort I hope to change the prevailing paradigm currently used by scholars in the field of college student development to understand sexual and gender identity development among college students.
Chapter Two—Review of Literature

The challenges and limitations of this research effort are many. Indeed, the more time devoted to research around this topic increasingly suggested that this may be an impossible task, which may explain why not many have undertaken it previously. First among the limitations is the complex nature of identity development. There are many individual components of identity that work together to impact the individual’s sense of identity. In an effort to broaden my own understanding of identity I have identified 20 unique components and unabashedly acknowledge that there are likely many others. The goal here is not to be comprehensive but to be illustrative. This list includes (in no particular order):

1. Psychological identity
2. Social identity
3. Intellectual identity
4. Physical identity
5. Geographical identity
6. Political identity
7. Age identity
8. Sex identity
9. Gender identity
10. Religious/Spiritual identity
11. Economic/Class identity
12. Residence identity (related to economic identity)
13. Vocational/occupational identity
14. Employment identity
15. Health identity
16. Racial identity
17. Ethnic identity
18. Sexuality identity

19. Sexual orientation identity

20. Class identity

Depending on the readers’ scholarly background, this list may be viewed as a good
representation of the various components of identity or as grossly uninformed for the lack of just
one or two components that, from their perspective, are essential and would, in their mind
disqualify me from speaking to the subject at all. Indeed, one of the significant challenges in this
work is that there are so many groups vying for scholarly and political attention. I am reminded of
the image of two parents at a little league baseball game arguing about an umpire’s call while an
eight-year-old player sits in the dirt with a look on her face that says, “Can I play some more?”

Theorists and practitioners often argue over terminology and nuance and abstract concepts while
all around us are people, young and old, who would just like a little help figuring out who they
are or who they might be or become.

While I acknowledge this limitation, I do not concede that this limitation is due to a lack
of scholarly effort. Further, I recognize that knowledge in any subject is never in the possession
of a single scholar and hope that this present effort might be simply viewed as making some small
contribution to that broader understanding that can only be approached by a community of
scholars.

Second, within each of the components of identity there are an infinite number of
gradations such that it is unlikely that any two individuals could be said to be similarly positioned
on any one of the components. For example, if we were to consider the identity component of sex
and look at a variable called “male” as an identifier, no two individuals could be said to be
located at the same position in that component. In describing sex or gender differences Beall, et
al., (2004) suggested that similarities and differences of women and men should be thought of as
a continuum. Anderson and Collins (2001) described a “range of social relation” (p. 174). Others
wrote about “overlapping distributions” (Caplan, et al., 1997, p. 8), a continuum (Marecek,
Crawford, & Popp, 2004), “interrelated bands of color that make up a spectrum” (Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, & Messner, 1988, p. 175) and multiple masculinities (Hamilton, 2008). All of these scholars described something very different than the traditional binary--an either/or relationship. Each individual identity is unique on a macro level and is modified by the uniqueness of each individual on a micro level—within each component of identity.

In her article titled, “The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough” Fausto-Sterling (1993) noted, “…biologically speaking, there are many gradations running from female to male…” (p. 21). Further, she (Fausto-Sterling, 1993) described sex as “a vast, infinitely malleable continuum …” (p. 21). One might imagine this more flexible understanding of sex by considering the light spectrum (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1
Visible Spectrum

While we routinely identify an object as being red, we know that there are many shades of red which become increasingly differentiated from red as we approach the color we identify as orange. Further, a color I might identify as being red, another person might call orange.
Similarly, the variable we routinely call male then, might be reasonably understood as somewhere within a range of characteristics we call male but not a clearly defined set of characteristics or a particular position that might be labeled male. No one really knows what red really is—it’s perception. Similarly, no one really knows what male or female really is. That too, is perception.
We should stop pretending that we do. This visualization should help us imagine the more flexible nature of the variable of sex and hopefully can help us to deconstruct the idea that sex as a variable might only be thought of as either female or male or that any one characterization defines any individual particularly well.

This same kind of understanding can be applied to the concept of gender. Thinking of feminine and masculine as two sets of characteristics entirely unique from each other should be reconsidered and likely rejected. As Hamilton (2008) noted, earlier concepts of masculinity and femininity held that they were situated at opposite ends of the same continuum (see Figure 2.2). The limitation of this conception is that for an individual to be more feminine (i.e., possessing traditional feminine characteristics) he had to be less masculine (possessing traditional masculine characteristics.)

![Figure 2.2](image)

**Figure 2.2**

Feminine-Masculine Continuum

| Feminine | or | Masculine |

Gender identity options based on this model are that an individual can be either feminine or masculine—perhaps more accurately described as possessing more traditional feminine characteristics or possessing more traditional masculine characteristics. The individual who possesses more traditional feminine characteristics is considered feminine; the individual who possesses more traditional masculine characteristics is considered masculine. Further, with this understanding, possessing traditional feminine characteristics means that the individual cannot possess traditional masculine characteristics. The concepts of feminine and masculine were in opposition to each other.

In 1974, Sandra Bem introduced the idea that an individual could be more than simply masculine or feminine (see Figure 2.2). Her model suggests that an individual might possess or exhibit characteristics that have been traditionally understood to be both masculine and feminine (see Figure 2.3.) Rather than just one continuum ranging from feminine to masculine, Bem
(1974) imagined two continuas—one describing the level of traditional feminine characteristics an individual possesses and a second describing the level of traditional masculine characteristics an individual possesses.

Figure 2.3

Bem’s Continua

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High feminine</th>
<th>Low feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High masculine</td>
<td>Low masculine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This idea is consistent with Bell’s (2004) interpretation of Freud—“…that men and women are both masculine and feminine…” (p. 147). Prior to these conceptions, sex and gender identity options were very limited. Being identified as female meant one is or should be feminine; identified as male meant one is or should be masculine. The idea that a man could possess either traditional masculine or feminine characteristics (or both) changed things.

Without considering the perspectives offered by Bem (1974) and Fasto-Sterling (1993), identity options embodied three important theoretical perspectives: 1) determinism—that the sex of an individual determines their gender; 2) essentialism—that there are essential differences between men and women that can be identified; and 3) binarism—that there are only two options for sex and gender identity. For sex: female or male; for gender: masculine or feminine. These three theoretical perspectives are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Bem’s (1974) model expands identity options. Under her conception the following identity options are available (see Bem, 1974, Table 7, p.161):
Table 2.1

Bem’s Sex and Gender Identity Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Sex Role <em>(Gender)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Near feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Near feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Androgynous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Androgynous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Near masculine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Near masculine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The term sex role is the term Bem employed in her research. For purposes of this research the term sex role is understood to be synonymous with gender.

Bem’s conceptualization expands sex and gender identity options from two (male/masculine or female/feminine) to ten (see Table 2.1). She used the term androgynous to describe individuals who possessed similar levels of feminine and masculine characteristics (Bem, 1974). In early testing of her theory, Bem (1974) found that in a sample drawn from Sanford University (n=444 males), 55% of the males were classified as masculine or near-masculine, 34% were classified as androgynous, and 11% of the males were classified as feminine or near-feminine. Among the females (n=279), 48% were classified as feminine or near-feminine; 27% were classified as androgynous, and 20% were classified as masculine or near-masculine. Bem (1974) warned that the “cutoff points are somewhat arbitrary” (p. 161) so caution should be used in interpreting these results but even with this caveat, these results suggest significant variance within the category of sex based on gender that is worth consideration.

Similarly, Spence & Helmreich (1978), using their Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) reported that college students in their sample (715 men and women), 34% of the males in their sample scored as masculine, 32% scored as androgynous, 8% as feminine, and 25% as
undifferentiated while 32% of the females scored as feminine, 27% scored as androgynous, 14% as masculine, and 28% as undifferentiated. The validity of these two instruments has often been questioned. These results are not here offered as definitive—only to suggest that within the variable we commonly understand to be sex, there is possibly variance that should be taken into consideration—especially when we are trying to measure differences based on psychological or emotional issues.

Putting Bem’s (1974) conceptualizations together with Fasto-Sterling’s (1993) thinking about sex identity, the identity options for individuals are expanded even more. Rather than the long-held tradition of just two sexes, female or male, Fasto-Sterling (1993) suggested at least five medical realities. In addition to the male female categories, she reports three major subgroups of intersexual individuals: 1) hermaphrodites “herms”—individuals with one testis and one ovary; 2) male pseudohermaphrodites “merms”—individuals with testes and some aspects of female genitalia but no ovaries; and 3) female pseudohermaphrodites “ferms”—individuals with ovaries and some aspects of male genitalia.

Table 2.2

Combining Bem’s Sex Role Identity Options [gender] and Fasto-Sterling’s Sex Identity Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Near Feminine</th>
<th>Androgynous</th>
<th>Near Masculine</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
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<td>Herms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merms</td>
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<td>Ferms</td>
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Thus, sex and gender identity options are expanded from the traditional deterministic binary in which sex determines gender—male determines masculine or female determines feminine, to Bem’s (1974) sex role (read, gender) identity options (feminine, masculine, androgynous, near feminine, near masculine) that separate binary sex identity from gender identity—allowing that females may have some level of traditional masculine characteristics and
males, traditional feminine characteristics; to Fasto-Sterling’s (1993) five sex identity options, which together with Bem’s (1974) gender identity options, expands ones identity options to twenty-five (see Table 2.2)!

While post-structuralists, who anticipate the eventual end of gender/sex as a relevant identity category (Francis, 2006) may be concerned that we are here simply creating more broadly defined structure when the more important task is to deconstruct all the structure, I argue that if we create an infinite number of identity options we have, de facto, deconstructed the structure. At last we may be beginning to make room for individuals who do not fit so neatly into traditional identity options.

Further expanding identity options, Fasto-Sterling (1993) went on to write that “sex is a vast, infinitely malleable continuum that defies the constraints of even five categories” (p. 21). Is it possible that the day may come when we think of both sex and gender identities as infinite possibilities that would allow each person to be more fully the person they understand themselves to be? Perhaps the more we know, the more we will realize the unique value of each individual—as an individual, and not as a member of some socially constructed category created for the sake of scholars and others who find it methodologically inconvenient to embrace each person as worthy of individual attention.

Within the body of literature found in gender studies, women’s studies, anthropology, and biology, this expanded understanding of sex and gender identity has been evidenced over the past 75 years—one might even say that this understanding is prevalent in these fields. However, in the field of college student development there is little, if any, indication of an understanding that the variable of sex defines anything other than the traditional binary of male or female.

The third phenomenon that causes more complexity in understanding identity is the intersectionality of the individual components. The term intersectionality was first used by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in 1991 in her work on violence against women of color (Jones, et al., 2012) and, according to Diamond and Butterworth (2008) is understood as a “feminist
theoretical approach known as gender multiplicity” (p. 33). Jones, et al. (2012) suggested that intersectionality “reflects the reality of lives” (p. 304) and noted that there is “no single identity category that adequately describes how we respond to our social environment or are responded to by others” (p. 304). The identity categories of sex and gender, while presented here as separate and unique categories, intersect with each other (and other components of identity) to create the uniqueness of each individual.

Much more complex than additive models which place people in either/or categories (Anderson and Collins, 2001) like black or white, male or female, poor or not poor, intersectionality describes the interconnection between multiple components of identity and suggests that each component impacts all others. Regarding the use of intersectionality in higher education, Stewart (2008) noted that in 2001, “literature concerning multiple identities and the integration of identities or identity intersectionality within higher education and student affairs was very thin” (p. 185).

Intersectionality is the understanding that the various components of identity are “interlacing categories of experience that affect all aspects of human life” (Anderson and Collins, 2001). Each component of identity both impacts and is impacted by the others. The concept of intersectionality simply asks scholars to keep the context in mind when we think about any particular component of identity (Anderson and Collins, 2001). For example, Zinn, et al. (1988) found that “women of varied races, classes, national origins, and sexualities insisted that the concept of gender be broadened to take their differences into account” (p. 171).

**Defining Identity**

To be nobody—but yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you somebody else—means to fight the hardest battle any human being can fight; and never stop fighting (e.e.cummings,1894-1962, American Poet & Author).

Marcia (1980) defined identity as an internal, self-constructed dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. Johnston (as cited in Eliason, 1996) offered,
“identity is what you say you are according to what they (italics added) say you can be” (p. 3).

While many definitions of identity focus on the individual, Johnston’s recognizes that identity is, at least in part, impacted by historical and social context (Eliason, 1996). Torres, et al. (2009) reported that within student affairs literature, identity includes both individual work, “personally held beliefs about the self” (p. 577) and an acknowledgement of society’s impact, “in relation to social groups” (p. 577). Therefore, identity is understood as both a personal and a social construction (Torres, et al, 2009).

Hoffman (2004) suggested that identity formation includes all areas of diversity—gender, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, religion, class. For Josselson (1987) identity is the “stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world” (p. 10). Later, Josselson (1996) defined identity as the “ultimate act of creativity (p. 27).

In recognizing the impact of environment and culture on the formation of identity Josselson (1996) wrote, “Identity is what we make of ourselves within a society that is making something of us” (p. 28). Identity development has been described by Erikson and Chickering as “the central part of adolescence and early adulthood” (as cited in Josselson, 1987, p. 205); the “dominant developmental task for people of traditional college age…” (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005, p. 215); by Erikson as the “primary developmental task of adolescence” (as cited in Welch, et al., 2000, p. 121); as the “critical task of adolescence” (Jamil, et al., 2009, p.203); and the “central ‘crisis’ of adolescence” (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005, p. 23-24).

Erik Erikson is the theorist most scholars look to as the one who initiated most of our thinking about identity. He has been called “our most important theorist of identity (Josselson, 1987); the “pioneer in the development of identity theory” (Jones, et al., 2012); and the “premier identity theorist” by Josselson (1996). Erikson’s influence is evident throughout the literature on identity development and is often referenced in college student development literature.

Who among us has not said, “I wish I could just be myself!” The often unspoken, but clearly recognized angst in this statement is that we all, from time to time, feel pressure to be
someone other than the person we believe ourselves to be. The reality is, individual identity is formed in the context of others—that simply cannot be avoided. But what if our contemporary approach to understanding ourselves could be changed in some way that would make it easier to be ourselves? What if we could create a new lens through which identity could be viewed?

Interestingly, as Jones, et al. (2012) noted, “the existence of identity is always assessed, widely discussed, yet variously understood in the literature” (p. 699). Very likely this is due to the complexities of identity formation as described above—the many components of identity, the perhaps infinite positions available within each component, and the synergistic nature of each component of identity.

To think we can do meaningful research on identity formation may mean that we have too elementary an understanding of identity. We think we can rather easily finish the phrase: Identity is… On the other hand, it seems it is just not in the nature of human beings to see a challenge and turn away from it. I have been drawn to this challenge for both highly personal and professional reasons. I have read countless books and journal articles that have purported to describe some new level of understanding regarding sex or gender differences. As I read those books and articles I often had a difficult time finding myself in them, an experience that I share with Josselson (1996) who reported that she rarely found herself in what she read about women. I simply could not find a reasonable alignment with the ways I self-identified and the ways those writers suggested I should be able to self-identify.

As I tried to make sense of what had come to be for me a meaningful sense of personal identity and the scholarship I was reading, I found myself returning to an understanding I had gained as a graduate student which I described in Chapter 1. I identify as male, but I possess and comfortably operate with many characteristics that are defined as traditionally feminine. And while scholars in fields such as gender studies and women’s studies, anthropology, sociology and psychology have struggled with the closely aligned identity components of sex and gender, and have worked to come to some clearer understanding of the possible differences between the two,
in my field of college student development, we simply have not. I believe that our failure to do this work has resulted in creating challenges for students which could be eliminated if we looked to these other fields to inform our work. I want to begin that process here by describing fundamental concepts that must be understood in order to move forward.

**Defining Sex and Gender**

Caplan, et al. (1997) reminded us of the importance of clarifying the distinction between sex differences and gender differences by offering the following definitions:

“Sex” marks an essentially biological distinction between women and men that may be based upon their anatomical, physiological, or chromosomal properties.

"Gender," marks a sociocultural distinction between men and women on the basis of the traits and behavior that are conventionally regarded as characteristic of and appropriate to the two groups of people (p. 7).

LaFrance, et al. (2004) noted that “sex was generally understood to mean identities rooted in bodily differences that were believed to significantly affect traits, abilities and interests regarded as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’” (p. 333). This definition emphasizes the relationship between sex and gender and defers to Freud’s notion that “gender is always related to sexuality” (Bell, 2004, p. 149) but clearly delineates between sex and gender as they (LaFrance, et al., 2004) offered that “the terms gender and gender identity were invented to describe individuals’ outward manifestations of and attitudes toward their status as males or females” (p. 333).

In their review of popular understanding of the use of the terms sex and gender Pryzgoda and Chrisler (2000) reported that gender typically refers only to behavioral, social, and psychological characteristics of men and women while sex has come to refer to the biological aspects of being male and female. Among professionals, Hamilton (2008) noted that it is conventional to associate the label ‘sex’ with biological distinctions and ‘gender’ as a social construction.
Viewing gender as a socially constructed phenomenon, Schwartz and Rutter (1988) suggested that “gender is a social characteristic of individuals in our society that is only sometimes consistent with biological sex” (p. 457). Thus, they (Schwartz and Rutter (1988) noted, “animals, like people, tend to be identified as male and female in accordance with the reproductive function, but only people are described by their gender” (italics added), as man or woman” (p. 457). Dillabough (2006) supported the notion that gender should be viewed “as a relational social construct” (p. 48) which is very different from “sex as a highly deterministic concept deriving from the biological sciences” (48). Riger (1992) added further support to the idea that gender and sex are separate constructs—gender, a social construction and sex, a “biological fact” (as cited in Trotman Reid and Bing, 2000, p. 143). Finally, Bell, (2004) reported that second-wave feminists agreed with Freud that “gender is not self-evident, that particular personality characteristics such as active and passive, independent and dependent [characteristics that are often associated with gender difference] do not universally differentiate the sexes” (p. 152).

LaFrance, et al. (2004) found that “authors who stress biological variables tend to use the term sex more often than gender, while authors who stress social variables and explanations tend to employ gender more often than sex” (p. 335).

As discussed earlier, it is problematic, however, to try to draw a distinct line between the concepts of sex and gender and we should be careful to not simplify the equation of sex with biology and gender with social construction. As the discussion of intersectionality suggests, one clearly impacts the other. LaFrance, et al. (2004), suggested what may be needed is a single term that conveys the idea that “both biology and social context are simultaneously implicated whenever gender matters are discussed” (p. 335). In the absence of that term, it is important that sex and gender be understood as separate components of identity that do not operate any more independently of each other than any other two components of identity. However, Pryzgoda and Chrisler (2000) reported that the field of psychology has not directly addressed the issue of these
definitions—that is, a clear statement has not been published. In light of this void, Hamilton (2008) called for researchers to clearly define the terms used in their research. This is an admonition that scholars in the field of college student development have not heeded very well.

**Sex and Gender—What’s the Difference?**

I’ll begin by discussing two unique, yet intricately interwoven components of identity formation: gender and sex. Many believe that there is no difference—that these two terms are just different ways of describing the same thing. This is one of the specific gaps in the understanding of identity development that I am addressing.

Highlighting a significant part of the challenge—terminology, Colin Hamilton (2008) provided the following review of the various terms used by scholars concerned with gender issues: sex role (Balistreri and Bush-Rosnagel, 1989); sex role identity (Bernard, Boyle & Jackling, 1990); gender schema (Ginn and Stiehl, 1999); and gender trait possession (Hamilton, 1995); sex role behaviour (Orlofsky and O'Heron, 1987); gender role orientation (Rammstedt and Rammsayer, 2002); sex role stereotypes (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1974); gender role personality traits (Sugihara and Katsurada, 2000). Hamilton (2008) noted that Spence (1985, as cited in Hamilton, 2008) suggested that if anything, the clarity associated with psychological conceptualization of gender has decreased since the mid-1960s. “The diversity in the labels identified above suggests that conceptual understanding in the area has not greatly improved” (Hamilton, 2008, p. 129).

According to Francis (2006) “An apparent solution to this problematic terminology emerged when the concept of gender was appropriated from linguistics for sociological use by Anne Oakley in the 1970s” (p. 11). “Those using the term 'gender', then, did so in order to indicate that differences in behaviour according to sex/gender identification were a social, rather than biologically driven, phenomenon” (Francis, 2006, p.11-12). According to Marecek, et al. (2004) feminists adopted the term gender in the late 1970s to distinguish between biological and social aspects of maleness and femaleness. Moir and Moir (1999) suggested a rather sinister
reason for incorporating this language. They suggested that use of the term gender, allowed academics to “exclude any reference to the hard science that demonstrates substantial biological differences between the sexes; differences that are not and cannot be, culturally engendered” (p. 13). To the Moir’s (1999) this was necessary to advance a specific political agenda—eliminate the evidence of sex difference for the purpose of advancing equality. Where there is no difference, equality can be assumed.

In 1979, Unger introduced the concept of gender to psychology and defined gender as “those traits socio-culturally considered appropriate to males and females,“ (p, 1085) which she termed masculinity and femininity. From her perspective, sex is to gender as nature is to nurture (Unger, 1979). The purpose for using the term gender here was also to clearly indicate a difference between “social [gender] and biologically [sex] driven phenomenon” (Frances, 2006, p. 12).

More contemporary understanding of these terms is that in discussions of human behavior the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ (relating to biological sex) have “largely been replaced” (Frances, 2006, p. 12) with ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ (relating to gender). Dillabough (2006) affirmed this understanding by suggesting that gender is viewed as socially constructed with much more flexibility than previously offered under sex-role theory and that sex is “ a highly deterministic concept deriving from biological sciences” (p. 48). Fiske (1998) noted that “gender is both visibly accessible” [I presume he is referring here to mannerisms] and “culturally meaningful” [i.e., our culture has a relatively clear understanding of the concepts of masculine and feminine] which makes gender for him, one of the “primary categorization systems used in Western societies” (as cited in Ridgeway and Bourg, 2004, p. 224). Although she did not specifically define the term, Bell (2004) pointed out that Freud was perhaps the first gender theorist in that he insisted that “biological sex was not the same as acquired gender, that biology is not destiny, and that gender is made and not inborn” (p. 147).
Conflation of Terms

One of the significant challenges in thinking about gender and sex is that the terms are often used interchangeably—even in professional writing (Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 2000). Psychologists who focus on the psychology of gender have struggled with the nuances of the terminology (Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 2000). Although the terms are often conflated, Pryzgoda and Chrisler (2000) reported that “people who study and think about sex and gender would probably agree that they are not synonyms” (p. 554). This conflation of these two terms is one of the significant challenges found in the literature in the field of college student development. I recently examined the way scholars in the field of college student development defined and operationalized the terms sex and gender in their research. I used EBSCO Host to search for relevant literature. A broad search on the topic of gender using Academic Premier and ERIC databases resulted in 159,776 hits and returned published work from the years 1866 through 2010. Narrowing the search to the most recent decade revealed that 71% (113,985) of that literature has been produced between 2000 and 2010. Less than 1% of that body of literature was produced in the century between 1866 and 1966, which means that over 99% of the literature in these databases which included the word “gender” has been published since 1966. Clearly, gender is a modern concept.

For purposes of this research it is important to make the distinction between the terms sex and gender. As noted above, these terms are often used interchangeably by the general public and scholars as well. Indeed, the Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender suggests that “no issues are more debated today than those that swirl around the subjects of sex and gender…” (Malti-Douglas, 2007. p. xiii). According to Pryzgoda and Chrisler (2000), “The words ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are deceptive. They appear to be simple, straightforward descriptors of some of the most basic characteristics of humans. Indeed, these two terms are routinely interchanged.
In the preceding section I have presented support for the separation and clear definition of the terms sex and gender but where is the other side of that argument? Who makes the case that it does not really matter? The answer is that there is no one making that argument. There are only those voices (presented above) who speak strongly in support of a careful definition of these terms and those who simply do not seem to concern themselves with it—easily using the terms interchangeably. Scholars in the field of college student development are among those who rarely, if ever, concern themselves with the difference between sex and gender as constructs or variables. These researchers routinely use the terms interchangeably, fail to define the terms and fail to operationalize—translate concepts like sex and gender into measurable variables as Nardi (2006) recommended.

Among those scholars whose work is related to sex and gender identity issues and is commonly recognized in the field of college student development are: Nancy Chodorow, Marcia Baxter-Magolda, Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger & Jill Mattuck Tarule, Carol Gilligan, Ruthellen Josselson, William Perry and Linda Sax. I offer them as examples of well received scholarship that spans the previous fifty years of college student development research. Taken together, their work represents the general structure upon which much of the thinking regarding student development generally and identity development specifically has been constructed. I will provide a review and critique of their work later in this chapter.

I remind you that the notion that personal identity is a collection of independent identity components such as gender, sex, race, class, etc., is a grossly oversimplified one. While these components may be separated for an academic purpose or for closer examination, they cannot be separated in real life—each informs and forms the other.

Deconstructing the Binary

A binary system is defined as a system involving only two elements. A dichotomy is defined as division into two parts. Both of these terms are used to describe a sex categorization
system that is limited to either female or male or a gender categorization system that is limited to either feminine or masculine. As outlined above, it is important to remember that sex and gender as identity categories should include more than the traditional female/male and feminine/masculine binary or dichotomy. According to Diamond and Butterworth (2008) dichotomous models of gender have been criticized for failing to represent the experiences of individuals who claim neither an unambiguously female or male identity. There are individuals who, based solely on their physiology, cannot be readily categorized as male or female at birth. Born with ambiguous genitalia, these individuals are classified as intersex and represent approximately 4% of births (Fausto-Sterling, 1993). In addition, there are other sexual identities lived out by individuals which should not be denied or ignored. The increasingly visible and vocal "trans" movement has put forward an abundance of sex categories:

FTM [Female-to Male], MTF [Male-to-Female], eonist, invert, androgyne, butch, femme, Nellie, queen, third sex, hermaphrodite, tomboy, sissy, drag king, female impersonator, she-male, he-she, boy-dyke, girlfag, transsexual, transvestite, transgender, cross-dresser" (Stryker, 1998, p. 148, as cited in Marecek, et al., 2004, p. 204).

Social constructionists generally challenge the idea that there can be only two sexes and that they can be defined by biological sex (Marecek, et al., 2004). Marecek, et al. (2004) further asserted that the conventional Western view that there can be only two sexes is not universally shared. They offered as examples, the hijras of India and kathoeys of Thailand.

Bell (2004) however, noted that “contemporary theorists recognize the value of oedipal-level thinking about gender, in which rigid categories and binary oppositions predominate, in children but not in adults. Here, the child develops categories of thinking that organize his or her experience--male and female, black and white, can and cannot, subject and object, active and passive and so on. It is not developmentally appropriate, however, that adults should remain at this developmental stage” (pp.160-161). Taken together, these realities require that a forward
thinker consider that the category of sex include more options than the historic binary, female or male.

Similarly, gender should not be thought of as a binary—feminine or masculine either, as if clear distinctions can be drawn between the two. LaFrance, et al. (2004) pointed to the 1970s as the time when psychologists began to conceptualize gender as multidimensional rather than binary. In response to the inadequate either/or approach, which presented feminine at one end of a continuum and masculine at the other, the understanding of gender identity was expanded to be considered as points on two continua with high feminine at one end and low feminine at the other of one, and high masculine and low masculine at the other end on a second continua (Bem, 1974). Seeking to find a more satisfactory way to think about gender, Sandra Bem (1974) suggested that the previous sex-role dichotomy “served to obscure two very plausible hypotheses” (p. 155): first that an individual may be both masculine and feminine and capable of engaging in both “masculine” and “feminine” behaviors. These individuals were labeled by Bem as androgynous. (Note that the reference to masculine and feminine behaviors is to what might be considered traditionally ascribed behaviors that may or may not be agreed upon in the light of contemporary definitions of masculine and feminine.) This individual may be capable of being both assertive (a characteristic traditionally ascribed to masculinity) and yielding (a characteristic traditionally ascribed to femininity), both instrumental (a characteristic traditionally ascribed to masculinity) and expressive (a characteristic traditionally ascribed to femininity), depending on the situational appropriateness of these behaviors.

A second plausible hypothesis put forth by Bem (1974) was that an individual might be low on both the masculinity and the femininity scales. These individuals were labeled by Bem (1974) as undifferentiated. More contemporary thought then is that it is much more valuable to think of gender as two continua—one masculine and one feminine. With this model an individual can possess both traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics—that is, possess both traditional masculine and traditional feminine traits or any combination of traits ranging from
high to low masculine traits and high to low feminine traits (Bem, 1974). This more contemporary way to think about gender, though it allows the individual to identify themselves much more broadly than simply as masculine or feminine, still carries vestiges of the traditional feminine/masculine binary. While there are many who challenge the concept of traditional masculine and traditional feminine traits as too contextually sensitive to be of much value, this approach at least allows for a much broader understanding of the possible realities of gender identities experienced by individuals and it begins to move us away from the binary understanding. Just how far we can move toward valuing broader identity options remains to be seen.

**The Challenge of Essentialism**

Essentialism is the belief that there is an innate essence in both men and women that make them fundamentally different from each other. Essentialism has a number of origins. Biological essentialism (Dillagaugh, 2006) suggests that this essence has its origins in biological differences. Moore and Travis (2000) noted that the message of the program [ABC News (Neufeld, 1995), Men Women & the Sex Difference] was that “men and women are "just biologically hard-wired to be different," (p. 49) and, accordingly, expectations of gender specific behaviors and attitudes should be different as well. This is a notion that is embraced almost universally by popular culture, relationship literature, and business literature as it relates to relationships among the sexes (Gurian, 1996; Gurian, 2002; Gurian and Annis, 2008; Hoff-Sommers, 2000; Pease and Pease, 2002). Relating to the study of sex or gender difference, Zinn, et al. (1988) offered that essentialism is “the notion that women’s and men’s attributes are categorically different” (p. 170). Trotman Reid and Bing, 2000) think of essentialism as “an essential experience of women” (p. 143) and “the belief that there exists a basic female nature relatively impervious to contextual factors” (p. 145). Schwartz and Rutter (1988) in speaking of sexual attraction offered that it is an “essential inborn desire, and it cannot change” (p. 464).
Evolutionary psychologists, according to Francis (2006), see gender differences as reflecting innate sex differences configured during pre-history. Barrett and Rivers, (2004) wrote about “essential feminism” (p. 10) which holds that all differences between the sexes are the reflection of innate characteristics.

Presented below is a list of characteristics that scholars have identified as somehow separating women from men. I will leave it to you, the reader, to determine which characteristics are associated with men and which are associated with women.

- Efficacious
- Physical
- Directive
- Warm
- Understanding
- Venturesome
- Helpful
- Dependent
- Communal
- Assertive
- Unambitious
- Decisive
- Emotional
- Daring
- Subservient
- Domestic
- Nurturer
- Strong
- Kind
- Sensitive
- Powerful
- Logical
- Controlling
- Powerful
- Expressive
- Passive
- Competitive
- Separate
- Dominant
- Rational
- Feeling
- Connected
- Sympathetic
- Affectionate
- Supportive
These characteristics are representative of dozens of characteristics that scholars have found and that they report differentiate between men and women. I challenge anyone—scholar or layperson, to prove that even one of these words characterizes only females or only males.

There are essentialists that approach the issue from a biological perspective—i.e. that there are innate biological differences between men and women. There are those who approach the issue of essentialism from an evolutionary perspective believing that somewhere in the distant past, survival meant that certain characteristics were needed and those individuals who possessed those characteristics lived to pass those characteristics along to their progeny. A third group might be considered environmental essentialists. For them, the pressure of society for women and men to act in a particular way has become so pervasive that individuals have little choice but to follow those prescriptions.

Regardless of the source of the essentialist idea one fact remains: As long as we hold to the belief that, regardless of the source, there are innate, deeply seated, immutable differences between men and women—that men and women are essentially different, we will have to live with the challenge of what to do with those who do not align with the prevailing characteristics. And those individuals will have to struggle with the knowledge that they do not fit in society the way others seem to fit.

Because of this essentialist perspective a great deal of energy has been expended to try to identify and prove these differences. What if we were to acknowledge differences between individuals but looked for those differences in a place other than sex? What if sex is not the most salient variable as we think about differences between human beings—especially relating to behaviors and attitudes?

The Challenge of Determinism

A third challenge that we face as we seek to move this conversation forward is the concept of determinism. Determinism is the philosophical perspective that one’s choices,
decisions, and actions are decided by antecedent causes, inherited or environmental, acting upon his character (Funk and Wagnalls, 1973). In this case, one’s sex determines one’s gender.

For the present, let’s just allow that there may be an essence to sexual and gender identity—an unknown place where sex and gender identity begins before it is clouded with questions of cultural and social influence. With that issue set aside for the moment, an important component of identity formation is the choices one makes regarding that essence and the interaction of genetic, cognitive and social inputs with that essence. The essentialist position regarding sex and gender identity development is that there is something that makes women and men different from each other and that that difference establishes fundamental and unchanging differences between men and women. A deterministic position suggests that sex (for the sake of this present argument, let’s say sex is established at birth, though more contemporary thought is that sex is an ongoing construction) determines gender. That, for example, identifying as male means one is, or should be or become masculine. We have already discussed the ways that the various components of identity impact one another (intersectionality) so we understand that certainly one’s biological sex impacts one’s sense of being masculine or feminine (or some other personally meaningful gender identity) but the idea that sex determines gender must be set aside if we want to allow a more full range of identity options for individuals. Sandra Bem’s (1974) work and the work of others (e.g., Spence, et al., 1974) clearly point to this possibility.

**Moving Forward: What Will it Take?**

One time honored technique often employed to understand complex concepts is to begin by analyzing—to separate into constituent parts or elements; determine the elements or essential features (Dictionary.com) and then synthesize—combine those parts or elements in an effort to more fully understand the whole. For purposes of this research we begin by analyzing four key issues related to the development of identity that this research addresses and beg the reader to allow this temporary departure from a more comprehensive approach to understanding identity. Those issues are: 1) The concepts of sex and gender must be thought of as two distinct
components of identity. For our purpose here, sex is related to physical attributes of the individual and gender to psychological attributes of the individual. 2) The idea that there are essential, innate, immutable differences (essentialism) between men and women must be set aside in favor of a potentially more robust variable. While that variable is yet un-named, we must, for now, reject any notion of immutable differences between men and women. While there may be empirical evidence to suggest many differences between females and males (Baron-Cohen, 2003; Baxter-Magolda, 1992, 2004; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Gray, 2004; Gurian, 2002, 2008; Moir and Moir, 1999;—there simply is not empirical evidence to support the notion that all males and all females are different in any specific ways. Indeed, while a large body of literature exists that begins by touting sex differences between the sexes—Moir and Moir (1999), for example, used the phrase, “...Unalterable differences between men and women” in the title of their book. Virtually all of the literature (only modesty and scholarly caution prevent me from eliminating the modifier virtually—I do not want to make the same mistake others have made) quickly begin to incorporate modifiers to their essentialist positions. In fact, the Moir’s stated,

It is insulting to the reader to qualify everything to death. This is a book about the biological science of gender differences, and science is about the probable (italics added). There is no need to keep saying this. So when we write "Science finds such and such: it plainly means that this is the best bet: no more, no less" (p.14).

Why then, must the title include, “Unalterable differences between men and women?” After shouting about essential differences between males and females, the Moirs and other scholars routinely incorporate the following modifiers: most, many, typically, usually, seem to be, much more, far less, tend to, rarely, on average, etc.as they describe essential differences.

Biologists have routinely examined specific areas of the human brain in their quest to find and explain sex differences. Dr. Roger Sperry, a well-known neurobiologist noted, “The brain operates as a coherent whole, a closely integrated unit” (as cited in Fasto-Sterling, 1985, p...
While examining what we might consider as an independent component of the whole, we should be careful to remember that there is no part of us that operates independent of other parts. What Dr. Sperry reported to be true about the human brain is also true of the human being as a whole. It is the function of the integrated whole that constructs what we call personal identity, with each component informing, forming, and reforming the others. The challenge as outlined by Jones, et al. (2012) is that components of identity “were typically investigated and presented as independent, one-dimensional, and discrete dimensions of identity rather than on the intersections which more closely reflect the lived experiences of individuals” (p. 700).

Understanding intersectionality means we should always question scholarship that suggests that all women or all men hold a particular characteristic in common. Best-selling popular books such as Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus by Dr. John Gray (2004) and John Eldredge’s (2011) Wild at heart: Discovering the secrets of a man’s soul both suggest that there are essential differences between men and women that must be understood if the sexes are ever going to be able to get along. Anne and Bill Moir (1999) published Why Men Don’t Iron: The Fascinating and Unalterable Differences Between Men and Women. These and other similar books (a search on the Amazon book section using the key words, relationships and sex differences resulted in 960 titles) generally have titles that suggest essential differences between the sexes but even just a cursory examination of the work quickly reveals that modifying words such as tends to, most, many, typically, usually, seem to be, more likely are strewn throughout. The headline is: There are Sex Differences!—but the content in the books quickly acknowledge that there are clear (and many) exceptions to the essentialism that the titles suggest.

This pattern continues in other popular books aimed at enhancing the work place by helping women and men understand each other. The teaser on Amazon.com for Leadership and the Sexes by Michael Gurian and Barbara Annis (2008) stated: “This powerful and timely book unlocks gender truths for the workplace. Every business person—man or woman—needs to read this book.”
There are 218 titles available through Amazon when searching with the keywords: business and sex differences. A cursory examination of these titles also reveals the use of the same or similar modifiers as are used in the relationship literature in the text. Indeed there is no evidence of a single characteristic that is totally unique to any particular sex.

The casual use of language for the purpose of selling books or magazines may be acceptable in a capitalist system where profits are paramount. One can imagine the less than enthusiastic response to a title such as: *A Few Characteristics I Think May Be Related In Some Way to Sex Differences*. While we may be inclined to forgive those authors and their publishers whose primary goal is to sell books, we should not offer the same level of flexibility to scholars whose primary purpose is to advance human understanding.

While scholars may try to analyze a single component of identity formation such as sex, (and we often do) the idea of intersectionality suggests that there is no component of identity development that can be isolated from others. A scholar may purport to study the differences between white and black students or female and male students, for example, but the truth is that these identity components cannot be examined in isolation from other components of identity. They intersect with other components, making analysis difficult at best—perhaps impossible, but certainly not as simple as is often reported in literature.

This phenomenon is often described as within characteristic variance as compared with between characteristic variance. For example, there may be (and often is) more variance within a group of individuals defined as “white” as there is variance between a group of individuals defined as “white” and “black.” The truth is these identity components are simply not as useful as unique descriptors as scholars often would like to suggest. This is especially true when the variables are not carefully defined and operationalized.

We have learned that it is not as instructive or appropriate to think about race, for example, in one dimension. A Black American is not necessarily the same as an Afro-American. A Black-American from the south is not the same as a Black-American who grew up in the inner
city of Chicago. Similarly, we have learned that Latino, Hispanic, Chicano, etc., while sharing some race characteristics with each other, are more unlike each other than they are alike. In a similar way, it is not particularly valuable to think about males in one dimension. As Murray and Kluckhohn (1953), wrote, “Every man is in certain respects (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, and (c) like no other man” (as cited in Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998) I think it is reasonable to say that this is true of women too.

3) The idea that any component of identity determines another must be set aside—specific to this research—the idea that being female means that one must be feminine or being born male means that one must be masculine. We can allow that individual components of identity have an impact on others but we must reject the deterministic view that one determines another.

**Sex and Gender Identity Development Theory**

Having established some ground rules or scholarly parameters for this work, I move to a brief discussion of identity development theory. How does one come to have a personally meaningful sense of identity? As I have done earlier, I will separate the discussion of sexual identity development from gender identity development, while acknowledging that this can only be done in the laboratory of scholarly discussion and research and not in practice.

One useful way to differentiate between gender and sexual identity development is to think of gender as being a psychological identity and sex as a physical identity. While this differentiation is valuable on some level, it is also problematic. As White, Bondurant & Travis (2000) reminded us, “biological and social factors cannot be considered in separation” (p. 26). Gender and sex are both essential components of one’s sense of identity. A traditional binary perspective suggests that an individual is either male or female; an essentialist position suggests that there is a fundamental difference between a male and a female; a determinist position insists that there is a direct relationship between gender and sex—regardless of which identity seems to come first, one determines the other. Poststructuralists, in an effort to ensure that individuals are most free to become themselves and not confined by predetermined structures, seek to remove all
categories (Francis, 2006)—even those that might prove useful as we seek to understand concepts such as gender and sex.

Many stumble over the question of which comes first—sexual identity or gender identity—the physical or the psychological. While this is a complex question, I take the position that human beings are at once both sexed and gendered—that one’s sense of being male or female [or other personally meaningful sexual identity] psychologically or socially (Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 2000) has a significant impact on, and informs one’s understanding of themselves as being sexed—the biological distinctions between men and women based on the differences in anatomy, physiology, and so forth (Hamilton, 2008). An individual does not have a clear sense of identity independent of how one thinks about one’s anatomy, nor can an individual think about one’s gender as masculine or feminine (or other personally meaningful gender category) without considering physiological realities. Fast (1999) for example, reported that one’s sense of being male or female is reinforced by the appearance and sensation of the genitals. Therefore, while we are here trying to consider sexual identity and gender identity as unique constructs for the sake of greater understanding, the reality is they are intricately connected to each other—one informs the other.

As stated above, identity development is a complex, interacting, and evolving task (Eliason, 1996). Each component of identity development (forgive the implication that they can all be named—it is unintended) is complex in itself. Components of identity formation cannot simply be pulled out of the individual, manipulated, adjusted, and plugged back in. Each component of identity development interacts with all others and taken together, create the internal sense of self to which the individual responds in the context of her environment to create her sense of personal identity.

The reader should note that while this research is foregrounding gender and sexual identity, it is done in the context of a clear understanding that doing so limits a more comprehensive understanding of personal identity development. Studying individual components
of identity formation can be valuable but the significant limitations such activity places on a more comprehensive understanding must be acknowledged.

An overview of theories of gender identity development and sexual identity development reveals that theorists generally agree that there are three primary components of gender and sexual identity development. They are: biology, psychology, and culture or environment. Virtually all theories address these three components in one form or another. Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, (2002) noted that “it is now widely accepted that regardless of one’s preferred theoretical orientation, cognitive [psychology], environmental [culture], and biological factors are all important” (sect. A Theoretical Debate Begins, para. 3).

Eliason and Schope (2007), in reviewing the field of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) studies reported what they call competing paradigms. They (Eliason and Schope, 2007) identified three: 1) nature v. nurture; 2) biology v. environment; and 3) essentialism v. social constructionism. Further, Eliason and Schope (2007) identified similarities among these paradigms. “Nature, biology, and essentialistic paradigms propose that sexual and gender identities are “real,” based on biology or very early life experiences and fixed and stable throughout the life span” (Eliason and Schope, 2007, p. 3). This approach may also be understood as deterministic as described previously. These paradigms will be evidenced in the theories suggesting linear stages of development (Eliason and Schope, 2007) with a goal of establishing or accepting a particular gender or sexual identity. An example of this paradigm is Cass’s (1979) Homosexual Identity Formation model.

The alternative paradigm—nurture, environment, and social constructionist “point to sexual and gender identities as contingent on time and place, social circumstances, and historical period…suggesting that identities are flexible, variable, and mutable” (p. 3). This paradigm is represented by Worthington, et al’s. (2002) Heterosexual Identity Development. Post modernists would suggest that both sexual identity and gender identity are flexible and changeable and in many ways undefinable and ultimately useless.
However, the complexity of sexual and gender identity formation suggest that these dualistic comparisons—nature v. nurture, biology v. environment, essentialism v. social construction over-simplify reality. Byne, (1997), for example, noted that “all mental phenomena must have an ultimate biological base even if the precise contribution of biological factors is not clear” (p. 73). Gooren (2006) added, “Prenatal androgen appears to predispose to a male gender identity development, but apparently not decisively” (p. 589). Further, Martin, et al., (2002) reported that biologically oriented studies done with children with hormone disorders suggest that prenatal hormones influence girls’ behavior. Gooren (2006) also noted that transsexual individuals routinely report that “the body is not me.” Clearly, something besides anatomy communicates a different reality to these individuals. These studies all indicate a connection between biology and gender albeit an uncertain or unclear one. Rehashing the nature/nurture question should perhaps be set aside in favor of acknowledging that both nature and nurture participate in significant ways to impact an individuals’ sense of sexual and gender identity.

It seems clear that while the nature/nurture, biology/environment, essentialism/social constructionism dichotomies may help categorize the perspectives of various sexual and gender identity development theorists, they may not be particularly valuable as we consider how gender and sexual identities are actually formed. In terms of gender identity formation it may be more worthwhile, as Martin, et al. (2002) suggested, to examine how biological and early hormone environments work in interaction with cognitive and social factors to influence development. If there is any evidence for an essence that marks the beginning of gender and sexual identity development—and it seems there is, perhaps energy would be better spent trying to identify the reluctance to accept that perspective and work to alleviate those concerns.

I believe that there is an essence in each individual which establishes only a unique beginning point and a set of identity potentialities. This beginning point and set of potentialities informs, but does not determine the individual’s future. Individual choices, limited as they may be
by physical realities, ability, political and social realities beyond the control of the individual, collectively bring the individual to a personally held sense of identity which includes sex and gender identities. Over a lifetime, biological, environmental, and cognitive influences will cause certain components of identity to be more important to the individual than others (e.g., sexual identity during puberty or adolescence or at mid-life.)

As noted above, it is important that self-identifying as a male (sex identity) does not mean that one must also self-identify as masculine (gender identity)—one does not determine the other. In order for an individual to live out their most personally meaningful identity, identity categories must be flexible and interactions among identity categories fluid.

Gender and sexual identity development has assumed a more predominant role in American culture than ever before in our history. Student affairs professionals who seek to understand and serve contemporary college students must recognize and respond to their responsibility to become more adequately prepared in this essential component of student identity development.

**What Does This Mean for College Student Development Professionals?**

For over seventy years a primary purpose of student personnel professionals has been to enhance the development of students (Torres, et al., 2009). Chief among the tasks that college student development professionals assume is that of helping students achieve a personally meaningful sense of identity (Torres, et al, 2009). While some have theorized that identity is established in childhood, others point to puberty as the place where the real work of identity is done. Still others (Arnett, 2000) suggest that developing a sense of identity continues beyond adolescence. Most likely, creation of a personally meaningful sense of identity is a life-long process. The work is foregrounded, whether in childhood, adolescence, or beyond by intricate and complex combinations of biological, psychological, and social aspects on one’s life (Eliason and Schope, 2007).
Historically, the field of student affairs/student development incorporated the work of psychologists and sociologists, interpreting the various theories to make them apply to work with traditionally aged college students (Evans, Forney, Guito-DiBrito, 1998). As the profession matured, an independent body of literature was developed, though still closely related to those fields.

Those first theorists studied predominantly white males and for some twenty years practice was guided by those theories. Among the first to specifically research the development of college students (specifically, cognitive development) was William Perry (*Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*, Perry, 1999). Perry’s effort was driven by his deep love and concern for college students and his desire to know and understand them better. He had very few women in his sample, not because he was uninterested in women, but because of convenience. He was employed as a professor of English at Harvard College—in those days (the 1950s), an all-male institution. Perry was deeply concerned about his students and understanding their developmental paths. “His students” just happened to be overwhelmingly white, male students because that is who attended Harvard in those days. There were a few women who attended Radcliffe College who occasionally walked across the street to attend classes at Harvard, but there were not many. (He later assessed women’s development and found that women too conformed with the paths found in the male data (Belenky, et al., 1986).)

What Perry gave the field was very important. His theory helped set the research agenda for a generation. The contribution he made to our understanding of student development, including the non-directive research methods he used to gather his data, is immeasurable. The most common criticism of his work—related to his sample, was that it was overwhelmingly male, white, and economically privileged. This criticism, while accurate, is unfair in that he never suggested that his findings described all students. Indeed, he never made the claim that his scheme even described the experience of all Harvard students. His focus was always on understanding each student—not all students.
I am deeply disappointed that I never had the opportunity to meet William Perry. Those
who knew him would say that he valued each individual student and that he believed his scheme
only had value to the extent that it helped him understand a little more about the student sitting
across the desk from him in his office. To illustrate his concern for the individual I offer the
following quotation. Perry often told groups of students, “I don’t love you all—I love you each
one” (p. xxv, Perry, 1999).

Understanding the cognitive development of college students is an important component
of preparation for work in college student development/affairs. The foundation William Perry
established, upon which the field of student affairs/development has built was, and continues to
be, sound. Asking questions and listening to the answers (Baxter-Magolda, 1992) that serve to
deepen our understanding of individual student development is reasonable and appropriate.
Perry’s *Forms of Intellectual and Student Development: A Scheme*, is arguably the cornerstone of
current student development theory. Indeed, as Love and Guthrie (1999) suggested, “any
discussion of cognitive development theories of college students must begin with William Perry’s
work” (p. 5). It has been, and continues to be an important reference point for student
development theory and for some fifty years it has been considered the best beginning point for
understanding cognitive development of college students. But his theory inspired (as I believe all
good theory does) many questions.

Perhaps first among those questions was whether or not a theory of cognitive
development, based on an overwhelmingly male, white, and economically privileged student,
could be used to understand students who were very different from this sample? Are there
perhaps, differences in the developmental paths for different student groups? Are the
developmental paths different for women? Do blacks differ from whites? What about the
developmental paths for students from differing economic backgrounds?

The variables that could be studied are many and diverse and to some extent, Perry
informs them all. But the most important lesson that he offered that has somehow been lost, that
is the uniqueness of each individual—that no one individual student fits any developmental scheme or theory—that to know a theory about students is not to know a student. Baxter-Magolda (1992), as she was sifting through stacks of pages of notes and transcripts for her work on her book, Knowing and Reasoning in College discovered that “…statistical analyses of gender similarities and differences were less helpful than the actual words and stories of the students” (p. 12).

Perry’s work was pragmatic. He wanted to better understand the next student who came into his office or classroom. Since Perry, it seems that practitioners have focused more energy on creating and understanding theories of student development and trying to determine how students fit into the theory than they have understanding the student sitting across the desk from them.

Perry was criticized because his theory was not more generalizable to the larger population of all college students. Since he developed his theory, student affairs/development scholars have sliced the population known as college students in many ways and there has been tremendous value in that effort, but we have erred by studying sub-groups within the population of all students and believing that we now have the definitive understanding. Here, for example, is how black students develop, or women, or gays, or… name your preferred sub-group.

Linda Sax (2008) noted that traditional theories of cognitive, moral, and identity development contributed by Perry (1999), Kohlberg (1975), and Erikson (1968) have long been criticized for their lack of attention to developmental differences based on gender (actually, the criticism was about using only male samples and assuming that the male developmental path was the normal path). Sax (2008) further noted that critics of the male-based theories gave rise to the feminist theoretical approaches that view women’s development as uniquely dependent on their relations with individuals and on fostering a “care orientation” (p. 3). She (Sax, 2008) cited Chodorow (1978a), Gilligan (1982), and Josselson (1987) as examples of scholars who were critical of the prevailing developmental theories.
Why mention a cognitive development theorist when the focus of this work is identity development? First, because cognitive development is certainly a component of identity development but, more importantly, it was Perry’s work that initiated the conversation about sex and gender differences among college students. He became associated with the group of researchers (including Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg) who developed theory based on male subjects that was used for years to describe a normal developmental path for all students—male and female.

As the body of literature in the field of college student development began to grow, scholars (primarily feminist) cried “foul!” They noted that it simply was not fair to measure male and female development with a yardstick created from male samples. Psychological studies done prior to 1970 “disregarded women altogether or…assumed that women were probably pretty much like men in terms of universal psychological principles” (Josselson, 1996, p. 32). A host of scholars, most prominently, Chodorow (1978a), Gilligan (1982), Belenky, et al. (1986), and Josselson (1987) noted a number of ways that women are fundamentally different from men and supported the notion that to measure development of any sort against models developed by male-only samples disadvantaged women in a number of ways. Belenky, et al. (1986) specifically stated, “Developmental theory has established men’s experience and competence as a baseline against which both men’s and women’s development is then judged, often to the detriment or misreading of women” (p. 7). This, by any standard, was unfair to women and it needed to be corrected.

As Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBBrito (1998) noted, “research findings are inevitably influenced by the values of the inquirer” (p. 303). Consistent with this thought, Josselson (1987) wrote, “The nonclinical literature, some of it perceptive and wise, too often has its roots in the writer’s personal observations or the experiences of friends and colleagues” (p. xi). Indeed, in the push-back against the male-only samples used to develop theory, a second round of scholars, most notably, Chodorow (1978a), Gilligan (1982), Belenky, et al. (1986), and Josselson (1987),
seemed to make similar mistakes by incorporating female-only samples and single variable methodology that could not be used to identify differences between two groups. So I begin with William Perry because it was the influence of his theory in the field of college student development that sparked the response from these scholars.

In the field of college student development, one of the most-studied sub-groups has been women. Scholars have often studied the differences between men and women. These studies seemed to be rather straight-forward with the sex of responders operationalized by simply asking them to indicate their sex—most generally a choice between two options—male or female. Among the most prominent scholars who have worked to more fully understand the challenges of women are Baxter-Magolda, *Knowing and Reasoning in College: Gender-Related Patterns in Students’ Intellectual Development* (1992); Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (1982); Belenky, et al., *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (1986) and Josselson, *Finding Herself: Pathways to Identity Development in Women* (1987). A common critique among these scholars, consistent with the criticisms noted above, is that it is inappropriate to try to understand the developmental path of women by trying to make the female experience align somehow with a developmental theory that was designed using an all-male sample. Their work and the work of other less prominent scholars was met with a collective response of “of course!” It’s *intuitive*—men and women are different. But, as Rosalind Barret and Caryl Rivers (2004) note, quoting Harvard psychologist Jerome Kagan,

> Just because an idea feels right doesn't make it right. Most of the time, intuition is wrong. I mean, intuitively the sun goes around the earth, right? Intuitively, the earth is flat, right? Why is psychology the least advanced science? Because our intuitions aren't very good (p. 90).

Just how much of what we know about college student development is based on personal observations or those of our friends (Josselson, 1987) or intuition, should be questioned. The point here is not that there are not differences between men and women—that our intuitive sense
is wrong. The point is that we should use caution with intuition—that our intuitions should be carefully examined and studied to determine their validity. While these scholars provided significant advancement to the knowledge base in the field of college student development which deserves recognition, each of them made errors in their work, which I hope to inform.

This scholarship on sex difference, with sex operationalized as self-reported female or male, drifted into gender differences (in large part due to conflation of terms described above) without defining gender or changing the way the variable was operationalized. “Sex” simply became “gender” and offered the options, female or male. If scholars wanted to study gender differences, they should have at least offered the options of feminine or masculine.

Trying to generalize from a sample to the population, without taking care to ensure that the sample was drawn from that population violates the most fundamental principles of research design and interpretation. Perhaps the overwhelming influence of a patriarchal society that assumed the male experience to be the norm could be blamed for such an error—but this second round of scholars made similar mistakes—often using a female only sample, yet reporting differences. The differences they reported were derived from comparing their results using an all-female sample with previous studies that used an all-male sample.

I believe that each scholar has the professional right to employ the research methodology of her choice. Indeed, there are review processes, both formal and informal in every professional field that serve to sort and process and validate the work of the professional. I am free to choose my methodology, but my colleagues will evaluate its worth. However, in these cases, colleagues were less than critical.

Broadly speaking, there are two categories of research methodology that have been used extensively in the field of college student development—qualitative and quantitative. As a new professional in the mid 1970s I well remember the strong desire in our field to be viewed as scholars in academe. The push at that time was to do research that would be valued by scholars all across the campus—including the “hard sciences.” We were encouraged to learn and use
complex statistical analysis, rigorous sampling methods, methodology that would be viewed as scholarly (read quantitative)—even if it was not particularly valuable for practice. We wanted to prove that we belonged as full members of the academy. I remember thinking, “But we are who we are—can we just do the work that we believe is important and not worry so much about impressing others?” I also well remember some ten years later, the push for learning about and using qualitative research methodology—the methodology recognized then as being more valuable for the work of college student development professionals. It seems we had grown past the rivalry with our siblings in the hard sciences. I believe this evolution from a focus on trying to keep up professionally with other respected members of the academic community, to being comfortable with our place in the academy, is an important part of the present challenge.

Belenky, et al. (1986) wrote, “Over the past decade, there has been considerable feminist academic debate over…the equation of the masculine with objectivity, science, and the scientific method in its emphasis on manipulation, control, and distance from the objects of study” (p. 72) (note the date). I believe the move from an emphasis on quantitative research methodology with its emphasis on the scientific method including: systematic observation, measurement, experiment, formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses, (what Nardi, 2006, characterized as “a more structured scientific approach” p. 15) to qualitative research methodology has had a significant impact on the advancement (or the lack) of knowledge in the field of college student development—especially as it relates to our understanding of student identity issues. At issue here is not the relative value of one research methodology over another. The issue from my perspective is that these scholars pushed the results of their research beyond the methodology used.

For example, to be able to generalize from a sample to a population requires that the sample is carefully selected to represent the population. The samples in these studies were not selected in this manner, yet broad statements were offered in each case that suggested a knowledge or understanding of the population described as women. The new perspectives and
knowledge these scholars offered about women were very valuable until they pushed their findings beyond the strength of the methodology—qualitative research methodology is not designed to generalize from the sample to the population. It is extremely valuable when we want “to understand human behavior in its natural setting and from the viewpoint of those involved…” (Nardi, 2006, p. 15) but it is not appropriate to use the life experience of a few subjects to generalize to a population. Based on their research design, what they found to be true for women in a particular study cannot be said to be true for all women.

I have examined these studies and have found that these scholars (who I think fairly represent the evolution of thought in college student development from the 1970s through the mid-1990s) share a number of common beliefs. First, female development is different from male development. Barnett and Rivers (2004) noted that Carol Gilligan (1982) influenced many by what they say has come to be called female essentialism—noting that the idea of women being essentially different from men is found in “management texts, newspaper and magazine articles, best-selling books—maybe even in chats with your best friend over coffee” (p. 31). Josselson (1987) pointed to a lack of “perspective on the different pathways to development” (p. 5) for women. Among the differences are: interpersonal relatedness, need for affiliation, attachment and connection (Josselson, 1987). Baxter-Magolda (1992) suggested that women seem to be more tolerant and flexible. These female developmental issues can be contrasted with what Josselson (1992) identified as being “traditional male terms” (p. 26). She (Josselson, 1992) reported male development as being movement from dependence to autonomy. That is, developing autonomy is evidence of appropriate growth.

Second, these scholars collectively reported that until the 1970s, women were ignored as research subjects (Gilligan, 1979; Belenky, et al., 1986). Josselson (1996) reported that the prevailing thought was that “women were probably pretty much like men in terms of universal psychological principles” (p. 32). Carol Gilligan (1982) thought that theories of development based on male samples had two results: 1) When female experience did not align favorably with
the theory (e.g., when women did not seem to value separation as much as they did connectedness) they were viewed as somehow deficient in their growth and development. 2) The theories did not allow for the full spectrum of human experience.

Third, they share the view that women are essentially, fundamentally different from men and they tend to speak in those terms. Examples of this belief follow: Men focus on autonomy and separation while women are concerned with connectedness and relationships (Gilligan, 1982). Baxter-Magolda (1992) wrote that boys are socialized toward separation and individuation and girls are socialized toward connection. Barnett and Rivers (2004) reported that Gilligan believed that “women’s nurturing or ‘relational’ self is an essential part of her nature… not a role that she can put on or take off at will, but rather one that she—and not the male—is destined to fulfill” (p. 10). Specifically, “relationships, and particularly issues of dependency, are experienced differently by women and men” (Gilligan, 1982). In support of this perspective, Gilligan (1982) suggested, “In general…most men do not have an intimate male friend of the kind they recall fondly from boyhood or youth” (p. 154). Josselson (1987) believed that men define themselves by occupation or by their distinctiveness from others which she says, “makes their identity easy to name while women, on the other hand, have more complex identities” (p. 8). Severiens and Dam (1998) noted that when comparing Perry and Belenky, et al., Baxter-Magolda concluded that while men and women appear to develop on parallel tracks, there are also differences.

In Belenky, et al.’s (1986) *Women’s ways of knowing*, they noted that girls and women have more trouble than boys and men in asserting their authority or considering themselves as authorities; in expressing themselves in public so that others will listen; in gaining respect of others for their minds and their ideas; in fully utilizing their capabilities and training in the world of work (p. 4-5).

The specific language use to describe this essentialism included:

- “different internal models” (Gilligan, as cited in Josselson, 1987, p. 23).
• “two different modes” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 2).
• “relational self, innate only to women” (Barnnet and Rivers, 2004, p. 21).
• “relationships experienced differently by women and men” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 8).
• “women have a definable identity—different from men” (Josselson, 1996, p. 32).
• “uniquely female in form” (Josselson, 1987, p. 191).
• “such activities will have a place in identity that is uniquely female in form” (Josselson, 1987, p. 191).
• “significant differences exist in the ways men and women develop during college” (Sax, 2008, p. 64).
• “college women’s development should be considered as potentially distinct from men’s” (Sax, 2008, p. 3).

Beyond the language that supports the notion of differences between men and women, these scholars also use language to describe just what these differences between women and men are. As you read through these descriptions can you think of specific exceptions? Do these descriptions really define women exclusively or are they also descriptive of some men?

• “dominant image for men is that of hierarchy, competition to be alone at the top, women respond to themselves through the image of the web or concerns about connectedness” (Josselson, 1987, p. 23).
• “unique caring nature that men do not share” (Barnnet and Rivers, 2004, p. 20).
• “basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world; the basic masculine sense of self is separate” (Josselson, 1987, p. 24).
• “girls’ greater capacity for empathy and greater preoccupation with relationships with others” (Josselson, 1987, p. 170).
A fourth issue that is consistent across the work of these scholars is the notion of the concept of sex as a binary—either female or male, and the failure to recognize that there are individuals for whom this understanding is insufficient. The language used in their work clearly indicated this level of understanding. Examples of this language included: both of the sexes (Gilligan, 1982), both men and women (Belenky, et al., 1986), two parallel patterns (Baxter-Magolda, 1992) and two genders (Sax, 2008). This failure is only significant in the light of the large volume of work that was done at that time in closely related fields such as women’s studies,
gender studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc. These scholars should have been more aware of the directions scholars in these fields were heading. Especially culpable is Baxter-Magolda, who reported in 2004 that she read feminist scholarship to inform her perspective on gender as she was preparing for her research in 1992 (Baxter-Magolda, 2004). How did she miss the perspective that sex was defined as more than simply female or male? Further, how did she come to conflate the terms sex and gender after reading feminist literature?

But Baxter-Magolda was certainly not alone in conflating these terms. Each of these scholars used the terms sex and gender interchangeably. Baxter-Magolda (1986) reported that her sample was 51 women and 50 men and suggested that the gender (italics added) balance was crucial to tracing the role of gender in intellectual development. Gilligan (1982), in writing about the challenges of assessing women’s development against a model developed using an all-male sample reported, “as long as the categories by which development is assessed are derived from research on men, divergence from the masculine standard can be seen only as a failure of development” (p. 70). Belenky, et al. (1986) reported, “Although these differences in self-definition do not necessarily divide along gender lines, it is clear that many more women than men define themselves in terms of their relationships and connection to others…” (p. 8).

Josselson (1996), in comparing Perry’s research and that of Belenky, et al. (1986), wrote about gender similarities and differences when neither scholar attempted to define gender as a construct or variable unique from sex. Sax (2008) suggested that “Instructors need to understand that even when they believe they are treating male and female students in the same way, the two genders (italics added) may internalize those interactions differently” (p. 224). Indeed, the title of Sax’s (2008) book, The Gender Gap in College: Maximizing the Developmental Potential of Women and Men, shouts the conflation of terms issue. She (Sax, 2008) made no attempt at defining gender as separate from sex or to operationalize gender.

Finally, after presenting arguments in essentialist terms, insisting that clear differences exist between men and women, these scholars, like virtually everyone who wrote about sex or
gender differences, used modifying words throughout their writing that takes back much of their position. They argued for differences between men and women but failed to produce even one difference that is true for all women or all men.

Here are examples of the modifiers that these scholars used:

- *most* women (Gilligan, 1982, p. 15)
- *seem* to (Josselson, 1987, p. 23)
- women individuate *less than* men, they vary (Josselson, 1987, p. 186)
- women in our sample *seemed* to say (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 44)
- these women *seemed* to be awed...they *appeared* to identify (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 44)
- women *typically* approach adulthood (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 48)

I call the use of these modifiers the *language of uncertainty* and suggest that what we need in our scholarly work is a little more certainty—especially as it relates to identity development for students. At the least, we should be more careful to report what our research tells us. Stretching the data to try to make it say more than our methodology allows is certainly problematic.

Baxter-Magolda (1992) acknowledged four things about her categories of knowing:
1) the five ways of knowing are *not necessarily fixed, exhaustive, or universal categories*,
2) that they are abstract or ‘pure’ categories that *cannot adequately capture the complexities and uniqueness of an individual woman’s thought and life*, 3) that similar categories can be found in men’s thinking, and 4) that other people might organize their observations differently (p. 15) (italics added).

Baxter-Magolda (1992) at least reported what she called, *gender-related* not gender *determined* differences (this in spite of the fact that she did not operationalize the term *gender* in her work. The pervasive use of modifiers tends to make each of these research results less clear.
Gilligan’s (1982) stated purpose was not to highlight differences between men and women, but rather to “expand the understanding of human development by using the group left out in the construction of theory…to create a more encompassing view of the lives of both sexes” (p. 4). Yet, her book, In a different voice: Psychological theory and women’s development clearly presented the idea that women are different from men. In her own words,

> These findings were gathered at a particular moment in history, the sample was small, and the women were not selected to represent a larger population. These constraints preclude the possibility of generalization and leave to further research the task of sorting out the different variables of culture, time, occasion, and gender (p. 126) (italics added).

She found that the women in her sample did approach life from a perspective that was different from the earlier theories based on male samples. However, her methodology did not permit her to generalize to the population of all women or allow her to make the sweeping statements about difference between men and women that she did. Her own experience and the experiences of her female friends and colleagues may have been confirmed in stories of the women in her study; intuitively, it may have seemed right, but her research design did not support these findings. As noted previously, qualitative research methodology does not support generalization to a population (Nardi, 2006).

However, Gilligan did raise a significant issue when she noted that there is more than just the male voice. There certainly are more than just the male voice—but could we ask how many voices there might be? Prior to Gilligan’s work, women were not the only ones who might have been judged unfairly—as deficient, only because they did not measure up to the standard established by all male samples. Any male whose approach to life was characterized by any of the qualities Gilligan discovered in her female sample would also be judged as deficient. In a Different Voice not only describes many women (but not all women), it also describes some men whose psychological makeup aligns more closely with that of those women. Caring about each individual demands that we make room in our understanding for these individuals too. I’m
writing here about men who might embrace more feminine characteristics than masculine characteristics or men who might be characterized as androgynous based on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974).

Imagine the challenge to a person’s sense of well-being and identity. When a woman was thought to be not developed or mature, thanks to these scholars, she could at least point to a model that was constructed using an all-male sample and cry “foul!” For men who did not follow the prescribed developmental path because their psychological make-up was not similar to the men in those earlier samples, there was no explanation—only anxiety and quiet confusion. Gilligan insisted that we look at psychological development more broadly—considering both men and women in the construct. Belenky, et al. (1986) also suggested, “It is possible that more women than men tip toward connected knowing and more men than women toward separate knowing” (p. 65). This perhaps subtle movement from the idea of essential differences between sexes, is an important one. Making room for variance within the category of sex permits us to ask the question, “What about these variances?”

This was an important step forward. The next step is to acknowledge that as humans, men may possess and exhibit some of the characteristics that Gilligan identified as contrasting with men (e.g., connectiveness and caring) and women may possess and exhibit characteristics that Gilligan identified as contrasting with women (e.g. separation and justice) without being diagnosed as under-developed or deficient. Further, these differences would not have to be thought of as aberrant. Men, whose development follows a path more typically understood as a path that women might follow, or women, whose development follows a path more typically understood as a path that men might follow; or any combination of “typical” can all be celebrated as developing along a human path. In a different voice? Yes! But not a female or a male voice—a human voice.
Challenging the Scholarship

These scholars Chodorow (1978a), Gilligan (1982), Belenky, et al. (1986), and Josselson (1987) all helped to correct the error of expecting women to follow a developmental path based on theory derived from all-male samples by developing and presenting theories of development using female subjects. Their work was embraced by the scholarly community as important and essential to our collective understanding of college student development. I agree that their contribution was invaluable. However, I believe it should be challenged on three fronts. First, they made the same research design error that the earlier male scholars made—they used a single sex sample to address differences in the developmental path between women and men. They compared their findings with the findings of Perry and other early scholars from some twenty years earlier. They reported that the developmental path of the women in their sample did not follow the developmental path described by Perry.

A more appropriate research model would have been to gather data from both males and females using the same methodology and to look for differences based on the variable of sex. It is inappropriate to report differences between any variable that was not included in the sample. They could have reported their findings from their sample but should not have reported differences between their sample and that of another researcher.

Secondly, they did not try to draw a sample from a particular population—unless that population was defined as any woman. Samples were samples of convenience. Of course, they used a qualitative methodology which lends itself to the gathering of rich data but limits the researchers’ ability to generalize to a population (Nardi, 2006).

Finally, and more specific to the challenge of my research, they purported to examine gender differences without defining the term and employing a tool designed to identify the gender of participants. They simply talked with women and reported the results. In an earlier time, this error might be overlooked because prior to the 1960s there was not much scholarly work surrounding the potential differences between our understanding of sex and gender. But by the
1980s, the feminist movement, gender studies, women’s studies, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and other related fields of study had raised awareness that sex and gender might reasonably be considered two separate, albeit closely related variables. The point is: scholars in the field of student affairs/development should have known better.

Guba (1990) defined a paradigm as an interpretive framework, a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (p. 17). When a particular paradigm dominates thinking, its assumptions are unquestioned and implicitly undergird the understanding of phenomenon. The prevailing paradigm in college student development currently, as it has been for the last half-century, is that gender and sex are similar concepts—so much so that the terms are used interchangeably. The practice of examining gender differences without regard for defining gender continues seemingly without question. When results are inconsistent from one study to the next, those inconsistencies are noted, but no one ever seems to ask “why?” I stand in opposition to this paradigm, I ask “why?” and I suggest that the inconsistent results are due to confounded and ill-defined or undefined variables.

**What Have We Learned?**

Most recently, Linda Sax (2008) in her research and subsequent publication, *The Gender Gap in College: Maximizing the Developmental Potential of Women and Men*, followed suit with these researchers by failing to define the terms, sex and gender, and by using the terms interchangeably throughout her book. While she used the term *gender* in her title, she did not define the term, and without a definition of the term there was really no reason to operationalize it. Nardi (2006) wrote, “A concept is an idea, a general mental formulation summarizing specific occurrences, such as ‘gender’ representing such things as masculinity and femininity, or ‘age’ summarizing specific instances of the idea of time (youth, middle age, elderly” (p.43). A common way to define a concept is to use a dictionary but more suitable definitions are found in professional literature (Nardi, 2006). The point is, if we are using a term such as *gender* (as Sax did), it is essential that we define the term.
The problem in Sax’s work and the work that preceded hers (described above) is that the variable of sex and gender have been almost universally assumed to be such *concrete concepts* (see Nardi, 2006, p. 43) that there seems to be no need to define them—everyone knows what we mean when we talk about sex—it’s about being a woman or a man! Each of the specific studies reviewed here made this same fundamental error—they failed to tell us exactly what they meant by sex.

If we are willing to overlook this error, we may want to take a closer look at the next error. If we believe that sex is a universally understood concept (and just to be clear, it is not) we might at least agree that the concept of *gender* is a bit more of a challenge. Even those who think that sex is a concrete concept would likely agree, upon reflection, that gender is probably not so concrete. Nardi (2006) wrote specifically about “specific and concrete” (p. 43) concepts and concepts that he refers to as “constructs” (p. 43). Likely, the most novice scholar would agree that gender is a concept that is not easily defined and is, perhaps, a construct. Sax (2008) and the scholars noted above must have made the assumption that everyone knows what we mean by sex and that sex and gender are pretty much the same concepts. Nardi (2006) reminded us that “what we mean by the ideas and terms used in our study should be explicitly stated” (p. 43). Hamilton, in 2008, recognizing that there is not a universal understanding of the concepts of sex and gender, called for scholars to clearly define terms. Remember, Sax (2008) wrote about the differences between the genders—“the gender gap” but she did not define sex or gender in her book. Without defining terms, there is really no reason to try to operationalize them (i.e., describe how we expect to determine which variable category is appropriate for each of our sample, Nardi, 2006).

Earlier I reviewed the literature in the field of college student development during the decade of 2000 through 2010 and found that in spite of the new perspectives on sex and gender in other fields traditionally related to the field of college student development, we have shown little regard for those new understandings. In my review I found that we routinely failed to define terms and in failing that, do not operationalize terms. Ah, you say, perhaps we have more recently
learned our lesson. Regrettably, that is not so. I recently updated my review of the literature published in two highly regarded publications in the field—*The Journal of College Student Development* and the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practices*. I used the same search tool, EBSCO Host and databases, ERIC and Academic Search Premier and search terms, gender, differences, and college students that I used in my first search to find the articles published in these journals between the years 2010 and the present. These searches returned 31 articles in the *Journal of College Student Development* and six articles in the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*. Of these 37 articles, only two provided a definition for sex and/or gender, and only two operationalized gender—i.e., they provided some specific method to determine the gender of the individuals in the sample (Nardi, 2006). In thirty-four of the thirty-seven articles, the authors routinely conflated the terms, sex and gender. So the answer to my question, “what have we learned?” is sadly, not much.

**Does it Matter?**

This is precisely the question I hope to answer with my research. Over the past five years I have been actively involved in examining questions of sex and gender identity. I have informally discussed these issues with dozens of people from all walks of life and a wide variety of ages. While the conversations have never been short—try as I may, I cannot describe my research interest in three to five minutes. Interestingly, no one I have talked with has ever seemed like they really want to end the conversation quickly. Each one has nodded knowingly as I have described the difference between being described as a male and being described as masculine or being described as a woman and being described as feminine. The collective “yes” that I have experienced among average people as they recognize themselves in my story, together with the dozens of studies I have reviewed during these five years that clearly indicate that there is a significant gap in our understanding of sex and gender issues, has provided steady motivation for me to pursue this work. I know this matters for many, many people.
From the many thousands who buy popular relationship literature in an effort to enhance and enrich their relationships to those who hope to enhance the workplace through a better understanding of the opposite sex, it matters. Most importantly, it matters to those students who count on college student development professionals to help them develop a personally meaningful sense of identity. What we understand and what we do not understand about sex and gender identity development may make all the difference in the world to them—it matters to them. In chapter 3 I will describe a methodology for moving the ideas presented here from theory to practice.
Chapter Three—Methodology

In chapters one and two I tried to make the case for the challenge that seems to keep theorists, scholars and practitioners from making progress in understanding sex and gender identity issues among college students. Of primary concern to me is just how we can move from simple, interesting conversation concerning sex and gender to serious application of knowledge to practice in the field of college student development. What will it take to move forward?

I believe that progress will require a paradigm shift in the field. A paradigm is defined as a framework containing the basic assumptions, ways of thinking, and methodology that are commonly accepted by members of a scientific community (Dictionary.com, 2014). Our current paradigm regarding sex and gender identity development must be reexamined and consciously adjusted to include knowledge and understanding that have been available through other knowledge communities for decades. Figure 3.1, on the next page, graphically shows my interpretation of the current construction of the knowledge community in college student development.
The college student development knowledge community is located in the knowledge universe. There are three definable groups of professionals that comprise the college student development knowledge community—theorists and scholars, educators, and practitioners. In this model you will note that these three groups are represented graphically by colors. These colors are intended to suggest that while these three groups are distinct from one another, they are not exclusive—these three groups blend with the others. That is, one might be an educator and a theorist or a practitioner and an educator. Certainly there are some professionals who might move about successfully in all three groups. However, for the most part, these three groups of professionals tend to approach their work in ways that are unique from the others. Educators work
to interpret the work of theorists for aspiring professionals; practitioners work to apply the work of theorists to the delivery of direct services to students; and theorists challenge us all to think and work in new and hopefully, more effective ways.

The two-pointed arrows between these three groups in this model suggest that knowledge created by each one flows in both directions—that each one informs the other. Finally, the orb that defines the college student development knowledge community suggests that the knowledge in this community (the college student development knowledge community) is defined and in some ways protected. However, that orb line is pierced by two-pointed arrows which suggests that each of these groups can inform, and be informed by, other knowledge communities that are a part of the knowledge universe—but not without specific effort to do so. The college student development knowledge community can look exclusively within itself for knowledge or it can allow other knowledge communities, drawn from the knowledge universe, to inform its thinking. Our best thinking is the result of a free flow of knowledge created among theorists and scholars, educators, and practitioners in the field of college student development who allow their thinking to be influenced by other knowledge communities. Significantly, in this model, the purest light, the light that allows us to see things most clearly—the white light, is available at the intersection of theorists and scholars, educators, and practitioners when they allow themselves to be informed by others in the knowledge universe.

The answer to the question of how to change the prevailing paradigm concerning sex and gender identity development in the field of college student development must be informed in the context of understanding this model. Theorists always lead the way in the creation of new knowledge in any field of study. Educators follow as they work to keep current with the newest and most relevant research in their field and insert it appropriately in the body of knowledge to which they seek to expose their students. Finally, practitioners get to decide what works and what does not in their daily work with students. Their days are filled with realities that routinely
demand that they modify the work of both educators and theorists. Therefore any strategy
designed to promote a paradigm change must address all three of these groups.

In an effort to help these three groups apply the understandings presented in this work I
have chosen selected work from each group for specific review and critique and have applied
these new perspectives to their work. This review is presented in Chapter 4.
Chapter Four-Application

In this chapter I have identified specific examples of how each of these three groups within the field of college student development have misunderstood sex and gender identity issues. By addressing the challenges of all three of these groups I hope to affect a more rapid recognition of the issues and a more immediate press to the desperately needed paradigm change.

I remember getting glasses for the first time when I was about 33 years of age. I probably needed glasses for a few years before I got them. It was not vanity that kept me from getting those glasses—my eyesight just got slowly worse and I did not notice the change. I could not believe the world I saw after getting those glasses! I’d been missing a lot. In this paper I’ve tried to introduce a new lens through which we might gain a new, perhaps clearer vision of understanding sex and gender identity development.

We can certainly learn a great deal from scholars that have come before us. Multiple perspectives are essential to bring us closer to a more full understanding of any human condition. I am grateful to those whose work informs us today. However, the lens through which we viewed sex and gender identity development issues for a generation has blinded us from alternative perspectives. This is perhaps neither right nor wrong—rather just the way it is. Viewed through that lens, the work that has been done makes sense and adds some value to our understanding. Viewed through a different lens however—an alternative perspective, that work may be reinterpreted in a way that has the potential to also add value to our understanding. In the following paragraphs I will apply that new lens to three specific areas that impact the practice of college student development. They are: 1) the work of theorists and scholars; 2) the work of practitioners; and 3) the work of educators in college student development professional preparation programs.

I provide examples of how this new lens can be applied to each of these areas of current practice in the hope that this new lens will inform and expand the way we think about student identity development as it is impacted by sex and gender identity development.
Scholars and Theorists: A Critique of Current Work

Linda Sax—The Gender Gap in College

In chapter eight of Linda Sax’s (2008) book, The Gender Gap in College, she recommended further examination of nine areas in which “gender differences” should be taken into consideration. They are: 1) Financial Circumstances, 2) Connection to Family, 3) Student-Faculty Interactions, 4) Presence of Women Faculty, 5) Academic Engagement, 6) Academic Self-Confidence, 7) Health and Well-Being, 8) Impact of Diversity Programming, and Careers and Majors. I will first critique the introduction to this section using the lens suggested in this chapter and then look at one specific recommendation for further study and provide ideas on how that recommendation might be improved.

Chapter 8 is titled, “Where should we go from here? Implications of the gender gap for campus practice and future research.” Throughout her book, Dr. Sax defined the term, gender in reference to the individual’s sex. That is, comparisons between students are made based on their biological sex. I have argued for the importance of being more precise with terminology—suggesting that we use the term, sex, when referring to one’s biological characteristics and the term gender, when referring to one’s psycho-emotional characteristics.

I do not doubt that there are differences based on an individual’s sex—and am not particularly surprised when differences are discovered and reported. However, there are differences, particularly those related to psycho-emotional characteristics, when gender is the more salient variable. Results vary, but research using instruments like the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974) or the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Spence and Helmrich, 1978) indicate that males score themselves as masculine or near masculine about 50% of the time and females score themselves as feminine or near feminine at about the same level. A significant number of both males and females score as having both masculine and feminine traits (30-35%) as determined by these instruments. As suggested earlier, knowing if an individual (or group of individuals) think of themselves as having more traditional masculine or more
traditional feminine characteristics (defined here as gender) may be the more salient variable. That is, the within-the-category (in this case, sex) differences that have not been controlled for in the research design will likely confound the results.

Scholars in the field of college student development have historically tended to consider the impact of college on students in the aggregate and we have discovered, as Sax pointed out, that we must begin to understand the impact of college on different groups of students—the differential impact (Sax, 2008). I call for scholars who have read Sax’s important work to simply add the understanding that gender is a construct that, though related to sex (biological), is indeed unique and should be considered as such.

Of the nine areas recommended for further research suggested by Sax, I will focus specific attention on student-faculty interactions, described as probably the most consistent pattern of conditional effects detected in this study (Sax, 2008). Sax (2008) noted that gender differences in this domain fall into three main categories: 1) politics and social activism, 2) attitudes toward gender roles, and 3) faculty influence on women’s sense of confidence and well-being. She (Sax, 2008) found that interactions with faculty encourage liberalism, political engagement, and a commitment to social activism for both men and women but they were more common among men. Sax (2008) noted these differences but acknowledged that further research is required to determine why this is so.

A second theme highlighted by Sax related to student-faculty relationships is in the area of attitudes toward gender roles. For men, working closely with faculty on research or receiving advice or encouragement leads to a more egalitarian view of gender roles while for women, the opposite is true—those women who spend time with faculty become more committed to traditional gender roles.

A third theme is related to faculty influence on women’s sense of confidence and well-being (Sax, 2008). She (Sax, 2008) noted that “feeling dismissed by faculty in the classroom has negative consequences for women’s longer-term sense of physical well-being, their confidence in
...math, and even their sense of physical well-being” p. 221. This, Sax (2008) suggested, lends support to the “theoretical work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) and Baxter Magolda (1992) who underscore the importance of validation, support, and sense of connectedness in women’s intellectual and personal development” p. 224. But wait, unfortunately these scholars did not show that these characteristics were unique to women—only that some, even if perhaps most women, exhibit them. If there are men for whom validation, support, and a sense of connectedness is important, and I think that is very possible, it seems likely that they would be impacted in the same ways as women who have these characteristics. When one examines differences based on gender as possibly unique from differences based on sex, nuance is introduced that has the potential to expand and perhaps better explain difference.

Sax (2008) suggested that members of the college community would be well served to be more aware of the potential “gender differences in the student-faculty dynamic” (p. 224). The problem she appropriately pointed out is that even when faculty or staff personnel believe they are treating female and male students similarly, their response to that treatment may be very different. I agree, but would simply add that the student response may be different, more because of gender differences than sex differences. And arguably, gender differences are not so easily spotted as sex differences. So the good that we would do by encouraging faculty and staff personnel to be aware that students may respond differently to similar treatment may be lost when they expect all or even most males to respond in one way and all or even most females to respond in another.

It is now commonly understood that we dare not treat all students as if college impacts them similarly; but treating all students similarly because we do not know better is probably preferable to treating a student differently because we think we know how they will, or worse, how they should respond. I believe that the psychological (here understood as gender) make-up of an individual is more instructive regarding how one might respond to my actions than their physiological (here understood as sex) make-up. Sex may be a more convenient characteristic by
which to divide our understanding of students because we think it is more easily determined than gender, but supposed knowledge of student characteristics based on an ill-defined variable is certainly problematic. Perhaps the only thing worse than not knowing a student, is thinking we do and treating them differently based on that false understanding.

Sax (2008) provided implications for practice based on her findings. She suggested that faculty should be particularly careful to not make dismissive comments to female students because they may have a “deleterious effect on female students’ academic confidence and even physical well-being” (p. 224). This recommendation ignores the possibility that there are males in the classroom whose psychological make-up may be very similar to that of females and therefore might experience a similar deleterious effect. When specific “gender differences” are expected, the real deleterious effect is on the individual who does not respond in the expected way and is unintentionally made to feel as though something is wrong with them because they do not.

She went on to suggest that faculty should “consider strategies for encouraging women to feel safe speaking up in the classroom” (p. 224). A better recommendation would be for faculty to consider strategies that would encourage each student to feel safe in the classroom—to go “out of their way” to provide a welcoming environment for all students which would, by definition, include women and men (and, importantly, students whose identity is something other than the traditional binary—female or male/feminine or masculine.)

Finally, Sax noted that “taking the initiative to challenge faculty in the classroom is a precursor to many beneficial outcomes for both genders” (p. 225) but that it does cause greater stress and anxiety for women. I believe that there are men in classrooms who would experience greater stress and anxiety similar to their female classmates—those whose psychological make-up are similar to women. Faculty, please do not expect the women in your class to experience stress and anxiety when they challenge you in class—and please do not expect all men to thrive in those circumstances. Each student should be allowed to respond in their own way to situations in the classroom without being burdened by artificial expectations from faculty or, for that matter, other
students. Men and women may respond differently to the classroom environment—research may prove that, but the differences may not be entirely because of their sex. Let’s please not forget the impact that their gender might have on their response.

Perhaps even more challenging is the discovery in Sax’s research that the presence of women faculty on campus seems to benefit both women and men—specifically, female professors strengthen “female students’ scholarly confidence, achievement motivation, and college GPA” (Sax, 2008, p. 226). For men, the presence of women faculty seems to provide gains in mathematical confidence, scientific orientation, leadership ability, emotional well-being, and even greater gains in GPA than the female students—overall, “a particularly positive and supportive environment for men” (Sax, 2008, p. 226). The recommendation?—“hire more women faculty!” (Sax, 2008, p. 226). I would like to believe that Sax was not entirely serious about this recommendation, but there is no evidence that she was not.

This recommendation is consistent with the actions of the business community several decades earlier when they discovered that collaboration and teamwork (characteristics often traditionally ascribed to women) seemed to be preferable to the military-style competitive, hierarchical organizations then prevalent (characteristics traditionally ascribed to men.) The assumption then, which continues in large part to this day, was if an organization can benefit from characteristics that have traditionally been associated with women (characteristics I believe might be more accurately described as traditionally feminine characteristics), then the obvious solution is to hire more women—regardless of their individual characteristics. This practice ignores the possibility—indeed the proven reality, that not all women possess and exhibit traditionally feminine characteristics and not all men possess and exhibit traditionally masculine characteristics.

Before we implement Sax’s recommendation to hire more women, we should make an effort to determine if the impact that women make on a college campus is because they are female (sex) or because they possess and exhibit more traditionally feminine characteristics.
(gender). If the impact is found to be due to their biological construction, then, by all means, go hire more females. If, however, the impact is found to be due to their psycho-emotional construction, then, the more effective response would be to hire more faculty who possess and exhibit more traditionally feminine characteristics, regardless of their sex.

Sax offered a number of questions for further research, including: What are the substantive differences in the nature of men’s and women’s interactions with their professors? Does the subject matter make a difference? Does the nature of student-faculty interaction vary depending on where the interaction takes place? Why do women often internalize their interactions with professors in a negative way? How much does student-faculty interaction depend on the sex [or gender identity] of the faculty? All of these questions are important and worthy of pursuing. I would simply ask that future scholars carefully consider the variable of gender as unique from sex when asking these and other questions. In questions of relationships between people, do we think that their physical characteristics are more salient than their psychological or emotional characteristics? Think carefully about the variables you choose to study. Please define your terms and tell us how you intend to operationalize them. And please, do not report sex differences as gender differences. Moving this conversation forward requires that we be more careful with our research design and our language.

**Susan Jones’ Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI)**

Recently, Susan Jones and Elisa Abes (2013) described Jones’ model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) (see Figure 4.1 below) and their joint work, the Re-conceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) in their book, “Identity Development of College Students: Advancing Frameworks for Multiple Dimensions of Identity” (2013).

This model was born, as most are, out of a dis-satisfaction with previous ones. It was designed to depict “a fluid and dynamic image of identity when multiple identities are considered” (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 79). The model depicts the context within which identity
develops and includes considerations of family background, sociocultural conditions, current life experiences and career decisions and life planning; a core identity, which includes personal attributes, personal characteristics and personal identity (Jones & Abes, 2013). The central components of this model are (see Figure 4.1 on p. 84):

1. The core—the internal sense of self, including personal attributes, such as, “intelligent,” “compassionate,” “good friend,” (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 82).

2. Multiple social identities—recognition of external identities such as “race, gender [in this work, defined as sex], culture, sexual orientation, religion, and social class” (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 54).

3. The recognition of the relationship between the core (internal) identity, social identities (external identities), and identity salience. “Salience refers to the prominence or importance attached to a particular experience, idea, feeling, or, in this case, social identity” (Jones & Abes, p. 40).

4. Contextual influences such as “family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, life planning” (Jones & Abes, p. 54).
The stated purpose of Jones’s (1997) original study was “to understand the multiple dimensions of identity development among women college students” Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 64). To accomplish this purpose, she employed grounded theory methodology with a sample size of ten (10) college women selected by purposeful sampling. Each participant was interviewed three times using broad, open-ended questions. Jones (2013) described this sample as “diverse” (p. 65).

There are several specific, yet related challenges to Jones’s work which together lead to a broader challenge based on our culture. Here are those challenges: 1) She used a small, purposeful sample (n=10.) While a purposeful sample typically yields a rich understanding of a few concepts, it is not appropriate for generalizing to a population. Creating a model must certainly be considered a form of generalizing. While Jones gained an understanding of how these ten women came to understand their identity, it is not appropriate to suggest that others follow a similar path—even if the model seems intuitively correct. Remember Jerome Kagan’s comment
in Barret & Rivers, 2004): “Why is psychology the least advanced of the sciences? Because our intuitions aren’t very good” (p. 90).

2) The use of grounded theory to create a model of identity development is a second challenge to this work. We certainly learned a lot about these ten women and with the help of grounded theory methodology, and Jones did find interesting patterns, but the small, purposeful sample size all but eliminated the possibility of developing a general model of identity development. A model based on a narrowly defined sample should be presented as such—not as a model that might fit anyone. 3) Finally, the use of open ended questions, an approach that is well received generally becomes problematic in this particular application. The purpose of the open-ended question is so that responders are free to respond from their own set of response options as compared with pre-determined response options provided by the researcher (e.g., multiple choice). However, open-ended responses are limited by the experience of the responder. That is, for the responder to offer a particular response, that response must be available to them—it must be in their knowledge or experience base. For example, before I was exposed to the idea of psychological androgyny, when asked about my gender identity, the only response options available to me were feminine or masculine. Culture defined the limits of response options available to me—even when asked an open-ended question. A significant challenge to the development of the MMDI is the fact that our culture does not fully understand or acknowledge the difference between sex (defined as a biological construction) and gender (defined as a social construction). Because of this (mis)understanding, when the participants in this study were asked to identify personally meaningful dimensions of their identity, it is possible that it did not occur to them that perhaps an important part of their identity included their psycho-emotional make-up I have labeled as gender. Words that they might have used to describe gender include: feminine, masculine, androgynous. Words they selected to describe themselves included (illustrative—not intended to be exhaustive): responsible, student, smart, black, woman, overweight, daughter,
Jewish, sister, Catholic, caring, young, athlete, poor, funny, hardworking, African Cherokee, activist (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 80).

Personally, knowing that I am male (sex) with a significant number of characteristics traditionally associated with being feminine (gender), provides a path to an expanded level of personal understanding not previously available to me. Because the possibility of a gender identity that is unique from, though certainly informed by, sex identity, is not widely considered in our culture, the women in this study would not (perhaps could not) name it.

It is as if I asked you your favorite color and you, not knowing that purple was even an option, chose red. If you knew about purple, you might choose it. Jones and Abes (2013) affirm this notion in the following explanation: “…if the campus climate sends messages that celebrate only heterosexual relationships, through traditional notions of homecoming kings and queens, a Greek system grounded in heterosexual dating rituals, or an alumni association that recognizes only heterosexual marriages among alums, women students may not even perceive the possibility of identifying as a lesbian” (p. 106). Similarly, if our culture does not recognize a difference between sex identity and gender identity, it is not likely that students—like the students in this sample, would employ such a difference in selecting words that answer the question, “Who am I?”

While I agree with the research strategy of not providing information that would unduly guide or influence responders’ answers, I believe we do a major disservice to advancing our understanding of personal identity development when we do not address this significant deficiency in our popular cultural understanding. In this case, failure to do so possibly left a gaping hole in the middle of the data and consequently, in the model created based on those data.

Jones and Abes (2013) came closest to indicating that they understood the difference between sex and gender when they described the gender expression of their sample as “eight female and two as androgynous” (p. 103). Yet this statement alone exhibits a lack of understanding of even fundamental concepts. Gender expression is generally understood as
behavior—not physiological characteristics which are usually described as male, female, or some other description. Androgynous, though historically used to describe some ambiguous physiology, is more contemporarily understood as related to gender (see, for example, Sandra Bem’s (1974) work or Janet Spence & Robert Helmreich (1978).

Gender, understood as a variable unique from sex, is conspicuously absent from this model perhaps because responders simply did not think about it and, the researchers did not concern themselves with it or see this as a significant omission. As a result, we have yet another theory of identity development that does not make room for individuals to understand themselves more fully by considering their sex identity separately from their gender identity.

**What Should Be Changed in this Model?** This model of identity development addresses many of the concerns not approached by other models—the contextual nature of identity development, the interaction between social and personal identities, the idea of a core identity, the idea of salience of the multiple identities and movement toward and away from the core, and generally the dynamic nature of identity development. Each of these ideas represents positive developments; however, the absence of gender identity in this model is problematic. I suggest that gender identity (understood as psycho-social characteristics) must be considered fundamental to one’s identity and should at least be included in the options for personal identity—if not part of one’s core identity.

**Practitioners: A Critique of Practice**

**Ludeman—Arrested emotional development: Connecting college men, emotions, and misconduct**

Ludeman (2004) described a program designed to address the challenges of dealing with college men relative to their emotional development. The focus of this program is on the overrepresentation of men in campus judicial systems. The author reviewed current college judicial systems and college men’s experiences in it. As a prelude to the program description the
author offered an overview of hegemonic masculinity and behavior and the impact of male socialization on male behavior.

In a review of research regarding men and behavior, the author pointed to the following topics as representative of the literature: 1) men and violence; 2) men’s violent or oppressive behavior against women; 3) the disproportionate and over representation of men as both perpetrators and victims of violence; 4) men as the perpetrators of homicide, physical assaults, sexual assaults, and domestic abuse; and 5) men and boys as more likely to bear weapons (Ludeman, 2004). In pointing to these common research topics, the author clearly reinforced a particular dimension of human behaviors and attribute them to men. The reader should note that this is a program intended to address challenges of college men, yet the author slipped very easily from addressing the challenges of college men to addressing the challenges of college men who embrace traits of hegemonic masculinity—propensity for violence, aggressive behavior, confrontation, “sexual abuse, sexual harassment, substance abuse, and other self-destructive behaviors, relationship inadequacies, absent fathering, and social-emotional withdrawal” (Ludeman, 2004, p. 76). Ludeman (2004) suggested that “many campuses have failed to recognize the link between men, socialization, and violence” (p. 76).

**The prevailing assumptions in this program.** Among the prevailing assumptions of this program is that male means masculine—further, that masculine means hegemonic masculinity. The author does not acknowledge that not all males are masculine nor do all masculine men embrace hegemonic masculinity. Some men do not embrace any form of traditional masculinity at all. A second assumption of this program is that all males face pressure to embrace hegemonic masculinity. While it may be true that there are cultural influences that push males toward a form of hegemonic masculinity, not all males respond to that pressure. A final assumption presented in this program is that all males, when pressured to embrace hegemonic masculinity are affected by that pressure in some significant way. This is an example of the determinism described earlier. Being male (sex) determines gender (masculine—in this case defined as hegemonic masculinity)

**Alternative perspective on the prevailing assumptions—What would make this program better?** Not all males embrace or exhibit traditional masculine characteristics. To assume that they do will result in inappropriate treatment of those who do not. While it may be true that the majority of college men who engage in behaviors that result in their being in the college judicial system possess and exhibit more traditionally masculine—perhaps hegemonic masculine behavior, to assume that all do is problematic. Developing programs designed to respond to these challenges based on these assumptions results in prescribing treatments that are not appropriate for males whose personal characteristics do not align with these assumptions. This is a common problem for all programs that are designed without recognizing that sex does not determine gender.

**Daughter Leslie—Housing Office, University of California-Irvine**

Our daughter, Leslie, is completing her M.F.A. in Costume Design at the University of California-Irvine. One of the ways she is earning money to help finance this endeavor is by working for the university housing office, serving as an on-site manager for the apartment complex where she and her family live. Part of her duties includes the development and implementation of educational, social, and recreational programs for the residents of the complex. In a recent meeting the staff was discussing a program they were planning and the conversation turned to how to promote it. The program was intended to be an opportunity for the women in the complex to get together and enjoy some time out of the house and included: manicures and pedicures and a movie. The staff all agreed that there were likely quite a few residents that would be attracted to such a program but, as the talk turned to how to promote and advertise it, desiring to be an inclusive community, they were faced with two challenges—1) how were they to
describe and name the event in a way that would accurately communicate what they expected the experience would be like? And 2) how could they, for promotional purposes, identify the appropriate individuals and groups of individuals who would be most likely to want to attend such an event? As they discussed these challenges they acknowledged that they envisioned this event to be a sort of “girl’s night out”—an opportunity for the women in the complex to get together, enjoy each other’s company, and do what they described as “girl” things—do their nails and watch a movie (the planners actually described the movie as a “chick-flick” and everyone knew what they meant.)

As they continued in their planning they quickly realized that they were planning an event that would perhaps be attractive to a wider range of individuals in their community—not just women. Recognizing that some men might enjoy this kind of experience is an acknowledgement of what I have described as “gender” differences—not sex differences. The attraction of an event such as this is more about an individual’s psychological makeup than it is about their physical makeup.

Valuing inclusiveness, they agreed that they did not want to plan, promote, and advertise an event that would inappropriately exclude anyone in their community. By this they meant that they did not want to suggest that only women should consider attending the event—anyone who might be attracted to the event as described in their promotional materials should feel and be welcomed. Specifically, they did not want to advertise this event as a “Ladies Night Out” or “Chick-Flick Night” or in any other way that would suggest that men, who would also enjoy this event, were not welcome.

For help they turned to the campus LGBT Resource Center. After several consultations with staff at the LGBT Resource Center, the program committee determined that they should scrap the idea since they could not figure out how to sponsor the event without possibly excluding some valued members of the community.
The prevailing assumptions in this program. This example suggests two prevailing assumptions regarding programming. The first is that there are events that would be attractive for only women. It may be true that some events might be attractive to most women, but it is not true that an event would be attractive to all women. With this thinking, this group was planning an event that potentially would exclude women who do not possess traditionally defined feminine characteristics and some men who do. (This is, of course, also true for practitioners who plan a program for men without regard for those men who do not possess traditionally masculine characteristics.) This does not mean that all programming must somehow be inclusive of the entire community. That is likely impossible. The second assumption is that programming with a particular population in mind is not appropriate. Programming with a particular population in mind can be very meaningful and valuable and it should be pursued. In this case, the community lost a potentially good program because of these two assumptions.

Alternative perspective on the prevailing assumptions—What would make this program better? There is a difference between programming with a particular demographic or population in mind, yet welcoming anyone whose interests might align with the program objectives and programming with the intent to exclude a particular demographic or population. If, for example, a programming committee believes that the presence of any males would hamper the achievement of program objectives, they should be able to go forward with their plan to exclude males. Creating a “Girls Night Out” because we believe that there are a number of community members who would enjoy such an event should not be an issue and excluding men from the event should also be acceptable. However, care should be taken to also plan and deliver programming aimed at community members of varying identities with other interests—not simply programs aimed at men or women or any other sex identity. Programming for women or men does not sufficiently address the interests of the whole of the community. Programming committees should begin by thinking about the various identities represented in their community.
and then create programs that respond to those interests, being careful to not make assumptions about anyone based on artificial characteristics.

This program plan was cancelled because the programming committee was not able to think of ways to reach out to all community members. Although the members of my daughter’s programming committee had a very clear vision for what this event could be, plans were cancelled because they believed that each program should be inclusive. Sadly, what could have been a very enjoyable evening for many community members was never offered because of this erroneous prevailing assumption.

All programming ideas should be evaluated on the basis of their value to members of the community and should only be rejected if they arbitrarily exclude members of the community. It is important that professionals involved with programming for students understand that men and women are not the only identities that should be considered, and that not all men or all women will be attracted to a particular event. Similarly, they should understand that there is not likely a program that only men or only women will be attracted to. For example, do all men enjoy watching sporting events on television?—certainly not. To assume that all men do, indicates insensitivity to those who do not. The program plan and the promotion of the program should be sensitive to these realities. Are there women who enjoy watching sporting events on television?—certainly yes. To assume that no women do, indicates insensitivity to those who do. Awareness and sensitivity to multiple identities should be the primary considerations.

Ehrmann—What is false masculinity and its negative consequences?

Joe Ehrmann (2014) wrote about the challenges of boys coming to understand gender identity in his brief essay What is False Masculinity and Its Negative Consequences? He wrote about the challenge each boy faces when he is told to “Be a Man!” Ehrmann believes that this admonition involves the expectation that boys who desire to be a man must stop crying, disconnect from emotions, and avoid “acting like a ‘sissy’ or ‘mamma’s boy’” (Carpenter, 2014, p. 21). He (Ehrrmann, 2014) further suggested (though he personally disagrees with this
(perspective) that in our current culture, “to have tender emotions, to share them, show them and name them, are signs of masculine failure” (Carpenter, 2014, p. 21). He (Ehrmann, 2014) suggested three fundamental lies young boys are taught: 1) their value and worth has something to do with their physical strength and athletic ability; 2) being a man has something to do with sexual conquest; 3) masculinity is defined by economic success. According to Ehrmann, the model for these masculine characteristics is, most often, a professional athlete. Too often the professional athlete reinforces these three characteristics of masculinity in highly exaggerated and negative ways.

To address this challenge Ehrmann recommended that we work to create a “clear and compelling definition of healthy masculinity that will guide every young man to understand the truth about what it means to ‘Be a man’” (Ehrmann, 2014, p. 22).

The prevailing assumptions in this program. The prevailing assumptions evidenced in this essay are that first, “healthy masculinity” (p. 22) can be defined in such a clear way that that definition can be packaged and passed along to subsequent generations. He suggested that that definition “will help guide every young man to understand the truth about what it means to ‘Be a Man’” (p. 22). Secondly, he suggested that masculine characteristics are only available to males. He delineated between unhealthy masculinity—that form that denies the “full expression of their humanity” (p. 21) and healthy masculinity, which includes being in touch with, and willing to express their emotional selves.

Alternative perspective on the prevailing assumptions—What would make this program better? When we establish an expectation for behavior—whether that is defined as healthy or unhealthy, we create a standard against which individuals begin to measure themselves—often not even consciously. Though I have encountered many people who are willing to accept the responsibility for doing this, I do not know who has the right to do it. Rather than working to determine an appropriate standard for masculine behavior for boys, it seems that our time would be better spent helping each boy express himself in as authentic a way as is
possible—they should not have to be limited by a “masculine” way or a “feminine” way to express themselves—there should only be the way they want to express themselves. Only in this way is the full range of human responses available to each individual. Boys should not be taught that there are limits on the possible responses to a situation based on their sex. Our emphasis should shift from trying to teach boys to be good men to trying to teach boys to be good people.

What Educators and New Professionals Should Know

The last group needed to affect a significant change or paradigm shift in our understanding of sex and gender identity development in the field of college student development is the students who are currently in graduate professional preparation programs and the professors who guide them during this important preparation. These soon-to-be new professionals will be serving on the front line of the delivery of service to undergraduate students. So far I have addressed the need for changes in understanding among theorists and scholars and practitioners. Educators must also be equipped with a more comprehensive and contemporary understanding of sex and gender identity development as they seek to prepare new professionals for service in the field.

There are currently some 1,300 graduate student members in ACPA—College Student Educators International and 120 graduate preparation programs listed in the ACPA directory, across the country (C. McRoberts, email message to author, July 8, 2014). The impact these new professionals can have on practice is immense. But, they must be prepared with the knowledge concerning sex and gender identity development that I have outlined in this paper.

I will begin with a review of the current status of graduate professional preparation programs. In 2010, I (Wise, 2010) reviewed a representative sample of eight (8) professional preparation programs across the country. They included public and private colleges and universities; large, comprehensive universities and small colleges; sectarian and non-sectarian; and those that have been in the business of preparing new practitioners for a long time and relatively new programs. In preparing for that research I reviewed the literature to find out what
preparation was expected by the field. In 2007 the Steering Committee on Professional Competencies (Love, et al., (2007), suggested the following list of skills new professionals should possess:

- Advising & helping
- Assessment, evaluation, & research
- Ethics
- Leadership & administration/management
- Legal foundations
- Pluralism & inclusion
- Student learning & development
- Teaching

Palmer (1995) suggested that the expectations for new professionals in just one college student development functional area—residence life, is so broad that it is unlikely that any one person could possess them all.

Conspicuous by its absence, is competency related to helping undergraduate students develop a meaningful sense of personal identity. You will recall that the task of helping students develop a meaningful sense of personal identity was among the list of important tasks for college student development work (Torres, et al., 2003). It may be that we just do not expect new professionals to be involved in these tasks, but experience tells me that new professionals are very involved. New professionals are prominent among residence life staff and student activities and educational programming staff. It is likely new professionals are involved in the task of helping undergraduate students develop a meaningful sense of personal identity as much as anyone.

In my research I compiled the required courses for each of the eight (8) professional preparation programs and found forty-three (43) unique course topics. (I did not simply look at titles—but rather examined course descriptions to determine if the course it represented was
similar to a course with a different name.) I grouped these courses under the following seven categories:

1. Understanding Higher Education—Historic understanding of the rise and development of colleges and universities and an understanding of the organizational structures.
2. Understanding the Profession—Historic origins of the profession and the progression of the theoretical basis for the profession.
3. Understanding Students—Attitudes contemporary students bring with them to the collegiate experience including personal characteristics, socio-economic, geographic, religious, and related characteristics.
4. Professional Skills—Skills needed to successfully enter and perform in the field.
5. Research and Assessment—Ability to read and interpret professional writing and perform basic research and assessment.
6. Experiential Learning—Practical, supervised internship (on the home campus)/externship (on the campus of an affiliated college or university) experiences.
7. Capstone Project—Designed to help the new professional begin to develop a personally meaningful professional identity.

In neither of these lists—the Professional Competencies (Love, et al., 2007) or my own list, gleaned from exemplary programs from across the country, do we find a clear mention of preparation in the area of identity development (though certainly it would be appropriate to include the course or experience in my third category—Understanding Students). Without specific preparation, new professionals will learn about identity development through reading the professional literature (which I have shown to be limited in scope) or by working with practitioners either as a part of a practicum experience while in graduate school or in their first few years of professional service (also often based on misinformation regarding sex and gender identity development.)
Both of these paths to understanding will only reify the prevailing paradigm of sex and gender identity development. This is why an important part of the recommended change must be to address issues of identity development (specifically sex and gender identity development) during the professional preparation program. What specifically do I recommend they learn about identity development?

**What Should Students in Professional Preparation Programs Learn about Sex and Gender Identity?**

The most important lesson professional preparation educators should teach their students is that there is a difference between the concepts of sex and gender. Regardless of the path that the professional conversation takes, or the language that is embraced to characterize these concepts, an individual’s physical characteristics and their psychological characteristics are two related, yet unique constructs. In our conversation, our research, and our practice we must acknowledge, and perhaps struggle with, the difference between these two constructs. If students in professional preparation programs could learn only one thing, this would be it. From this beginning, all other important lessons will follow.

A second lesson professional preparation educators should teach their students about is the problem of binary thinking—especially as it relates to sex and gender. Individuals should not be characterized as either one or the other—as either male or female; or as either feminine or masculine. Educators should teach their students that sex or gender identity cannot be so easily categorized—there are, in fact, multiple sex identities and multiple gender identities which really defy definition except, perhaps in the mind of each individual.

A third lesson professional preparation educators should teach their students is that identity generally, and sex and gender identity specifically, are not pre-existing conditions that are established at the moment of conception or birth, waiting to be discovered by the individual at some time in their development. Sex identity and gender identity are defined and redefined over a lifetime and involve many facets of the individual, made more complex by the impact of the
intersection of those many facets. When one announces, “I know who I am!” What they are really saying is, “I have some useful sense of who I am for this moment.”

A fourth lesson professional preparation educators should teach their students is that sex does not determine gender—that identifying, for example, as male does not mean that one must then be masculine. To expect that sex determines gender is to fail to allow for the numerous (perhaps infinite) identities that are available to human beings. Failure to understand this concept will result in interactions with students that will serve to constrict their identity options, perhaps causing them to inappropriately or unnecessarily question or reject a currently personally meaningful sense of identity.

A fifth lesson professional preparation educators should teach their students is that while we may be able to point to what might appear to be differences between sexes, there does not exist an essential difference that clearly, and in all cases, differentiates individuals by the category of sex. Without evidence of this clear difference, we should not set up artificially created expectations for individuals based on this category.

These fundamental understandings delivered by educators to students in professional preparation programs should form the basis for practice as new professionals enter the profession. Their awareness, together with newly embraced understandings concerning sex and gender identity development among seasoned practitioners and the new lens for scholars and theorists have the potential to bring about the paradigm shift needed to move our profession forward in these essential areas of student identity development.
Chapter Five—Conclusions and Discussion

This work is intended to bridge a perceived gap in understanding of issues of sex and gender identity between the field of college student development and the collective fields of women’s studies, gender studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology and other related fields. By definition, a bridge stands between two positions. It is a connecting, transitional or intermediate route or phase between two adjacent elements, activities, conditions, or the like (Dictionary.com, 2014). A bridge requires at least two sides. The bridge is neither one side nor the other—it links two sides. Sometimes a bridge provides access from one side of a stream or river to the other side—a relatively minor structure—perhaps little more than a convenience for travelers. At other times a bridge crosses a large body of water or a deep valley, in some cases the only thing that makes traveling from one point to another possible. A bridge is intended to link the two sides or two positions—to bring them together. Just as a bridge can bring two or more communities together physically, a bridge can also bring two communities together intellectually.

The bridge itself, while certainly connected to both positions is not, in itself, a position. Those who have tried to build a bridge between these two positions have historically been challenged professionally and often personally. “You don’t understand our position!—you misrepresent us!” shout folks from both communities to the would-be bridge-builder. The bridge builder responds, “I know I do not fully understand your position, but there are folks on the other side of this chasm who have interests similar to yours who could benefit from meeting and talking with you. All I want to do is get the two of you together!” Please, dear reader, understand that I am not suggesting that I am expert on either side of the issues raised in this paper—but I do know how to recognize a problem when I see it and I am, at least arguably, an expert on solving problems.

As a life-long student development professional I journeyed across the chasm and met folks on the other side. In the language presented in the Model of the Student Development Knowledge Community, I stepped out of my own professional knowledge community into other
knowledge communities. What I found was that those in other knowledge communities have a great deal of understanding to add to our work with college students—especially as we seek to help students develop a meaningful sense of personal identity. I know I have written critically about what we, as a profession, do not understand about sex and gender identity. I did not do this to simply criticize, but rather to raise our awareness of the significant lack of understanding around these issues. I have tried to learn the language of our colleagues in women’s studies, gender studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology and others so I could begin to interpret these alternative perspectives for our field. If I have succeeded in building a good bridge, the real work can begin as we begin to apply new perspectives to our ongoing research efforts.

To my new professional friends, I acknowledge that I am not the best person to represent your understandings. To say that sex and gender identity issues are complex is a gross understatement. I pushed myself intellectually to try to understand the outer edges of your ideas concerning sex and gender identity and found myself woefully inadequate for that task. But I found areas where many of your most fundamental ideas seemed to be beyond the knowledge base in the field of college student development. I retreated to those points because I believe it is there that the conversations between our communities can begin. The bridge I have tried to build extends only to the edge of your knowledge community—it will be left to each individual scholar and our collective scholarly communities to move further into the more comprehensive understanding of sex and gender identity issues that you can offer.

I ask you to kindly forgive that I do not (indeed, cannot) address all of the issues you have been struggling with for decades and that you appreciate my efforts to introduce you to other professionals who share interests in your work and can benefit greatly by entering into conversations with you. More sophisticated understanding of sex and gender identity issues available from your fields of women’s studies, gender studies, psychology, sociology, and other related fields have either eluded us or we have simply ignored your important work.
I am not really sure how this happened, but it clearly did. In chapter two I noted that scholars in the field of college student development failed (and continue to fail) us in three very specific ways. First, we failed to define terms used in our research. This failure was often the result of making the assumption that the terms used are so commonly and broadly understood that definitions were not necessary. Everyone knows what we mean when we write or speak about sex or gender—Nardi (2006) refers to this as “everyday thinking.” The characteristics of everyday thinking and inquiry include: 1) biased questions, 2) limited sampling, 3) selective attention, perception, and retention, and 4) inaccurate generalizations (Nardi, 2006.)

All of these characteristics are evidenced in much of the research on sex and gender identity development in the field of college student development. While scholars across our campuses in other fields were struggling with greater complexities of sex and gender identity development, we in college student development were ignoring those fundamental issues. Secondly, most likely because of the first failure, scholars did not try to operationalize their terms. If we assume that everyone knows what we mean by sex and gender, there is really no reason to describe just how we intend to measure them. These failures, ubiquitous in the field of college student development, have resulted in a generation of research that has misinformed our thinking, practice, and agenda in the area of sex and gender identity development.

A third phenomenon that impacted our thinking concerning sex and gender identity was the inappropriate use of qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research methodology is valuable for gaining deeper insight into the subjects of the research but, while it can inform our understanding and provide insights for additional research, it is not appropriate to use qualitative methods to generalize from a sample to the population. Scholars using qualitative research methodologies often inappropriately pushed their results to generalizations about the broader population.
The Challenge of the Language of Certainty

There are a number of issues that I wish we would address as we seek to move our understanding of identity development forward. I wish scholars would simply refuse to use language of certainty in their books and article titles when they use modifiers extensively throughout their work. Gilligan’s (1982) *In a different voice*, Belenky, Clinchey, Goldberger, and Tarule’s (1986) *Women’s ways of knowing*, Caplan, et al’s (1997), *Gender differences in human cognition*, Gray’s (2004), *Men are from mars, women are from venus*, and Moir & Moir’s (1999) *Why men don’t iron: The fascinating and unalterable differences between men & women* are just a few examples of the hundreds of titles ranging from scholarly work to popular writing in which the language of certainty is employed in the title, while the prose which follows is strewn with modifying language that clearly suggests that not all female voices are different, not all women know in the same ways, not all men think in ways that are unique from all women, that not all men are from Mars nor are all women from Venus, and that differences between men and women are not truly unalterable and definite.

I know that the language of certainty is preferable for titles of books and articles but somehow it is the titles that communicate clear and irrefutable differences between women and men that seem to stick in our minds and all the care in the world employed to be more accurate with language throughout the book or article just seems to be lost in the reading. If people were not struggling with issues of identity—especially sex and gender identities I would say, “OK, this is not really an issue. Draw me into your work with a catchy title and leave it to me to be sophisticated enough to closely read and understand the more nuanced presentation of the issues presented in the book or article.” But we do struggle with issues of sex and gender identities—as a culture and individually. Please stop the headlines and sound bites that suggest there are clear, definitive differences between men and women unless you are prepared to support that position in your book or article.
Changes Worthy of Consideration by College Student Development Professionals

I wish scholars would stop using data gathered using qualitative research methods to
generalize to a population. There are strict guidelines regarding sampling and statistical analysis
that facilitate generalizing from a sample to a population in quantitative research that do not apply
to qualitative research methodology so please stop doing that. If you want to learn something
about a population—say college women, do the work of identifying an appropriate sample that is
representative of the population and employ all the rigors of scientific research that are
appropriate for trying to understand a population by examining a sample.

I wish scholars would stop comparing the results of two separate studies as if that is
instructive—especially if there is no effort to replicate the conditions in the first study. If, for
example, you want to examine differences between males and females, you must have both males
and females in your sample.

I wish scholars would stop conflating terms—Conflation is defined as the process or
result of fusing two items into one entity (Dictionary.com, 2014). In the field of college student
development we have taken two terms, sex and gender, that should represent two unique, even if
closely related concepts, and conflated them. Research that does not clearly indicate an
understanding of sex and gender as two unique concepts should be reviewed with caution.

I wish scholars would be more careful to operationalize terms—Nardi (2006) defines
operationalization as the process of specifying just how defined variables are to be measured. In
this case, operationalization would require describing how sex as a variable or gender as a
variable is to be determined. The conflation of terms that is common in sex and gender identity
development research in the field of college student personnel is perhaps one reason why
researchers have not paid much attention to operationalization of terms—we simply think of sex
and gender—as we have seen, very complex concepts, in overly simple terms. When we do not
carefully operationalize concepts we fall into what Nardi (2006) calls “errors of everyday
thinking” (p. 50). Surely we all know what sex and gender are—my research suggests we do not.
I wish scholars would choose their research methodology much more carefully. If your desire is to gain a deeper understanding of the nuance of a particular phenomenon, qualitative research methodology is a good choice, but if you want to be able to identify characteristics that can be generalized from a sample to a population, quantitative research methodology, with its more structured, scientific approach is required. Too much of what we think we know about sex and gender identity development has come from qualitative research methodology that was pushed into inappropriate and untested generalizations. Interviewing a dozen or so men about their personal experiences with trying to gain an understanding of their own personally meaningful identity development may yield rich knowledge of their individual challenges and may even provide themes that are common to many, if not all, of the individuals in the sample and those insights might be useful for us to consider as we seek to understand sex and gender identity development, but it does not allow us to say we know much about the population of men. We must stop reporting it like it does.

I wish scholars would stop approaching sex and gender identity from an essentialist perspective. There is no evidence that there is somewhere in each individual an essence that, provided an environment that does not squelch it, will be uncovered, discovered, or revealed. This belief also suggests that each sex or gender possesses an essence that sets them apart from other sexes or genders. No one has yet found a characteristic that is only found in one sex or gender and not in any of the others. Until there is empirical proof of an essential characteristic, we must stop speaking of differences we might find in our research as definitive.

I wish scholars would re-examine and reject the notion of determinism as it relates to sex and gender identity development. The belief that having some understanding of one’s sex identity determines their gender identity is not proven. It is this determinism that severely restricts identity options that should be available to each individual. While all components of identity likely inform and reform all others, there is no empirical evidence that one component of identity determines
another. Let’s allow identity development to unfold for each individual without the artificial restrictions we have imposed historically.

I wish scholars would embrace the idea of multiple identities. Scholars must move forward with the understanding that components of identity such as sex, gender, race, economic status, etc. intersect with each other creating a very complex construction of identity. As has been done in this present work, this complex construction may be deconstructed for a moment for the purpose of closer examination of a particular component of identity, but that should always be done in the context of understanding the power of intersecting identities.

The understanding that there is only one set of definable identity such as a male identity or a feminine identity indicates a lack of a more contemporary and sophisticated approach to identity. Due to the inherent complexities of human beings we must allow that there are multiple gender identities and multiple sex identities. Theoretically there are an infinite number of identities—practically, there are at least more that we might name. If, in our research, we feel a need to identify a finite number of identities, we should at least acknowledge that we have artificially limited the number only for the purposes of our research.

I wish scholars would consider the possibility of all characteristics being human characteristics. In research in the field of college student development we have been so determined to divide and define characteristics into female or male characteristics that we have failed to recognize that any characteristics that might be associated with any human being would be better described as a human characteristic and available to any human being regardless of any artificially created construct like sex or gender. To be able to describe any human characteristic as being an attribute of only one subset of human beings, we must be able to prove that that characteristic is not present in any other. Scholars have not yet found a characteristic entirely unique to any definable subset of humans.

All characteristics that have been traditionally described as feminine or masculine are potentially present in all humans. Rather than trying to divide these characteristics by sex or
gender and then use them to try to determine which sex is the most valuable, it would be far more useful if we worked to determine which human characteristics are most valuable to humanity and seek to cultivate those characteristics in all people.

I wish scholars would embrace the idea of the uniqueness of each individual. Scholars and researchers may have to create artificial categories for the sake of a useful research design—practitioners do not! Practitioners have the luxury of addressing each individual as an entirely unique person. William Perry, one of the primary theorists in the field of college student development, and one reviewed in this work, famously said that theory doesn’t matter when we are sitting across the desk from a student in our office. I think what he meant was that theory is useful and interesting, but the most important thing is to listen carefully to each student and respond to their unique situation the best way we can.

I wish scholars would watch for the language of certainty that is always modified later in reports, books, journal articles and presentations. The title suggests absolutes that are not supported by the research. Watch for the modifiers I have identified—tend to, generally, often, usually, etc. and, as a scholar, be careful to not overstate your results.

**Language Matters**

We must learn to use more precise language in our scholarship and practice. Just as we learned to interchange pronouns (he/she, him/her) to be more inclusive in our language and are currently working to create and learn new pronouns that more accurately describe individual lives, we must work to use more precise language in our scholarship and practice. It is not that there is an activity that women like more than men (or, in the current language of scholars and practitioners, “that women tend to like.”) It is not that there are attitudes or life experiences that men have; or jobs or careers that are more attractive to men or more appropriate for them. This popular division of the human experience into female and male categories may be the best that the everyday person can do, but for those who think more carefully about these issues—
especially those who purport to help college students develop a meaningful sense of personal identity, it is simply unacceptable—we must do better.

We could more accurately say, “These are activities that have been found to be more attractive to individuals who embrace more traditionally feminine characteristics or more traditionally masculine characteristics; that these are attitudes we have found to be held by individuals who hold more traditionally masculine perspectives or traditionally feminine perspectives.” We might say, “These are life experiences that are more common to individuals that have more traditionally masculine or more traditionally feminine characteristics.” This language is admittedly more cumbersome than we are used to using, but if we have found it to be more accurate in describing the human experience, it is worth the bother. Just as we have learned to use inclusive pronouns in our language we can learn to acknowledge the fundamental difference between an individual’s sex and gender identity.

I have been told that language does not really matter—I disagree. Language not only is necessary to convey our thoughts to others, it is also necessary to create and inform our thoughts. The greater our vocabulary; the more words we have at our disposal, the more precisely we can expand and communicate our thoughts. Earlier I have shown that scholars and practitioners in the field of college student development routinely conflate terms like sex and gender in spite of highly regarded scholarship that calls for an end to this practice. We must be more careful with our language.

There are two phrases I learned about in the past few years that have been used to characterize individuals. One was used in a scholarly work: “Only a boy with girl parts…” (Skaggs, 2010), was used to describe females who chose to pursue engineering as a major in college. “You’re a gay man in a straight body” was used to describe a friend who was kind, sensitive, considerate and heterosexual. While these two phrases may be cute, interesting, and in some ways even informative—and informative in that many would understand what they mean)—they
are also certainly problematic if applied to young adults who are struggling to develop a meaningful sense of personal identity.

I, as a sixty-plus year old, with a pretty well developed sense of personal identity, may understand these types of characterizations and may even smile if they were used to describe me. I know what is being communicated and I know where it fits (or does not fit) in my own personal sense of identity. The fifty-some year old faculty member who was characterized as a “gay man in a straight body,” likely understood what the woman meant when she said it and was likely able to place this description in an appropriate place in his mind. Indeed, when he shared this story with me, I believe I understood what was meant. He is a kind man—a gentle man; one who is sensitive to those who are around him. He does not care for sports, enjoys relationships with others and good conversation—all positive human characteristics that have been stereotypically linked to gay men and not to hegemonic masculinity. This language may be acceptable to him, but to a late adolescent college student, this language could be very challenging as he seeks to develop a personally meaningful sense of identity.

These are just two examples of the inadequacy of language in our society. In my generation we had perhaps less disparaging language—a girl who liked to do things that were generally thought of as things boys liked to do was called a “Tomboy”; a boy who did not enjoy physical activity as much as most boys or perhaps was not as boisterous as most boys was called a “Sissy” or a “Momma’s boy.” Neither of these characterizations evoked images of the child’s physiology or their sexuality. Though for a boy, being called a Sissy perhaps carried with greater stigma than for a girl being called a Tomboy, neither was considered particularly derogatory. I wonder though, how a girl or young woman who is working to fashion a personally meaningful sense of identity, would feel about being told she was a “boy with girl parts” because she was interested in science, technology, engineering or math? It seems to me she might get the idea that there is something seriously wrong with her—am I a boy or am I a girl? Or, what of the boy or young man who is kind, perhaps reserved, sensitive and considerate of others? What if, as he is
negotiating a personally meaningful sense of identity, he discovers that older men who are like him are thought of as “gay men in a straight body?” It seems it would be easy for this person to assume that he cannot be the person he is most comfortable with being unless he is gay.

In both of these examples, the language we use tends to limit identity options. And the language we use is directly connected to our flawed understanding of the issues outlined in this paper. Both of these examples suggest that one’s sex (biological construction) should determine their gender (psycho-social construction) which, in turn, should determine their sexuality. In the first example, if a girl likes math, science, technology, she must really be a boy (have boy parts) which, by inference, suggests potential limitations regarding her sexuality. In the second example, if a boy is sensitive, considerate, caring, less interested in physical activities, he must be gay. He is “a gay man in a straight body” our language suggests. Each aspect of his sex and gender identity is defined by sexuality. Language matters. We must find better ways to describe human beings. We can begin by understanding that sex and gender are two separate components of one’s identity.

Recently, while sitting on our porch one evening discussing my research with my wife, she asked me what I hope to achieve as a result of all this work. I think that is a question that should be answered in a conclusion. This effort has been a long and challenging—but invaluable experience for me and my family. My wife, each of our three daughters and their husbands have all walked with me as I pursued this quest for a deeper understanding of how people—particularly traditionally-aged college students move toward a personally meaningful sense of identity—who they are, and who they are becoming. Once, while discussing our work with college students, a friend said, “It is in helping them [students] write their story that you finish your own story.” I have found this to be true. In a very real sense, what I have been doing during these past few years is trying to find a way to help my students, my wife, my grandchildren, write their stories without being so burdened by inappropriate social challenges, misinformation and misunderstanding. I wanted to make the world in which they have to move toward a personally
meaningful sense of identity, more gentle, more understanding and tolerant. I have found that in trying to do that for them, I have done it for myself too.

It has been through listening to and hearing the stories of others that my own story has been formed, reformed, and formed again and again. I am not the same person I was when I began—and happily I can say that because of this experience, I look forward to new personally meaningful identities that lie ahead for me.

So what do I hope will come about as a result of my work? I hope that people everywhere, but especially college students, will experience greater freedom to pursue identities that are most valued and valuable to them. I hope that people will feel more free to pursue and develop all *human characteristics* that are most important and meaningful to them. I hope that more people will find the freedom to be themselves, however and whatever they understand that to be.

Several years ago some of my friends in women’s studies challenged my work, suggesting that I was reifying artificial categories like sex and gender and that what was really needed was the elimination of these categories. I did not understand that perspective then, but I think I do now. I think that the scholarly road I have travelled and described in this work will help others move toward this understanding as well. To simply say, “Stop thinking like that and start thinking like this!” is not particularly helpful. I hope I have cleared a path forward.

First, eliminate some of the obviously restrictive and not particularly valuable borders. I began by challenging the binary thinking of sex and gender identity as female *or* male and masculine *or* feminine—reminding all that there are other identity options beyond just these two. I followed that with challenging the notion that sex identity *determines* gender identity—that identifying as male, for example, means that I must identify as masculine. Then I challenged the idea that one’s identity exists somewhere within us—awaiting discovery. I gathered together other ideas that, taken together, challenged the prevailing paradigm within which the field of college student development has been operating—especially in our understanding of sex and
gender identity development. None of these ideas were original with me, but I believe that the way I have organized and presented them will help others understand them and challenge us to change.

So, my hope generally is that this work will help each individual experience more freedom in the pursuit of a personally meaningful sense of identity. One of my early advisors asked, “So you want to say that each individual should be understood as totally unique?” I thought for a moment before I realized that that was exactly what I wanted to say.

It may not be efficient from a program planning perspective to think of each individual as unique, and it may be much more difficult to work with students when we cannot put a number of them together in the same identity box; and designing a research methodology around that idea may be close to impossible, but that is exactly what I wanted to do. There is only one you, and the world desperately needs you to be you!

For too long we have insisted on dividing human characteristics along what we now know have been artificially defined variables. Aggression is a male characteristic—caring a female one. We discovered that this sort of differentiating led to value judgments—is caring somehow more useful than aggression? We could not simply list these various characteristics—we insisted on trying to determine which ones were the better ones. Historically, the better ones were defined as the ones exhibited most often by males, which resulted in females being viewed as inferior. Early research in the field of college student development using predominantly white male samples, assumed that characteristics discovered were the norm for all human beings—the white male experience was the norm and anyone who possessed and exhibited characteristics that were not consistent with this norm were considered abnormal. Women struggled beneath this burden for many years until scholars began to examine the characteristics of female samples, many of which were found to be different from those of the male samples. As Belenky, et al. (1986) pointed out, “Developmental theory has established men’s experience and competence as a baseline against which both men’s and women’s development is then judged, often to the
detriment or misreading of women” (p. 7). I would add that this “men’s experience,” described in early developmental theory did not represent all men either, often to the detriment or misreading of some men too. And thus it began—men and women are different, therefore one must be better than the other. And we have argued for decades about which sex is the better sex as if someone had actually proved that any of these human characteristics were exclusively the domain of one sex (no one has ever done so).

I would like for us to agree that any human characteristic is available to all human beings. Rather than continuing to separate human characteristics by what we have come to understand as artificially created variables, why don’t we seek to identify the human characteristics that are the most valuable to our society and encourage the adoption and development of those characteristics in all human beings. Each person could be celebrated for exhibiting those characteristics most valued by our society and not those characteristics that are the right ones for their sex.

A second goal that grew out of this research was to find a way to change the paradigm for doing identity work in the field of college student development. To affect change of this magnitude is a huge challenge and I certainly do not think that I can do this on my own, but I do want to be part of the effort to do so. I believe the model I have proposed to reach out to three specific groups, researchers and scholars, practitioners, and educators and their students in professional preparation programs is essential to bring about the change that is needed.

When my dissertation chair suggested that I pursue the Ed.D. rather than the Ph.D., I resisted, but upon reflection, agreed that the practical approach of an Ed.D. project rather than the theoretical approach of the Ph.D. project held the greater potential for having a broad impact on the field. Because, as a profession, we have the tremendous opportunity to impact the lives of tens of thousands of college students every year, and because we, as a profession espouse the goal of helping college students develop a personally meaningful sense of identity, we must get this right! By speaking to theorists, practitioners, educators and their students through the practical
applications offered in chapter four, I hope to significantly shorten the time it usually takes to move from theory to practice.

Throughout the work on this project there has been one significant disappointment. I was very excited to have grown professionally into an area research interest that was important enough to drive me through the challenges every scholar faces. It meant something to me both personally and professionally. The more I read, the more convinced I became that the development of a meaningful sense of personal identity—especially as impacted by sex and gender identity, warranted more attention. I also became convinced that my own life experience and my scholarly interests intersected in a very special way. Indeed, this work became an important part of my own “meaningful sense of personal identity.”

I admit that I am one who loves to learn for the sake of learning guy. I am, perhaps, even romantic in the way I approached doctoral studies. I came to this experience with pretty specific ideas about what it should be like. Earlier in my life I studied as a part-time doctoral student while working full-time and trying to be a good husband and father. While I loved the classroom and all I was learning there, I never had the sense of being in a community of scholars. I longed for meaningful scholarly, intellectual conversations with my classmates. With all my commitments (and theirs), it just never happened.

This time, I quit my job, accepted a position as a teaching assistant and enjoyed being a scholar for two full years (I had no idea what being a scholar was during my undergraduate years—when I also had time for it.) I was able to finish the coursework during those two years, but most importantly for me, I was able to live in a community of scholars and have significant time to read, think, write, and develop ideas. It was a great time, but realities of life called me back to full-time employment. For the next few years my focus was primarily on the responsibilities of being a campus dean—my scholarly endeavors relegated to my spare time. My family filled in very ably, providing many hours of rich intellectual conversations around my topic.
As I finished my first draft of the first chapters and received a favorable review from my advisory committee, the next steps seemed to me to be relatively simple ones. All I needed to do was identify four or five educational programs aimed at addressing gender issues on college campuses and critique them by applying my newly discovered perspectives on sex and gender identity development. A simple task, I thought. All I needed to do was to reach out to my community of scholars in college student development and ask them to recommend exemplary programs. The only difficult task would be to choose just four or five from among the many I would receive. This brings me to the most significant disappointment. In spite of numerous requests over a period of several months, I received no submissions. One individual responded in a dismissive and defensive way—so much so that upon receiving my response to his message, apologized for his initial response.

It seems that my topic is fraught with challenges both personal and professional. I have found that people either care too deeply about sex and gender identity issues or they do not care at all. This can be a very personal topic and I understood that from the beginning. Nevertheless, I was deeply disappointed by the lack of support from my scholarly community. I hope that once they have the opportunity to read my work, they will be glad that I am one of their own. As scholars we must have the courage to pursue truth as we understand it, wherever it might take us. I have done my best to do that and sincerely hope that in the process I have been able to add value to my scholarly community.

As a young graduate student in the mid 70s I spent the better part of a lunch hour trying to read the inscription across the top of the old library building at Bowling Green State University. It was challenging because ivy had grown around some of the letters but with a little effort I was able to read it. It read something like this: “Read, not to accept and take for granted, nor to refute and contradict, but to weigh and consider.” You have honored me by reading to this point and I am grateful for that. I do not ask that you agree with the perspectives presented in this
paper and I certainly hope that you will not simply discard them—I only ask that you “weigh and consider.” Perhaps together we can make a difference.
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Vita

Steven Ray Wise

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Bowling Green State University  M.A., 1977. College Student Personnel
Bowling Green, Ohio  Under the direction of Dr. Hal Marquardt

Trevecca Nazarene University  B.S., 1975, Psychology
Nashville, Tennessee

Mt. Vernon Nazarene University  A.A., 1972, History
Mt. Vernon, Ohio

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

2014 to present  Dean for Workforce, Technology, and Community
Education, New River Community and Technical
College, Beckley, West Virginia

2011 to 2014  Campus Dean, Mercer County Campus, New River
Community and Technical College, Beckley, West
Virginia

2008 to 2010  Teaching Assistant and Learning Specialist, University
of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky

1999 to 2008  Associate Dean for Residence Life, Asbury College,
Wilmore, Kentucky

1997 to 1998  Educational Development Counselor, University of
Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

1990 to 1997  Life/Education Advisor, University of Michigan, Ann
Arbor, Michigan

1984 to 1990  Academic Advisor, The Ohio State University-Lima
Campus, Lima, Ohio

1986 to 1988  Director of Development, The Ohio State University-Lima
Campus, Lima, Ohio (part-time overload
position)

1987 to 1990  Coordinator of Advising Services, The Ohio State
University-Lima Campus, Lima, Ohio

1977 to 1978  Residence Hall Director, Indiana State University,
Terra Haute, Indiana

1975 to 1977  Assistant to the Director of Student Services and
Residence Hall Director, Mt. Vernon Nazarene
College, Mt. Vernon, Ohio

UNPUBLISHED SCHOLARLY PAPERS

• “No Form of Love is To Be Despised: An Analysis of the Gender Development of Eleanor
Roosevelt.” Paper for EDP 604, Life Span Gender Development, University of Kentucky.

• “Sexual Identity: Expanding the Construct.” Paper for EDP 604, Life Span Gender
Development, University of Kentucky.
• “The Value of Multiple Historic Perspectives.” Paper for EPE 653, History of Higher Education, University of Kentucky.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS and PRESENTATIONS
  o Member, ACPA (College Student Educators International) (2001 to present)
    ▪ Appointed to Directorate, Commission on Assessment for Student Development (2002)
    ▪ Elected, Vice-Chair for Member Services, Commission on Assessment for Student Development (2003)
  o Member, NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) (2009 to 2010)
    ▪ Attended, NASPA Convention, Chicago, IL (2010)
  o Member, College Personnel Administrators Kentucky (1999 to 2008)
  o Member, Association for Christians in Student Development (2000-2008)
  o Member, Kentucky Association of Housing Officers (2001 to 2008)