

PATHWAYS: AN EXPLORATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING SCHOLARSHIP
AMONG STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS

by

GINNY MARVETTA JONES

(Under the Direction of Merrily Dunn)

ABSTRACT

Scholars in the field have asserted that the inclination to produce and engage scholarship is low among student affairs practitioners. However, very little is known about what the levels of scholarship engagement in student affairs actually are or what may be contributing to the perceived scantiness of scholarship activities among student affairs practitioners. Using a constructivist paradigm, the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, and Boyer's model of scholarship, this manuscript style dissertation explored 22 student affairs practitioners' graduate preparation and career experiences with scholarship. The purpose of that exploration was to discern what knowledge and skills practitioners might need to engage scholarship in their work and what support systems were necessary to their success in doing so. This exploration was focused on three distinct groups: (a) master's-level practitioners, (b) doctoral-level practitioners, and (c) scholar-practitioners. Each group was studied independently and a corresponding manuscript for each study comprises the study's purpose, design, and results. Additionally, a meta-synthesis of the three studies was conducted to look at the data and findings across each manuscript.

The findings revealed several important implications for student affairs practitioners, supervisors, and graduate preparation programs. The findings suggest that, contrary to previous writings on this topic, practitioners may be engaging in scholarship, in various ways, as a part of their practice. Whether or not practitioners perceived scholarship was supported within their communities of practice had a significant impact on their engagement with it. However, there were factors that mediated the effects of communities of practice in which scholarship was not supported such as mentoring relationships and intrinsic motivation. Other findings in this dissertation support previous literature in support of collaboration and critical discourse between graduate preparation program faculty and practitioners.

INDEX WORDS: Student affairs, Boyer, Scholarship, Constructivist, Symbolic Interaction, Communities of practice, Manuscript style, Graduate Preparation, Practitioners, Research, Teaching, Application, Integration

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to three very special women in my life: Marion B. Webb, Barbara C. Jones, and Netrice A. Thompson. It is because of each of you, for various different reasons, I sought after and accomplished this great task. Thank you for inspiring me, believing in me, and providing reasons for me to take advantage of the opportunities available to me. I love you all beyond the boundaries of words.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Literature Review

This qualitative dissertation explored factors associated with student affairs practitioners' involvement in scholarship. Several scholars in the field have written on this topic before, but little in-depth inquiry has been conducted to provide answers to the questions they have raised. This dissertation written in the manuscript-style, comprises multiple scholarly articles in the form of manuscripts as its chapters. It differs from more traditional dissertation formats in style but not content. Whereas traditional dissertation formatting is structured with each chapter containing the following specific foci: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and implications; this dissertation folds those elements into each manuscript as they connect to the area of inquiry presented in it. Each manuscript contributes, in its own way, to the broader conversation on scholarship among practitioners in the field of student affairs. An additional manuscript connecting the three groups of participant data explored serves as a bridge in the knowledge gained in the research conducted with each group. In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview about the background and context of these studies, discuss the problem, purpose, and research questions guiding these studies, and give a broad overview of the research design. I also detail my personal connections to this topic and their potential influence on the research, explain the conceptual framework that guided this research, and introduce key ideas and terminology used throughout the dissertation.

Background and Context

The beginning of student affairs in United States higher education can be traced back to the introduction of Deans of Men (Schwartz, 2010) and Deans of Women (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). These two groups came as a result of increased student enrollment, which made it increasingly difficult for faculty to remain in the multi-functional roles of teacher and disciplinarian with students (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001; Schwartz, 2010). The first college administrator hired for the purposes of serving the needs of women college students was Mrs. Marianne Parker Dascom. Dascom served under the title of Lady Principal of the Female Department at Oberlin College starting in 1835 (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). The first college administrator to serve as a dean of men in U.S. higher education was LeBaron Russell Briggs, who was appointed by Harvard president Charles Eliot in 1890 (Schwartz, 2010). Briggs was the first of many personnel workers who came after him known as deans of men. Schwartz (2010) explained, "...the early deans of men saw their role as both disciplinarian and absentee father to the young men on their campuses" (p. 4). Shortly after the establishment of deans of men came deans of women. Although women had been serving in administrative capacities at universities since 1835, the first woman to serve as a dean of women did not occur until 1892 (Nidiffer and Bashaw, 2001). Deans of women addressed the developmental, social, and disciplinary needs of female college students (Solomon, 1985). Each group, deans of men and women, saw robust growth in their professions and included the establishment of professional organizations to serve those working in the field (Nidiffer and Bashaw, 2001; Schwartz, 2010). However, the turn of the 20th century saw a shift away from the dean of men/women model, which was more geared toward discipline and management.

The focus on discipline and management in student affairs work shifted to one of guidance, which gave rise to the personnel worker. It was also around that time documents about what it means to work in the field began to emerge, such as both *Student Personnel Point of View* (SPPV) statements (American Council on Education [ACE], 1937 & 1949). These documents articulated the purpose of student personnel work as focusing, holistically, on the life of the student by supporting the academic mission through vocational and social guidance. Much of the theory undergirding the field at this time was borrowed from psychology and sociology (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001). As more and more personnel workers engaged in guidance work, the unique developmental needs of students began to become a focus of concern.

The 1970s saw increased concentration on college students' developmental needs. Personnel workers were expected to become student development specialists by designing and implementing programs and interventions to promote developmental growth in students (Sandeem & Barr, 2006). These programs and interventions were to be based on a multitude of developmental theories relevant to college students. For the first time, developmental theories specific to student affairs began to emerge, primarily with Chickering's (1969) work in *Education and Identity*, which he later updated with Reisser as a result of numerous studies initiated by his original model (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Other documents published at the time reflect this shift in focus as well. Brown's (1972) critical monograph *Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education: A Return to the Academy* challenged the way students were being supported in the academy. He argued that the purpose of higher education was to train students not only in the cognitive domain but also the affective domain. His thoughts were further developed and expounded on in a document released by the American of College

Personnel Association (ACPA) titled *A Student Development Model for Student Affairs in Tomorrow's Education* (American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1975) that outlined a model for student development in higher education.

Though some debate remains about the categorization of the different families of student development theories, they can be grouped in this way: psychosocial theories, which address intra- and interpersonal developmental needs as well as theories of specific social identities (e.g., race, socioeconomic, sexuality, gender); cognitive-developmental theories, which address students' meaning making; and environmental constructs, which address the contextual influences affecting student development and growth (Evans, et al., 2010). Many of the theories are a result of original research and ideas specific to college students. Student development theory continues to be a growing body of literature, all of which is intended to help practitioners describe, explain, predict, and control student behavior (McEwen, 2003). Yet, as inquiry into the natures and lives of students became more complex and deep, student learning became an added area of focus in the field.

In the late 1900s, nearly a century after the field emerged, student learning surfaced as a prioritized focus of the field (Love & Estanek, 2004). Out-of-classroom learning was highlighted as an area of extreme benefit to students, and student affairs practitioners were urged to focus on ways to improve this learning. Practitioners began to think of themselves as not only supporting the academic enterprise but also as active contributors to it. The shift was not completely away from development, but now included a learning component as well. Also, during this time student affairs was struggling to define itself as a profession (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001). Ever changing foci—from personnel services, to student development, and then student learning—made it difficult to define the boundaries of the profession. Student

affairs began to articulate its place in the role of student learning, partially in a search for legitimacy and to prove its worth. This articulation was begun by the Wingspread Group in Higher Education (1993) who authored a document initiating a national conversation among student affairs practitioners on their role in student learning. Though not directly related to student affairs, the outrage expressed by this group over the lack of educational gains made by college graduates sparked a learning reform movement in student affairs. One particular document by Boland, Stamatakis, and Rogers (1994) argued against student development as a focus for student affairs. Their rationale, in part, was that student development theory was not viable as a focus because it was too difficult to translate into practice and many of the theories were methodologically flawed. With a more holistic response to the Wingspread Group document, ACPA released its own, *The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs* (1994), which outlined what the organization believed to be the purpose of student affairs. Student affairs' practitioners need not only be concerned with providing sound services for students and focusing on their development, but also on learning, they argued. They went on to suggest student affairs divisions demonstrate their commitment to learning by allocating resources to meet that goal, while also acknowledging a focus on student learning could not be adequately achieved without collaborative efforts from student and academic affairs and faculty.

The field of student affairs has continued to evolve in a quest to define its role in the lives of students. A close examination of student affairs documents reveals the focus of student affairs has always been to benefit the whole student (ACE, 1937). The most recent focus of the field has been on student learning and collaboration across the academy. *The Student Learning Imperative* (1994) set in motion a series of documents, conversations, and colloquia on the role of student affairs in the learning process. It spawned a movement that highlighted the

importance of a seamless learning environment that could be achieved only through collaboration between student and academic affairs (American Association for Higher Education, ACPA, & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1998). The original *Learning Reconsidered* (2004) and its follow up, *Learning Reconsidered 2* (2006), introduced a focus on transformative learning in student affairs work and offered ways to put systems in place to achieve that focus. These documents suggested a focus on student learning involves not only students' cognitive development but also their development as holistic learners.

Each focus of the field, student personnel, student development, student learning, is interdependent and necessary. If student affairs practitioners are going to work with students in an intentional way (Winston et al., 2001), they need to have theories that help us focus that work. Winston et al. (2001) articulated it best when they suggested good student affairs practitioners are educators, leaders, *and* managers. Practitioners need to engage in best practices focusing on student services, development, and learning while using the best tools available to them to do so (e.g., theory and research) or producing those tools when there is a gap. The size, complexity, and structure of higher education institutions, in addition to higher demands for accountability, necessitate scholarship in practice.

At the beginning of the new millennium, several scholars and practitioners came together to critically evaluate the role of scholarship in student affairs, in part, to address the gap between the espoused and enacted value of scholarship in practice. Two of the leading journals in the field, the *NASPA Journal* and the *Journal of College Student Development* (JCSJ), printed special issues devoted to this topic. The first issue of the *JCSJ*'s 42nd volume in 2001 was the result of a series of conference papers presented by *Senior Scholars* during the 2001 ACPA convention (Blimling, 2001). Senior Scholars is an ACPA program that comprises 12 senior

members of the profession, full professors or chief student affairs officers, who advocate for the integration of scholarship into practice (ACPA, 2012). In the following year, the *NASPA Journal* continued the conversation on scholarship in student affairs practice (Roper, 2002). Six student affairs scholars were invited to write articles about traditional and foundational or emerging scholarship within the field.

Defining Scholarship in Student Affairs

There continues to be a lack of consensus on what scholarship in student affairs entails. Manning talked about scholarship being the result of “insight, original thought, and creativity” (Jablonski et al., 2006, p. 190). Carpenter (2001) suggested scholarship in practice must also pay attention to regeneration—teaching, publishing, editing, mentoring, supervising, and supporting colleagues. Scholarship in the field has also been argued to not be a static concept but one that exists on a continuum. For Schroeder and Pike (2001) that continuum moved from a basic understanding of theory and research about college students to an ability to bridge bodies of literature on student characteristics, student development, and college effects; contribution to knowledge by conducting research and disseminating results; and use of cognitive complexity to integrate knowledge into practice. Manning (Jablonski et al., 2006) also offered a scholar/practitioner continuum that moves from *pure scholars* to *pure practitioners*. Pure scholars, she argued are those who were contributing to the larger profession through articles, original research, and other activities but not engaged in the everyday practice of student affairs. Conversely, pure practitioners are those who find little value in scholarship in their practice. The middle of her continuum includes the scholar/practitioner, practitioner/scholar, and the practitioner. Her inclusion of both practitioner and pure practitioner was to draw the distinction between those whose main focus is on practice with intermittent focus of aspects of scholarship,

the practitioner, and those whose sole focus is practice with little to no interest in scholarship, the pure practitioner. Carpenter (2001) who did not delineate degrees of scholarship, argued a practitioner who engages scholarship is intentional, engaged in theory and data-based practice, open to peer review, tolerant of differing perspectives, collaborative, unselfish, and open to change.

Jablonski (2005) asked, “Where is the scholarship in student affairs?” (p. 147). When she wrote this, four years had passed since the *JCSD* and *NASPA Journal* on scholarship had been written and disseminated to the field. Sessions at both the ACPA national convention and NASPA national conference were held to discuss the issue of scholarship in student affairs. Yet, despite the increased focus on scholarship in student affairs early in the millennium, not much had changed as a result. At the time she wrote the article, she observed:

The *NASPA Journal* has no backlog of articles to print. Our online process has allowed us to go from submission to publication in 4 to 6 months. We have also reduced our publication rate from the upper 40 percentile to the mid-20s. We are now waiting for quality manuscripts to arrive. (p. 147)

The argument has been made by several scholars in the field of student affairs that practitioners’ voices need to be more present in the literature. Among those arguments have also been recommendations for how practitioners become more engaged with scholarship. Some literature has suggested synergy of graduate preparation program training, continuing education, and individual effort as necessary aides for practitioners to realize their full potential as scholars (Sriram & Oster, 2012; Schroeder & Pike, 2001). Carpenter and Stimpson (2007) suggested that in order for student affairs practitioners to move away from being narrowly focused on simply serving students and doing their jobs they must become willing to contribute to advancing the

field of student affairs. Their position argued for greater engagement of the practitioner in the broader culture of the field. However, the engagement of practitioners in scholarship continues to be low. Much speculation as to what prevents practitioners from engaging in scholarship has been offered through a delineation of challenges inherent in scholarly work.

Challenges of Scholarly Practice.

Integrating various forms of scholarship into practice is not an easy task. Schroeder and Pike (2001) acknowledged the following constraints and challenges presented to the scholar-practitioner: prevailing mental models, fear, inadequate preparation, lack of clear purpose, motivation, institutional context, individual differences, tyranny of custom, institutional culture, and the tyranny of the immediate. That last challenge, tyranny of the immediate, has been shared by others who have written on the topic. Boyer (1990) suggested that the amount of time and mental investment in engaging in scholarship is great, making it difficult to do. Evans et al. (2010) suggested practitioners might find the work of integrating theory into practice too time consuming in light of competing priorities in their work. They also suggested practitioners who are far removed from the study of student affairs may fail to remember much of the theory or models learned in their graduate programs.

Several models have been developed to aid practitioners' integration of theory and practice, in particular with student development theories (Dickson, Sorochty, & Thayer, 1998; Evans, 1987; Love, 2012; McEwen, 2003; Reason & Kimball, 2013). However, neither are these models exhaustive approaches of how to use theory in practice nor do they address the various forms of scholarship that can be engaged in practice. Past research does not reveal any such models for other areas of scholarship-in-practice use for student affairs. Previous literature of scholarship in practice suggests that if practitioners want to be scholarly, a number of factors

need to be present, such as: personal commitment through investments of their time and mental energies, strong mentoring relationships (Richmond & Sherman, 1991), and an increased understanding of organizational culture (Renn & Hodges, 2007). Failure to remember theories and models coupled with time constraints may lead practitioners to cease any active scholarship after completion of their graduate studies.

This dissertation is designed explore the state of scholarship among different groups of practitioners. In separating the groups of participants chosen for this dissertation, more insight can be highlighted from specific and comparative experiences of the participants. As a result, this dissertation comprises three studies, two of which focus specifically on graduate preparation program experiences in student affairs in conjunction with other influences on practitioner scholarship. The third study explores the experiences of student affairs practitioners who are considered scholars in the field. The three groups of participants are then explored collectively for similarities and differences through a qualitative meta-synthesis method; both individual participant data and themes across the three studies were revisited in order to provide a more comprehensive account of scholarship between and among participants and participant groups.

Problem Statement

Scholars in the field have asserted that the inclination to produce and engage scholarship is low among student affairs practitioners (Jablonski, Mena, Manning, Carpenter, & Siko, 2006). Many of those scholars have offered explanations for the presence of low levels of engagement in scholarship and offered suggestions for addressing the problem. However, despite much argument and speculation on the subject, very little is known about what the levels of scholarship engagement in student affairs actually are or what may be contributing to the perceived scantiness of scholarship activities among student affairs practitioners (Sriram & Oster, 2012).

To gain these insights, research is needed to explore practitioners' experiences with scholarship and their perceptions of factors that have influenced scholarship in their work.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this manuscript-style dissertation is to explore three different groups of practitioners' and their experiences with scholarship and their perceptions of the factors that have influenced scholarship in their work. Anticipating the possibility that factors influencing scholarship can be enmeshed, I separate these studies to provide an opportunity to highlight how three different groups of practitioners experience scholarship and their perceptions of factors that have influenced scholarship in their work. An added goal of these studies is to address questions previously raised by scholars: "What skills and knowledge do practitioners need to develop a scholarship agenda?" and "What support, coaching, and job modifications create environments for practitioners to be successful" (Jablonski et al., 2006, p. 197). To accomplish these purposes, the following research questions guided these studies:

1. What experiences with scholarship do participants who hold master's degrees in the field of student affairs have?
2. What factors do participants who hold master's degrees in the field of student affairs believe influence scholarship in their work?
3. What experiences with scholarship do participants who hold doctoral degrees in the field of student affairs have?
4. What factors do participants who hold doctoral degrees in the field of student affairs believe influence scholarship in their work?
5. What experiences with scholarship do participants who regularly engage in it have?

6. What factors do participants who regularly engage in scholarship perceive to influence its continuation in their work?
7. What are the differences and similarities among and between the three groups of participants explored in each study?

Research Design Overview

I explored factors associated with scholarship through conducting semi-structured interviews with 22 student affairs practitioners. Their interview data were audio-recorded and then transcribed for analysis. In this overview of the research design, I provide a brief description of the theoretical framework used as well as methods, data collection, and analyses that were similar across each individual study. A more detailed description of specific methods is included in each article.

Theoretical Framework

To give theoretical focus to the studies explored in this dissertation, I drew from a combination of macro- and mid-level a priori theories. The macro-level theory that framed each study was *constructivism*. Constructivism suggests that knowledge is socially constructed and suggests the way a person interprets herself and her environment is shaped by the culture in which she lives. According to constructivism, we cannot understand why and how a person does something without first understanding how she makes sense of her world (Crotty, 1998). There are several mid-level theories in the constructivist frame that can be used to give added focus to how data are analyzed. One of those, *symbolic interactionism*, was used to contextualize each study in this dissertation by highlighting participants' relationships to actions, events, and objects and examining the meanings they assigned to them (Prasad, 2005). In symbolic interactionism, the process of assigning meaning is neither an exclusively intrinsic act nor a one-time event. The

process of meaning making is influenced by the social interactions people have in the world and is in constant interpretive revision.

Data Collection

For each study, data were collected using face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Qualitative interviewing allowed me to capture the *voice* of each participant (Patton, 2002). Voice is the process of recording the participants' views and perceptions of their worlds using their own words and terminology. Semi-structured interviews gave me an opportunity to provide a format and focus to the interview while simultaneously allowing participants' some control over the direction of the interview (Prasad, 2005). Interviews conducted through a symbolic interactionist framework "are typically in-depth and meaning-centered" (Prasad, 2005, p. 25), focusing more on "how" participants make meaning of the topic of inquiry as opposed to what is actually happening in their accounts. It is important to note that data that result from qualitative interviewing can never fully represent participants' thoughts and actions. Data that are captured and presented as a part of the qualitative interviewing process are the result of shared meaning making between the researcher and the participant. However imperfect the method in fully capturing the participants' voices, I share the assumption that "the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). This results of this dissertation serves as evidence to support Patton's (2002) claim.

Data Analysis

Stake (1994) described qualitative research as being inherently reflective and involving a process of continuing to revisit the data and codes that emerge from them. Thus, preliminary data analyses occurred simultaneously with data collection in each study. As analysis proceeded, the data that emerged were compared with previous data and used to guide subsequent data

gathering. Once all data had been collected, a coding process, which included breaking down data into categories and concepts and then reassembling it into themes (Charmaz, 2000), was used. In order to address robustness and quality of my results, transcripts were also made available to participants to perform member checks (Merriam, 1998) and triangulation of sources (Patton, 2009) was performed on all data.

The Researcher

Throughout my time in graduate school, I have become acutely aware of the subjective nature of research. This was captured in a humorous phrase I was introduced to a couple of years ago, “research is *me*-search,” meaning we inquire into the nature of things that are connected to us in personal ways. That is certainly true for me. I am as transparent as possible describing what I bring to this research and what prompted a need to add this literature to the field. In doing so, I hope to present the results of this dissertation in the most ethical way.

My story is similar to that of many practitioners in student affairs: I stumbled into the work having no idea of what it was or encompassed. As an ambitious undergraduate student, I became very involved on campus. I was involved in numerous clubs and organizations as well as being a student worker. I also performed well academically. I believe it was my involvement in campus life that helped me excel academically, because it kept me grounded during a tumultuous period in my personal life. My experiences in college ignited my desire to pursue a career in higher education. Unaware there were fields of study specific to this work, I pursued a master’s degree in counseling with plans to work in a college counseling center upon completion. It was during the last year of that program—when I working as a counselor—I became aware of the field of student affairs.

I decided to switch my career focus away from counseling to one that provided more opportunities to engage holistically with students. My first professional position after completing my master's degree was as a Resident Director. As a Resident Director, I was a live-in professional who oversaw the daily operation of a residence hall and also supervised its staff. I was very intentional about training my staff and showing them why the work they engaged in was important. I knew if they valued their work, they would be more invested in their residents and have a more meaningful impact on them. I used different theories from the field of student affairs to guide my work. One group of theories, the environmental family, became a frequent topic in my staff meetings. Theory was a useful tool for helping my staff members understand why details that seem small may have important implications for their work (McEwen, 2003). The following is an example of an exchange I would have often with my staff. "I don't understand why you are making such a big deal out of people using tape on the walls," one of my Resident Assistants (RA) would say to me. "I know, to you, it just seems like tape on the walls. I also know that your residents complain about having to buy poster putty or 3M strips; those things are more expensive and less accessible than tape, but this is more important than tape. Tape pulls the paint off the walls, which is not a big deal when that happens once or twice. However, there are over 300 students living in this residence hall. When they constantly use tape on the walls and pull the paint off, the building starts to look badly and housing costs go up. Our physical surroundings convey what we value. We need to make the statement that we care for this building in which hundreds of students study, live, and work. Environment matters." I would reply, usually accompanied by a resource supporting my claim.

My aim in working with the RA staff was to teach and model for them how to engage *scholarship* in practice by asking them to consider different aspects of scholarship in their work.

I believed good work was informed by awareness and intentionality. Though they were paraprofessionals at the time, I wanted to encourage them to begin thinking about their duty to do good work. I wanted them to understand that good work requires scholarship, a commitment to continued growth, and good practice. I was trying to echo Carpenter's (2001) words, "being a good person or 'good with students' is not enough to be a student affairs professional any more than doctors or lawyers or mechanics are valued for their affability" (p. 311). However, much to my frustration, many of my colleagues were not operating in kind. There was little discussion among the other professionals about student affairs literature and practice.

Since my first professional experience, I have been interested in what compels some practitioners to engage scholarship in their work and practice and others to not. When something does not make sense to me, I am driven to understand it more deeply. As a student affairs practitioner, I consumed a lot of literature connected to the field. As a doctoral student, I have done it in a more systematic way, but I look forward to returning to the field and being able to actualize the knowledge I have consumed and even produced during this time. I am concerned with, what seems to be, a faculty/practitioner divide in student affairs (Jablonski et al., 2006), and I would like to see more engaged scholarship among practitioners. According to Fried (2002) engagement in scholarship by practitioners is rare. She suggested practitioners are disconnected from the field's scholarship, because they are often unaware of research that informs their practice and seldom engage in research about their practice. To date, not much has been offered as to why that disconnect exists, and I would like to find out. This information is important to me, because I want the field to advance in a way that is most beneficial to students. I do not believe that can happen if practitioners are not engaging scholarship, because theirs is the work happening at the ground-level. Their voices need to be heard.

Conceptual Framework

As a result of my literature review, which is introduced here and developed more fully across the manuscripts, coupled with my own experiences and insights, a conceptual framework was developed to design and conduct these studies. This conceptual framework was used to structure the analysis, interpretation, and reporting of all findings. Additionally the conceptual framework is tied to the research questions mentioned previously. The first research question explored for each study sought to determine what participant experiences influenced scholarship in their work. As a result, a conceptual category of “Exposures to Scholarship” was created to capture responses to this question. The second research question explored for each study sought to identify what participants perceived to be factors that influenced scholarship in their work. The conceptual category that emerged to capture responses to this category was “Cultural Behaviors of Scholarship.” The final research question intended to compare and contrast all participants groups for a broader picture of scholarship in the field. Categories of “Preparation” and “Socialization” were formulated to capture responses to that final research question. These conceptual categories were the final result of several iterations of the conceptual framework, which was revised and refined through the course of data collection and analysis.

Explanations of Key Ideas and Terminology

Some of the concepts and terms used in this dissertation may contain multiple definitions or definitions that are not clear to the reader. In order to provide clarity and focus to concepts and terms used throughout the dissertation, the following explain key ideas and terminology.

Student Affairs

Student affairs, also known as student services or student development, is a term used to describe units/divisions within higher education that provide support for students to enhance

their learning, growth, and development (NASPA, 2012). Student affairs' history has been traced back to just before the turn of the 20th century. The first groups of people working in a capacity similar to what has come to be called student affairs were the deans of men and women. The primary roles of these two groups were to provide discipline and developmental guidance to the students under their care (Ndiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Student affairs, however, was not established as a field until a few decades later. The field was initially referred to as student personnel services, as it was a response to a need for human development specialists on campuses to prepare students for work during the World War I and the Great Depression eras (Nuss, 2003). At that time, the main focus of student affairs practitioners was vocational guidance. As higher education evolved and student demographics changed, the field progressed as well. Student affairs became a field whose focus encompassed student learning outside the classroom as well as students' academic and psychosocial growth and development throughout their college careers. Today the field includes, but is not limited to, the following: enhancing student learning, guiding academic and career decisions, mentoring students, promoting leadership skills, and counseling students through crises. The field of student affairs comprises both generalists and specialists who operate on levels as high as Vice President of Student Affairs to undergraduate paraprofessionals. Functional areas or departments in student affairs include multicultural programs; student activities; Greek life; residence life; recreation and fitness centers; financial aid; women's centers and programs; student unions; judicial affairs; student organization advising; admissions; alumni programs; student government advising; leadership development; campus museums and art; career services; study abroad; wellness programs; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender programs; disability support services; veterans' programs; and new student orientation (NASPA, 2012). Student affairs, as a field, covers a

wide array of educational functions, programs, and services and affects the lives of students in multifaceted ways.

Scholarship

Boyer (1990) argued that to define scholarship solely as research and publication is to frame it too narrowly. He went on to explain this narrow understanding of scholarship is recent and history reveals scholarship as more broadly defined as “a variety of creative work carried on in a variety of places, and its integrity was measured by the ability to think, communicate, and learn” (p. 15). To conceptualize scholarship in this way disrupts the myth of linearity inherent in research-and-publication-only based scholarship. A broader definition acknowledges not only does theory lead to practice but also practice to theory. So, in addition to research, which Boyer (1990) called the scholarship of discovery, he offered three other forms of scholarship: the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. He (1990) described the four scholarships as having overlapping functions. To him, being scholarly meant not only engaging in inquiry but also looking for connections in theory and research, building bridges between theory and practice, and disseminating that knowledge to others effectively. Scholarship of integration was defined by Boyer (1990) as the ability to critically consume research, interpret it, and bring new insight to it in a way that shows its connectedness to a greater body of knowledge. Bridging theory and research to practice is at the heart of the scholarship of application, according to Boyer (1990). The scholarship of application includes the ability to look critically at practice and articulate how it can generate theory yet to be discovered or how it counters existing theory. Lastly, Boyer (1990) claimed the scholarship of teaching involved a commitment to be well-informed and steeped in the knowledge of the field and the “dynamic endeavor involving all the analogies, metaphors, and images that build bridges

between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning" (p. 23). He argued the scholarship of teaching extended beyond the transmission of knowledge, but also transformed and extended knowledge as well. Though Boyer (1990) was writing about the work of faculty in *Scholarship Reconsidered*, his conceptualization of scholarship can be applied to the work of student affairs (Carpenter, 2001), as well.

Open coding

Open coding (Charmaz, 2002) is the process of discovering, naming, and categorizing phenomena according to general or specific characteristics or attributes. During open coding, data are broken down line-by-line, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences. It also aids in constructing the range along which general properties of categories that emerge vary, and it helps define the dimensions of each of those categories.

Axial Coding

Axial coding (Charmaz, 2002) is the process of reassembling data that have been broken down into categories or individual constructs during open coding. During axial coding, the meaning-making categories or constructs are related to subcategories of constructs for forming more precise and complete explanations of the phenomena of the research participants' explanations of how they make meaning of scholarship in practice. A category may stand for a phenomenon such as critical incidents that influence practitioners' meaning making, or new constructs may emerge during the research. Categories or constructs are also organized through related statements.

Member Checking

Interview transcripts were provided to participants for review and member checking. Member checking is generally considered an important method for verifying and validating

information observed and transcribed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998) and is meant as a check and critique of the data. Member checking also provides material for further investigation and triangulation.

Triangulation

Data triangulation is a process of ensuring that the results are rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed (Patton, 2002). There are four different methods of triangulation: methods, sources, analyst, and theory or perspective (Patton, 2009). For the studies reported here, triangulation of sources was used. Triangulation of sources is the process of examining the consistency of different data sources from within the same method (i.e., at different points in time, in public vs. private settings, and comparing people who hold different viewpoints) (Patton, 2009).

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides background and context of the topic of study, identifies the problem and significance, introduces the research questions, briefly outlines the methodology, and contextualizes the study. The next three chapters comprise the individual manuscripts of the three studies conducted in this dissertation. Each manuscript contains literature review, method, results, analysis, and discussion sections as they relate to the particular focus of that study. Chapter Two introduces the first manuscript comprised by the dissertation. The focus of that manuscript is an exploration of the experiences and perceptions of scholarship experienced my practitioners who have received master's degrees in student affairs or related fields of study. Chapter Three introduces the second research manuscript, whose focus was on exploring the experiences and perceptions of scholarship experienced my practitioners who have received doctoral degrees in student affairs or related

fields of study. Chapter Four introduces the third research manuscript, which focused on the experiences and perceptions of student affairs scholar-practitioners. Chapter Five provides a meta-synthesis of all three research studies conducted, highlighting themes that emerged both between and among the three groups; explores the limitations of each study; and offers conclusions and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

MASTERING SCHOLARSHIP: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP IN THEIR WORK¹

¹ Jones, G. M. To be submitted to the *Journal of College Student Development*

ABSTRACT

Scholars in the field have asserted that the inclination to produce and engage scholarship is low among student affairs practitioners. However, very little is known about what the levels of scholarship engagement in student affairs actually are or what may be contributing to the perceived scantiness of scholarship activities among student affairs practitioners. Using a constructivist paradigm and the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, six master's degree level student affairs practitioners were interviewed. The results of which served to explore two gaps in the literature of scholarship in practice; an understanding of influences of preparation experiences and work conditions that support it. The findings reveal several important implications for student affairs practitioners, supervisors, and graduate preparation programs.

INDEX WORDS: Master's degree, Symbolic Interactionism, Role Taking, Scholarship, Boyer, Scholar, Practitioner, Graduate Preparation

There is a complex relationship between scholarship and professional practice. In the field of student affairs, a critical eye has been turned toward the scholar-practitioner (Blimling, 2001; Roper, 2002). Much theoretical discussion has surrounded understanding what prevents practitioners from engaging scholarship (Allen, 2002; Bishop, 2010; Carpenter, 2001; Fried, 2002; Jablonski et al., 2006; Kezar, 2000; Malaney, 2002). However, very little systematic inquiry has been used to explore the issue more deeply. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of student affairs practitioners with master's degrees in the field as they relate to factors that have influenced scholarship in their work.

Literature Review

This literature review explores two main areas, master's-level professional preparation with specific focus given to student affairs programs and writings on scholarship in student affairs/higher education practice. A focus on master's-level professional preparation provided a context for influences on training for master's students in general and student affairs practitioners in particular. Literature on scholarship in student affairs and higher education administration is reviewed to provide additional insight into how participants may have been socialized to think about the topic of inquiry.

Master's-Level Professional Preparation

Demands in the marketplace have affected higher education, so much so that 19% of degrees awarded by colleges are master's degrees (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012), and master's-educated workers are higher in demand than they ever have been before. The field of student affairs has been ahead of this trend, with some leaders in the field arguing that professional preparation is needed in student affairs work (Waple, 2006). The first graduate program in student affairs, designed to train deans and

advisors of women, began in 1913 at Columbia University's Teachers College (Lloyd-Jones & Smith, 1954; Ndiffer, 2001). Preparation programs have since evolved to encompass training of student affairs and higher education administrators in a number of functional areas, and they continue to grow in number with more than 150 in the U.S. (DiRamio, 2014). Yet, student affairs programs, like many other professional graduate programs, "face unprecedented definition by outside forces and societal demands along with internal forces" (Conrad & Rapp-Hanretta, 2002, p. 93).

Student and employer expectations. The demands of students and expectations of employers place a number of pressures on master's programs. To meet the demands of students, programs feel compelled to create "strong but fluid and highly relevant program[s] in which the currency of knowledge attained by learners will be self-evident based on when a student leaves the master's program" (Conrad & Rapp-Hanretta, 2002, p. 94). Master's programs also face pressure from employer expectations to provide the requisite knowledge and training necessary for their employees keep up with changes in their field and technology. Student affairs graduate preparation programs are not exempt from this expectation. In a joint document produced by the field's two major professional organizations, expectations were laid out for competencies student affairs practitioners need to possess. In addition to the competencies, it is asserted that student affairs practitioners should be aware of the use of technology in their work as it applies to each competency areas (American College Personnel Association [ACPA] & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 2010). This document was created to "define the broad professional knowledge, skills, and, in some cases, attitudes expected of student affairs professionals regardless of their area of specialization or positional role within the field" (p. 3).

Competency in student affairs. There has been a history of challenge in determining which competencies should be the focus in student affairs graduate preparation programs. Waple (2006) argued that from its beginnings, graduate studies in student affairs have been interdisciplinary with a focus on theory to practice. However, not until the late 1960s were formal guidelines laid out for graduate preparation programs in student affairs (Guidelines for Graduate Programs in the Preparation of Student Personnel Workers in Higher Education, 1969). Then, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) developed a more formal set of standards and guidelines for graduate preparation programs in the 1980s (CAS, 2012; Dean & Jones, 2014). The creation of these guidelines provided more focus to the structure of graduate preparation programs, yet the argument was still raised that “the question of what fundamental skills are necessary for practice in the field is still undetermined” (Waple, 2006, p. 2). Demands to critically examine what is being taught in preparation programs have been offered by several scholars in the field (Allen, 2002; Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009, Malaney, 2002; Waple, 2006). To address some of these concerns, the two major professional organizations in the field created a joint document detailing professional competency areas for student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). In that document, the writers address the interdisciplinary nature of the work and the complexity of determining competency areas that would apply to all practitioners. Skill levels in each competency were to be viewed as varying according to job function. The expectations were that graduate preparation programs would introduce some of the knowledge and skills of these competency areas and provide students the tools by which to “fill in the gaps.” Difficulty with defining quality graduate preparation is a continuous hurdle as the process continues to be critiqued for its lack of emphasis on management tasks such as supervision and translating theory into practice.

Even with the creation of guidelines, standards, and competencies, master's programs continue to face pressures on all sides to meet the demands of their various constituents. Preparation work in student affairs has been presented with a few different suggestions for options to focus their work in the form of standards and competency models, such as Mena's question, "Should the master's programs focus solely on preparing our practitioners to work in the field, or should they be educated to conduct assessment and research?" (Jablonski et al., 2006, 193). Yet, not only have criticisms been offered about the lack of preparation among student affairs practitioners in specific skill areas, but also concern has been raised as to the level of scholarly engagement enacted in practice beyond the graduate experience. Astin (1999) remarked, "Even when college personnel are aware of the theories that guide their actions, they seem to accept them as gospel rather than as testable propositions" (p. 520). His was only one assertion among many alluding to a lack of scholarship in student affairs practice.

Practitioner Scholarship in Student Affairs Literature

There is not much written about scholarship in student affairs in the literature, and most of what is available is theoretical and argumentative in nature. The two special issues, of the most highly respected journals in the field, devoted to this topic offer a variety of opinions and thoughts by scholars in the field. Through those writings, efforts were made to articulate what scholarship in practice means and its impact on the academy (Carpenter, 2001; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fried, 2002; Jablonski, Mena, Manning, Carpenter, & Siko, 2006; Malaney, 2002; Schroeder & Pike, 2001). In the following sections, I present attempts to define scholarship and the spectrum of scholarship in practice, as presented in the literature.

Defining scholarship. Though his work was initially written for those in the professoriate, it has been suggested that Boyer's (1990) model be used to think about scholarship

in student affairs practice (Carpenter, 2001; Malaney, 2002). According to Boyer (1990) scholarship takes on many forms. These forms include the scholarships of discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Each of these is discussed in more detail as they intersect with other student affairs literature. Other ideas of scholarship in student affairs have included a focus on research engagement (Sriram & Oster, 2012); continual learning, reflection, and growth (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007), and multiple dimension of scholarship that exist on a continuum from scholar to practitioner (Jablonski et al., 2006; Schroeder & Pike, 2001). However, other than Boyer's (1990), no formalized definition of scholarship has been offered for examining scholarship in student affairs. Consequently, understanding Boyer's position in the broader scope of student affairs literature helps to highlight its use as a framework for exploring scholarship in student affairs.

Intersections of Boyer and student affairs literature. Boyer (1990) offered a new vision of scholarship for faculty in the academy. In that vision, he argued a singular focus on research as scholarship was too narrow, as it was only one form of scholarship. The term Boyer used to refer to research was *discovery*. The other forms of scholarship, he suggested, were those of *integration*, *application*, and *teaching*. The scholarship of integration involves the process of taking various streams of knowledge that have been encountered over time and synthesizing them. The scholarship of application is the process of enacting knowledge in tangible and actionable ways. The scholarship of teaching is the process of interpersonal knowledge sharing. According to Boyer, discovery, integration, application, and teaching all represented ways to engage in scholarship. Though written about the work of faculty, Boyer's model provides a useful framework for examining scholarship in student affairs.

Carpenter (2001) suggested the use of Boyer's (1990) framework in student affairs saying, "Our work should be nothing less than a combination of discovery, integration, application, and teaching, managed efficiently and evaluated rigorously" (p. 304). In his model, Boyer argued that research was a necessary part of the academy that needed to be strengthened. While the importance of research in student affairs has been a part of the field's discourse for over a century (Harper, 1905), research conducted by practitioners has been highlighted as an important area of focus and training (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; Carpenter, 2001; CAS, 2012; Sriram & Osten, 2012). The interdisciplinary underpinnings of the profession offer many avenues for practitioner research and have been the foundation of master's-level professional preparation in student affairs. This is most distinctly seen in literature on student development theory and administration. Emphasis on these areas is integrated in preparation programs as professionals are being taught how to translate theory into practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; Cilente et al., 2006; Herdlein, Riefler, & Mrowka, 2013; Jablonski et al., 2006; Reason & Kimball, 2012). *Theory-to-practice* is a term often used in student affairs to describe the way practitioners think about and use formal and informal theories in their work. It has natural connections to Boyer's (1990) scholarships of integration and application, which emphasis making connections across disciplines and literatures and applying that knowledge to practical work. The scholarship of teaching is a process by which the person engaging it shares their knowledge with others, and it has the power to "entice and educate" (Boyer, 1990, p. 23).

Manning's scholar-practitioner continuum. Even when a definition of scholarship can be settled upon, determining what a scholar-practitioner is presents a more difficult challenge. To tackle that challenge, Manning argued for a continuum that moves from scholar to practitioner (Jablonski et al., 2006). Anchored on the left side of her continuum was the *pure*

scholar, a person whose contribution to the larger profession was mainly presented through articles, original research, and other activities. The next stop on her continuum was the *scholar-practitioner* who has more connection to actual practice in the field but also contributes original research and reflections on practice. Just down the continuum is the *practitioner-scholar* whose main focus is on practice but who also offers research and reflective writing to the larger field. Manning then offers two more groups that represent the right side of her continuum, the *practitioner* and the *pure practitioner* (Jablonski et al., 2006). The distinction between these two is one of engagement. The practitioner does not produce research but uses theory and scholarship in his work, whereas the pure practitioner does not engage at all with scholarship in his practice.

Lack of scholarship in student affairs. The overarching tone in the literature on scholarship in student affairs practice is one of concern. Many scholars bemoan the lack of practitioner engagement in scholarship (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Jablonski, 2005; Fried, 2002). Some of the concerns voiced are connected to quality of practice. Mena argued practitioners should connect research and practice to ensure good practice (Jablonski et al., 2006). Carpenter (2001) also articulated this in the form of obligations of practitioners to engage scholarship in their work. One of the obligations he highlighted was students, saying, they “have the right to expect that the student affairs professional with whom they are working has knowledge of appropriate theories, current research, and proven best practices” (p. 311). Others have suggested practitioners could use scholarship to better articulate the purposes behind how they approach their work in research-based and theoretical terms, in order to dialogue across the academy (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). At the heart of much of the conversation surrounding scholarship in practice is a focus on innovative and engaged work.

My review of the literature, in which I gave focus to two areas in the literature, master's-level professional preparation and scholarship in student affairs, revealed four themes. First, master's-level professional preparation programs are facing external and internal pressures that, sometimes, shape how their curriculum is assessed. Second, despite numerous attempts to provide a cohesive model of good preparation for student affairs work, there remains speculation as to how effective it is in preparing practitioners. Third, the literature reveals scholarship in practice is difficult to define and more than likely exists on a continuum than in any static categories. Fourth, while scholarship is an espoused value of the field, scholars believe there is very little practitioner engagement in it, but little research has been conducted to examine those claims. As such, inquiring after what, if any, skills practitioners have gained through graduate preparation programs to be competent student affairs practitioners who are able to engage scholarship is an important endeavor (Kuk & Banning, 2009).

Master's-level graduates of student affairs programs are worth investigating, because the field of student affairs is dependent on graduate students for its future (Grube, Cedarholm, Jones, & Dunn, 2005). Additionally, the literature argues the benefits of the scholar-practitioner can be far reaching. Scholar-practitioners “enhance the effectiveness of student affairs divisions, enhance student involvement and learning, and serve students more effectively” (Hossler, 2001, p. 358). For the purpose of this study, I used a combination of Boyer's (1990) conceptualizations of scholarship and Manning's scholar-practitioner continuum (Jablonski et al., 2006) as my framework for defining scholarship in student affairs practice.

Method

This study explored two main gaps in the literature of scholarship in practice; an understanding of influences of preparation experiences and work conditions that support it. This

study gave particular focus to master's preparation experiences and explored the following research questions:

1. What experiences with scholarship do participants who hold master's degrees in the field of student affairs have?
2. What factors do participants who hold master's degrees in the field of student affairs believe influence scholarship in their work?

Research Design Overview

This research was approached from a *constructivist* paradigm. Assumptions of this paradigm are that knowledge and reality are socially constructed, and both the participant and the researcher influence the research process. Theoretically, this study is conducted through a *symbolic interactionist* perspective, which suggests meaning is formed through a person's interaction with different actions, events, and objects in her life. A specific concept within symbolic interactionism takes precedence in framing these studies. This concept, introduced by Mead (1934), is called *role taking*. According to Mead, role taking is the tendency a person has to define herself in a social context. Role taking highlights the relational nature of behavior by offering an explanation on how a person examines herself in relation to others. It is a process of anticipating of others' behaviors and discerning behavioral expectations (Joas, 1997). In defining herself, this person will adopt certain roles, which offer guidelines for how she is expected to behave and act in social situations. In doing this, she is able to make herself object through the evaluation of her own behaviors through the perspective of others (Mead, 1934). She is then able to act in a way that responds to the influence of others (Blumer, 2004). While this can happen on the interpersonal level, Mead (1934) suggested a person looks to multiple others for information on role taking and acts based on a generalized understanding of behaviors

across all others. Mead (1938) went on to explain that identity is the product of a person's encounter with exceptional experiences, those that disrupt the understandings she previously had about behavioral expectations, and her ability to examine her self and choose how to act.

Identity formation is not an one-event, and a person may take on multiple roles depending on the various social situations she encounters over time (Prasad, 2005). However a person's identity serves as a basis for how the person behaves, acts, and interacts in the world (Blumer, 2004; Mead, 1938).

Participants. Participants in this study were six student affairs professionals (see Table 2.1). A combination of criterion-based and network sampling was employed by the researcher to recruit participants (Prasad, 2005). Research criteria were limited to student affairs practitioners who have graduated with a master's degree in student affairs (or a closely related field of study, e.g., college student personnel, counseling and student personnel services, student development, higher education). Demographic characteristics of participants were varied. Four of the six participants identified as women and two identified as men. In terms of race/ethnicity, two were African American/Black, one was Indian American, one was Latino, and two were White/Caucasian. None of the participants in this study attended the same institution for their master's preparation work nor did any of them work at the same institutions. At the time of the study, participants had an average of three and a half years full-time student affairs experience.

Table 2.1 Participant Characteristics

Name	Years in profession	Master's (Geographical)	# of Institutions (Worked)
John	5-10	Southeast	4
Jacqueline	5-10	Midwest	3
Jada	1-5	Midwest	1
Sasha	1- 5	Southwest	2
Alea	1-5	Southeast	1
Martin	1-5	Southeast	1

Data collection. Interviews are a common data collection method in the constructivist paradigm as they allow interaction between the researcher and the participants (Prasad, 2005). Specifically, data were collected for this study using face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen, because they present an opportunity to provide structure to the interview while also granting participants shared control over the direction of the interview (Prasad, 2005), which allows room for revealing multiple realities. The interview guide was constructed using Boyer's (1990) framework as guide for exploring scholarship (see Appendix F).

Data Analysis. Participant interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The resulting transcriptions were used for data analysis. To analyze data I engaged in a recursive process that included continually revisiting the data and codes that emerged from them. I used the *sensitizing concepts*—background ideas that offer ways of seeing, organizing, and understanding experiences (Charmaz, 2000)—of scholarship as described in Boyer's (1990) framework and role taking as presented by Mead (1934). These sensitizing concepts aided my search for how participants made meaning of their experience and how that meaning contributed to their behavior as practitioners.

My search for participants' meaning making and behaviors began via open coding. During this process, data were broken down line-by-line, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences. This helped me discover, name, and categorize phenomena according to general and specific characteristics or attributes. Additionally, it also allowed me to understand the range of variation among participants' responses. As a result, I was able to define the dimensions of each of those categories. Closely examining data for both differences and similarities provided me with a means of discrimination and differentiation among categories.

Through axial coding, I reassembled data into categories or individual constructs during open coding. The resulting product included four themes related to the exploration of scholarship in practice.

Measures of robustness. Interview transcripts were provided to participants for the purposes *member checking*. Participants are given the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy and clarification (Meriam, 1998). Member checking is generally considered an important method for verifying and validating information observed and transcribed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998) and is meant as a check and critique of the data. Data were also triangulated—a process of ensuring the results are rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed (Patton, 2002). For this study, *triangulation of sources* was used. I approached this task by examining the consistency of interview transcript data among interviews with the same participant, when multiple interviews were conducted, and between each different participants interview, in accordance to methods described by Patton (2009).

Results

In this section, I introduce key findings gained from an analysis of six participants' interview transcripts. Four themes emerged through the process of data analysis. Those four themes were: research opportunity, theory and scholarship in practice, teaching as learning and guidance, and taking on normed behavior.

The first theme that emerged from participants' accounts was on opportunities for research that were presented or missing in their master's program and work. In this theme, a distinction is highlighted in how opportunities were presented to participants and who decided to engage in them. Some participants described turning down opportunities to engage in research because of how they were presented. In contrast, participants who describe engaging in research

did so in response to opportunities that were presented as part of community effort and investment. This difference, in when and how opportunities for research were presented, seemed to influence practitioners' engagement in it as a part of their post-master's work.

The second theme surrounded participants' accounts of integrating and applying theory and scholarship in practice. All participants described their master's programs as giving emphasis to integrating theory and scholarship in practice. In many cases, participants went on to work in places where integrating and applying theory was not a specific part of the conversation among their colleagues. Yet, some participants shared instances in which they integrated or applied theory and scholarship to their own work. This theme highlighted the salience of socialization processes in professional preparation.

The third theme describes ways participants talked about teaching in their practice. Many participants describe both formal and informal teaching opportunities that were presented to them through their master's program or work. Some participants also described training as a teaching space in their work. For many participants, teaching was a way for them to stay engaged in the broader concepts of the field.

The fourth theme, taking on normed behavior, describes the influences of master's program culture and workplace culture on how participants thought about and engaged in scholarship. Participants described the cultures of their master's programs and places they have worked in the past or currently work. It appears cultural norms of those areas described by participants had some bearing on their thoughts about scholarship and their behaviors in those spaces. For some, different cultures encouraged or discouraged participation in research and teaching opportunities as well as theory integration and application. For others, culture did not

play as large a role, but was a noticeable element in relation to how they thought about scholarship.

Each of these themes is discussed in more detail in the next section. Participant accounts accompany those discussions as support to the ideas presented.

Research Opportunities

In their study, Sriram and Oster (2012) found that lack of research engagement among practitioners was a pervasive theme regardless of job level and education. They said, “We thought that perhaps student affairs professionals with graduate degrees and/or with more responsibility would be more involved in conversations relating to research and its relevance to practice. We did not find empirical evidence to support that thinking, however” (p. 390). Accounts from participants in this study presented some insight into why master’s-level practitioners are not involved in those conversations. How opportunities were presented seemed to influence the interest of participants’ engagement with research. In a discussion about why he decided not to pursue the thesis track presented as a part of his master’s program, Martin shared:

So, for graduation you do the comprehensive exam or you do a thesis or paper. You have to make this decision very early, like it came somewhere around October/November, and I wish there was an opportunity that we could’ve had like some sort of class or seminar for people who were interested. Because you have to start your second semester. They’re like, this is how you do research methods, this is how you write a thesis; like these are the processes you need to go through. It was advised that you need to have an idea of what you want to do prior to registering. I was in the midst of writing papers and going through theory and all this other stuff, I was like I don’t think this can happen right now.

Due to program structure, Martin did not feel able to engage in the research opportunity that was available to him in his master's program. He did not feel prepared enough to take advantage of the opportunity and it was presented at a time when he felt too overwhelmed to navigate the process. This was a disappointing choice Martin had to make given his initial attraction to his master's program, which he described thusly, "I just liked the professors when I went there, it was their philosophies and what their interest were as far as research, in case I was interested in doing a thesis." Another participant, Jada, had a similar experience in her master's program. Her master's program also offered a thesis option but little support to see it through. She explained:

Our program was in transition, but the people that were stepping into more leadership roles were much more – we had professors who were presenting at NASPA. We had professors who were traveling to conferences. One of my cohort members presented at NASPA with one of my professors. So there was that move and that push. They started to highlight, even more so, the idea of doing basically a defense, so everybody had to do comps, so we all had to do a defense, but some of us did a practical defense, and some of us would do a research defense. You had to pick. I thought, for a while, that I wanted to do a research project, because I do enjoy some of that, but there was no support. We had a woman who really wanted to go and get her Ph. D. right after, and so she did a lot of work on her own outside. There was only one class that she didn't end up taking with us, so she could work on her thesis. But I think that she put in a ton more time and energy than we did, and it's moving to that. To be honest, for the last class I graduated, I don't know how many of them actually did a defense, and the professors are getting them more and more comfortable and used to the idea of doing research. We had to do a research

project that was an archival research project. So, we were using a library and looking at old data and pictures and information and pulling that all together and putting that into a big research paper and project. But like I said, our stats class was not good, but if we had a better stats class, I think they would have had an even higher emphasis on research.

Jada had entered the program with some prior exposure to research and a high interest in learning more about it. However, the lack of a support structure for her to develop those skills deterred her from pursuing the opportunity.

Other participants reported not only a lack of opportunity to conduct research as a part of their master's program, but also that they had received poor instruction in research methods or none at all. Sasha recounted the disappointment she felt in not having an opportunity to engage research as a part of her master's degree program:

When I was there, it was kind of in this transition phase of the curriculum and so there had previously been a couple of research classes. We had to take statistics and a research class. Before, they had to take a class where they actually conducted research, but that was the transition and change and so my year we technically took that class but it wasn't that class. It was something completely not related at all to what we actually learned. So, I feel like I didn't learn a ton about research in graduate school which was a bit disappointing because I had to take research in college as a part of my major, and I did a lot of that as an undergrad. So, I was a little disappointed because I feel like I did get a little gypped on that as far as doing active research projects. I mean we definitely did research papers in all of our classes but as far as assessment related things, it wasn't too much of a focus at the time, because they were in the process of shifting the curriculum.

For Sasha, disappointment in not having an opportunity to conduct research was exacerbated by the poor quality of her research design course.

In contrast to those experiences surrounding research in their master's program, two other participants, Jacqueline and Alea, reported having very positive research experiences through their master's programs. Alea, recounted:

[Research] was highly encouraged and we actually got a couple of avenues to do that through a couple of our courses that we had. We had the Research Methods course which was...that course actually felt like we didn't get as much out of it as we did in the other courses because that course was not specific to student affairs. It was research methods in education. We had early, you know, pre-K through 12 and all these other random education majors, and the whole cohort of student affairs in the back of the room. We had this huge room with like 36 people or so, and the only people who were participating were us because we were like, "Yeah, we know the answers" and we were super hyped up and everyone else was just there because they had to take the class. But we were like, "Yeah, we love our cohort" and we bonded so much together.

Despite thinking her particular research methods course was not challenging, Alea described an enthusiasm for engaging in research based on other opportunities through her program and the community value for research that was present. Jacqueline offered a similar description of her program saying,

I think that because of who I was around, people who had graduated from higher ed programs, research was always something, I remember the faculty who were around and even other faculty members who were always talking about research. I feel like the

higher education program there also did a really good job of getting others engaged in their research and were always highlighting what they were doing.

At a different point in the interview she added, “There was a high interest in research from our faculty, and all the students. We worked closely with the doctoral students. So, we saw the connection to research the whole time we were working on our master’s.”

How research opportunities were presented did not only influence practitioners during their time in their master’s programs. When presented with supportive research opportunities in their work, participants reported being willing to engage in them. Sasha, who had not had a positive research experience through her master’s program, described how research opportunities were presented in her first professional job:

There were a lot of opportunities for [research] both within the department and in the division. There is a group that was a conglomerate of professionals and professors who did research together. That was a small “invite only” group. I forget what we called ourselves.... So, it was a group where people would write, encourage each other to write papers and presentations and vet those things and that sort of stuff and have those conversations and then in general, within the division we really tried to focus on doing good assessment of our programs so that we could make them better but then also presenting those things and using that to better the field in general. So there was a lot of focus on that.

When surrounded by a community of individuals who were committed to research, Sasha gladly accepted an opportunity to engage in research as a part of her practice. She continued engaging in research even when she moved to a different institution where she had to seek out opportunities to engage in it.

Theory and Scholarship in Practice

Boyer (1990) wrote about integration and application of knowledge as forms of scholarship. In the field of student affairs, activities surrounding integrating knowledge and applying it are often referred to as theory-to-practice (Bensimon, 2007; Love, 2012; Parker, 1977; Reason & Kimball, 2012). My interviews solicited participants' stories of integration and application experiences through professional preparation and practice. All participants claimed that their professional preparation programs placed emphasis on this area. One participant, Jonah, shared:

[My program] really gave some opportunities to really learn about the theoretical background of what you want to be doing actually later on in your career. It was good as far as, I think, preparing me to consider and think deeply about things that I needed to be aware of as a practitioner.

Additionally, many of the participants described moments when they were challenged through their programs to integrate and apply the concepts they were learning to real life situations. Sometimes the focus was more on integration, thinking about how concepts apply to things that were happening in participants' lives, and work. Jada gives one example of this,

The way that that professor taught [our multicultural theories class], we talked about, "Okay. So where did you see something where somebody was breaking their frame or something came across in the news where maybe ethnicity or race or any kind of sexual orientation." If any of those things were involved, we talked about it in the classroom, and so we were taking some of those theories and we were learning in our textbooks and looking to see where they were applied, not just in the higher ed world, but in the broader scope of what it looks like.

In other instances, theory-to-practice concepts were taught through application of concepts to an actual problem or project. An excerpt from Sasha's interview provides an example of the kinds of instances participants shared.

I feel like we were constantly encouraged to find ways to practice what we were learning in class and to bring real life examples into our course work. In one class we were talking about adult groups, and it was about advising and learning styles and things like. One of our projects was, that whole semester, we had to all find a student organization to advise and do a process, do like a journal and we're going to do all these great pieces of it. We had to take what we were learning about and do assessment before and after. [We learned about] how to set up learning outcomes for student groups. We had to do all of that with an organization on campus and chronicle our learning and their learning, which is really kind of cool.

Most participants stated that they were attracted to their master's programs because of how theory-to-practice was being handled in them. Each talked with much enthusiasm about how valuable these experiences were for them.

While theory-to-practice was emphasized in participants' programs, most reported conversations around integration and application were missing in their work environments. As illustrated by Martin who said, "if it exists, it's something that isn't...there's not that much emphasis on it, if it exists," the perception of most participants was that there was very little emphasis on folding theory and scholarship into practice among their colleagues.

Despite a lack of emphasis on theory-to-practice among their colleagues, participants talked about ways they found themselves applying what they had previously learned or were

currently learning to their work. Both Jonah and Jada gave examples about how they have gone about this:

[Integrating and applying theory] was again, something that was really engrained into me in my graduate program. That was something we talked about a lot. I don't see any reason why we should be doing anything else. How can you do student affairs work if you don't know what you're talking about? I just don't understand that. For me, it just makes sense to try to infuse, as much as possible (Jonah).

A student had, not really a concern or issue, but it was a student who was very, very young, and immature. It was really hard for me to wrap my head around how she was an honor student, and that it really got me into thinking, after asking her a couple of questions and her feeling more comfortable to talk about things. I started piecing the puzzle together. It was really a lot of about her family background and understanding the environment that she comes from. It developed so much of her understanding, and her perception of what college is like and everything beyond that, too. I found an article that seemed perfect for her, and I was reading it and I would start writing notes like "discipline issues" or something like that. [I would] then process "this is maybe why this is happening," and "this is where it's affecting what I'm doing." So, disciplinary issues, staff development issues, personal issues with her roommate, things like that, these are all the reasons why and this is where it can be relevant. That way, if I ever did have discussions with her, I can pull parts from that research to base where my decision or my judgment was coming back from. [Theory-to-practice] helps me process things a lot

more when I'm working with people from different backgrounds, just understanding perceptions (Jada).

The power of socialization that surrounded preparing participants for theory-to-practice work was evident in these participant interviews. Even when confronted with environments where little value was placed on integrating or applying theory, these practitioners were committed to infusing scholarship into their work.

Teaching as Learning and Guidance

Malaney (2002) said, "While research can be most typically thought of as scholarship, I believe teaching is the most common form of scholarship and the most important" (p. 133). I was surprised at how many opportunities participants mentioned were made available to them to teach. Some of these opportunities were presented as a part of the master's preparation experience and others were a part of their work experiences. Teaching became an avenue for participants to engage more deeply with the literature of the field.

I think [teaching] helps me to stay on top of things because it requires me to be a step ahead of my students. I get the ability of being a learner myself, because you can't teach people if you're not learning but also it's a different way to connect with students and see them differently than I do. So, I think it helps me to see them in a more holistic picture of what the student experience is like and helps with a more kind of academic component of the college experience, which is obviously a huge part of the college experience. I think it helps me understand and support students better as well as being a better learner myself.

While many participants had opportunities to teach in formal classroom settings, they also placed a very high value on informal teaching experiences. The level of informality varied among participants. Some spoke of teaching through presentations at conferences or on their

campus, some talked about teaching through training both professional and paraprofessional staff. Jonah shared,

I don't define teaching as just happening in the classroom. When I talk about teaching, for me, I think more about "how do I infuse that in to the work that I'm doing?" I do a lot more teaching with the work that I do with the graduate students that I worked with, than when I was [in my last position]. I might do a lot of that with some of the students that I had to come in. I try to infuse some student development theory in my conversations with my RAs.

Even in instances of informal teaching, participants spoke of how those experiences informed their own learning and engagement with student affairs theory and scholarship.

Taking On Normed Behaviors

The final theme that emerged from the data was one I termed taking on normed behaviors. While elements of this are captured in the other theme categories, there were many more isolated instances in which participants spoke of the influence of culture on how they thought and went about scholarship. As shown in some of the examples in other categories, the culture of the community in participants' master's programs and workplaces dictated what opportunities they were able to have. Sasha's experiences in her master's program and then workplace surrounding research engagement showcases the negative and positive influence of culture on opportunities for scholarship. Martin presented another example of this in his description of the culture at his current institution, in which he discussed not having a strong focus on using theory in practice:

It's very different here. I went into it earlier; we have to really rely on ourselves to be the voice of what we do here on campus. So, there are people who work in our department

who have this, I don't want to say outdated philosophy, but they are just still stuck in this mindset... Like, we're focusing on our customer service. Before someone even has an opportunity, like myself, to sit down with residents about a roommate conflict or assume it's happened, we're already changing them in our system to move them out.

We're losing that conversation of [developmental theory].

He went on to share how he feels he is constantly fighting against opposition to innovation at his institution. So, while he wanted to do more integration, application, and teaching work, he was having a difficult time navigating that within the culture of his institution.

Culture also presented positive influences on participants as connected to scholarship. When the culture was one that placed a high value on scholarship activities, participants enthusiastically engaged them:

All of us who worked within the student life office had a master's in college student personnel or counseling, so there was a high commitment [to] theory to practice. There was a really high commitment to research and education, and there was a high commitment to teaching. So, all of us got to teach some type of course, including [other departments]. ... They would pull articles out of the journals, for example, and pull them into our staff meetings where it was discussed. A number of people [were] working on their EDD's or PhD's while we were there and so we got to sit with them and do their dissertations like we would go through their actual presentations or dissertations and that would be considered professional development for us. There was just, it was such a wonderful atmosphere to be in.

As participants described their environmental cultures, it was clear that these cultures impacted the ease in which the practitioner could engage scholarship. Participants reported

being surrounded by others who shared an interest in any of the four scholarship areas served as an encouragement for their own thoughts about and engagement in it.

Throughout the interviews, themes related to research opportunity, theory and scholarship in practice, teaching as learning and guidance, and taking on normed behaviors emerged. Most participants entered their master's programs with an interest in research, but many found inadequate preparation and opportunities to be obstacles to their acquisition of skills in this area. For some, their deficits in knowledge and skills in research were strengthened by work cultures that presented opportunities and invited them to engage in research. Professional preparation experiences in which theory-to-practice was emphasized had a powerful impact on participants. These were strong enough that when participants encountered institutional cultures in which theory-to-practice was not valued, they still sought out opportunities to engage in them. For participants in this study, formal and informal teaching experiences were an impactful way for them to extend their knowledge. Finally, the cultures in which participants worked served to either motivate or demotivate participants' engagement with scholarship.

Discussion

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of student affairs practitioners with master's degrees as they relate to factors that have influenced scholarship in their work. This was a complex task, given the multitude of ways scholarship has been written about among scholars in the field. Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship, which offers four types of scholarship, has been a supported framework for examining scholarship in the student affairs scholar-practitioner literature (Blimling, 2001; Carpenter, 2001; Malaney, 2002). Using this framework and the theoretical lens of role taking (Mead, 1934), I analyzed data from six student affairs practitioners who have received master's degrees—each from a different institutions—in

the discipline. The findings from this analysis provide insight into the practice of student affairs and professional preparation in student affairs, at the master's level.

The literature on the discovery of knowledge through research in student affairs practice is scarce. What little is available paints a dismal picture of practitioner engagement in research (Sriram & Osten, 2012). The results of this study may offer some clarity to the perceptions of low research activity among student affairs practitioners, particularly when considering the concept of role taking (Blumer, 2004; Joas, 1997; Mead, 1938). For participants in this study, there were a number of inconsistencies in research experiences in their master's programs. When looking to the others in their program for who to act—navigating research opportunities—participants did not perceive a strong behavioral expectation for doing so. All of the graduate programs attended by participants had some opportunity for training in research methods. However, the presentation of the opportunity as well as the quality of the course(s) dictated participants behaviors regarding research; in many cases, it was a to not pursue research opportunities. These decisions were not a result of disinterest in research, however. As some participants expressed having had a desire and willingness to engage in research upon entering the program. Yet, they chose to opt out of the thesis when the option was presented to them. Their decisions to not pursue the thesis were due to a lack of confidence that the program would prepare them to have the kind of experience with the process for which they were looking. Other participants reported that their training did not prepare them with sufficient knowledge of research skills. In short, though research behaviors were espoused in the programs, participants did not perceive behavioral expectations toward research. These findings are not surprising in light of other criticisms of the comprehensiveness of preparation experiences in student affairs master's programs (Herdlein, 2004; Malaney, 2002; Waple, 2006). This finding was not true for

all participants, however. Two participants described very positive and involved opportunities for their research. Accompanying these accounts were stories of community research support through their cohorts or a collection of actors in the master's program. This notion of community support was also present in how and if participants engaged in research as a part of their work. For these participants the behavioral expectations were more explicit and their decisions to take on the role of researcher came as a result. As such, community support or lack thereof was highlighted as a factor that influenced participants' engagement in the scholarship of research.

Theory-to-practice has long been a focus of student affairs master's professional preparation programs (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; CAS, 2012; Fried, 2002; Herdlein, Riefler, & Mrowka, 2013). The participants of this study also highlighted this. Each participant attended a program where theory-to-practice elements were present and woven into the curriculum. These opportunities helped them make sense of what they were learning and gain an understanding of how to apply it to their work. These experiences influenced how they thought about and made decisions in their work as practitioners, despite working in institutions, divisions, or departments where there was little to no emphasis on using theory in practice. The behavioral expectations were so strong in these participants master's programs that their identity formation, as practitioners who value integration and application of theory, was able to withstand work cultures in which the behavioral expectations were different. Findings from this research suggest socialization through master's professional preparation is an important factor of influence when it comes to engagement in the scholarships of integration and application.

I was surprised at the findings that emerged around the scholarship of teaching among participants. Master's-level preparation is not generally considered a place for postsecondary

teaching opportunities. Some of the teaching opportunities reported by participants were unsurprising, such as the teaching of resident assistant seminars. However, participants also spoke of having teaching experiences in formal undergraduate classes, sometimes in departments very different than their own. There does not seem to be much literature on formal teaching experiences among student affairs professionals; however, these findings suggest that these experiences and practices are worth further investigation. Another finding that emerged through analyses was that participants perceived teaching to be an activity that took place in both formal and informal spaces. Many spoke about teaching in the form of training and interpersonal conversations had with students. Through these teaching processes, many participants found they were able to strengthen their own personal knowledge as well as the knowledge of their students. Consequently, the intrinsic rewards derived from teaching activities were an important factor in practitioners' engagement in the scholarship of teaching.

Finally, my findings also revealed that the cultural norms present in participants' work environments were important factors in participants' levels of engagement in scholarship. This concept, which showed up both among and between the previously discussed themes, supports Mead's (1938) role taking suggestion that role taking is inextricably linked to a person's relationship to others when it comes to agency and behavior. Even when participants' scholarship interests were high, if the culture of their master's program or institution for which they worked did not value it, participants were less likely to engage in those behaviors. Particular to this group of participants, who are largely new practitioners, the luxury of being able negotiated how they spend their time is not readily available to them. As such, even if they wanted to buck behavioral expectations, they may not have the agency to do so. This finding suggests that lack of scholarship among practitioners extends beyond individual desire and

agency, but may also be a systemic issue within preparation programs and cultures within the practitioners' office, department, division, or institution.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study suggest the state of scholarship among professionals may not be in the dire condition described by past scholars; the issue may be one of definition. When viewed through the lens of Boyer's (1990) model, the work of the practitioners in this study suggests both interest and engagement in scholarship. While these findings are not generalizable, they have the potential of transferability as both scholars and practitioners reflect on practice. This research also highlights important considerations for master's-level graduate preparation programs and those in positions to influence culture in the work of student affairs. At the conclusion of their study on research among practitioners, Sriram and Oster (2012) suggested, "Graduate preparatory programs could assess whether their required research courses meet the needs of future professionals, including refining curricula or offering more research courses at the master's level" (p. 39). The findings of this study add strength to that argument. Through a curriculum that properly prepares practitioners to engage in research, preparation programs empower students to have confidence in their research skills as practitioners. Likewise, those that hire entry-level professionals can provide opportunities for new practitioners to engage in research as a part of their work. This could come in the form of research, assessment, or evaluation teams or opportunities for practitioners to work across departments with others who are engaging research.

The findings of this research also suggest that some preparation programs are equipping practitioners with the tools that they need to engage theory in practice. Graduate preparation programs, however, could give some focus to preparing students to navigate institutional cultures

where little value is placed on these efforts or find spaces to connect with others in the larger field who are engaging these practices. Similarly, supervisors of all level of practitioner can extend opportunities for dialogue on theory-to-practice engagement. When supervisors are intentional about doing this with newer practitioners, it could have the powerful impact of creating a culture where conversations around and engagement in scholarship are the norm.

Teaching is an effective way for practitioners to synthesize and refine their knowledge. Graduate preparation programs can partner with assistantship providers to negotiate more spaces for formal and informal teaching as a part of the graduate experience. Similarly, graduate preparation programs can present more opportunities for peer-to-peer teaching as a way to challenge emerging practitioners to think more deeply about what they are learning. Supervisors can also provide supervisees opportunities to be more involved in training activities.

Finally, the findings in this study show that practitioners need to refine their skills in navigating cultures in which scholarship is not valued. Practitioners may leave master's programs that are rich in focus on research, theory in practice, and teaching only to acquire jobs at institutions where conversations and activities surrounding scholarship are non-existent. With this knowledge, graduate preparation programs can engage students in critical discourse about how to navigate those spaces. Supervisors, in turn, can be intentional in their conversations with their supervisees on areas where the supervisees feel stifled surrounding issues of scholarship in their practice.

Limitations

This study was conducted under the operation of one conceptualization of scholarship. Future studies might benefit from exploring other theories of scholarship to provide a more comprehensive picture of its state in student affairs. The use of network sampling may have had

an effect on the skew of engagement of scholarship that may be atypical of the larger population of master's-level practitioners. Increased study on this topic, which invites more participant voices, has the potential to support these findings or offer a more balanced view. The nature of qualitative studies done from a constructionist paradigm lends itself to a co-construction of knowledge between the research and participants. As such, research subjectivities influence how data are analyzed and reported. Subsequent studies may benefit from the use of multiple researchers and analysts to give a more diversified view of the data.

Conclusion

This study set out to uncover master's-level practitioners' experiences of scholarship and their perceptions of factors that have influenced its use in their work. The results suggest, while experiences in the master's preparation process can aide practitioners in engaging scholarship in practice, they are only one piece of the puzzle. Administrators in student affairs must also foster cultures of scholarship at their institutions and provide the necessary support to develop or refine practitioners' skills in these areas. Based on this research, I have offered suggestions on how preparation programs and administrators can approach these tasks; however, more research into factors that encourage scholarship engagement is needed to understand all the structures of support needed. Particularly, research exploring different functional areas and institution types may provide insight into how specific scholarship skills can be honed.

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CHAPTER 3

DOES HAVING A DOCTORATE MAKE YOU A SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER?: AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOLARLY PRACTICE AMONG DOCTORAL-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS¹

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ABSTRACT

Over a decade ago, several scholars in the field convened to address the program of scholarship among practitioners in student affairs. They argued that the inclination to produce and engage scholarship is low among student affairs practitioners. However, very little is known about what the levels of scholarship engagement in student affairs actually are or what may be contributing to the perceived scantiness of scholarship activities among student affairs practitioners. Using a constructivist paradigm and the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, eight doctoral level student affairs practitioners were interviewed. The results of which served to explore two gaps in the literature of scholarship in practice; an understanding of influences of preparation experiences and work conditions that support it. The findings reveal several important implications for student affairs practitioners, supervisors, and graduate preparation programs.

INDEX WORDS: Doctoral degree, Symbolic Interactionism, Scholarship, Boyer, Scholar, Practitioner, Graduate Preparation

Preparation of practitioners through doctoral education has become an area of concern (Shulman et al., 2006) that the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching initiated a project to examine doctoral programs designed to prepare educational practitioners (Perry & Imig, 2008). Through this project, the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED), aims to strengthen the efforts of both doctorates of philosophy (Ph. D.) and education (Ed. D.) programs in preparing academic scholars and leaders in practice, respectively. The impetus for this project came amid skepticism over whether or not doctoral programs prepare “recipients for the professional and scholarly roles they will pursue” (Shulman et al., 2006, p. 25). The general distinction drawn between the purpose of an Ed. D., to prepare practitioners, and a Ph. D., to prepare academic scholars, has been offered (Barr et al., 2000). However, given the complex nature of the field of education, which aims to prepare both scholars and practitioners, differences in the two programs can be difficult to delineate (Shulman et al., 2006). This issue becomes further complicated by burgeoning literature calling for those working in education to take the role of scholar-practitioner (Bouck, 2011; Bishop, 2010; Blimling, 2001b; Fried, 2002; Jablonski, 2005; Ribera, Fernandez, & Gray, 2012; Tyler, 2009). This study examined practitioners’ experiences of scholarship both as graduate students and as professionals. This study’s participants received doctorates in student affairs, higher education, or related programs. The study further explored those practitioners’ perceptions of factors that influenced scholarship in their work.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study is centered on doctoral-level graduate education and its role in professional preparation of student affairs practitioners as well as the role of scholarship in the professional practice of student affairs. For this review of the literature, I

explore material on doctoral education in the professional preparation of student affairs practitioners and the conceptualization of the term *scholarship* in the field of student affairs and present the definition that was used for the purposes of this study. I connect those literatures in a discussion of doctoral-level professional preparation in student affairs and scholarship. For the purposes of this study, “student affairs” is the term used to encompass related fields, such as college student personnel and higher education administration.

Doctoral Education in Student Affairs

In the field of education, the doctorate has the dual purpose of preparing students for scholarship and practice (Shulman, 2006). While some other disciplines have a more bifurcated view of scholarship and practice (Green, Maxwell, & Shanahan, 2001), doctoral-level preparation in education often intertwines the two. In the field of student affairs, many students pursue doctoral degrees in preparation for upper-level administration rather than faculty positions (Daddona, Cooper, & Dunn, 2006). Although obtaining a doctorate is not necessary for a successful career in student affairs, practitioners find that opportunities for advancement are made difficult without a doctoral credential (Komives & Taub, 2000). Unfortunately for many graduates, having a doctorate does not always result in obtaining upper-level positions (Daddona et al., 2006). One reason for this trend, offered by Dadonna et al. (2006), is the disparity between student affairs doctoral graduates and the number of senior leadership positions available. To wit, in the early 2000s, administrative positions obtained by recent doctoral graduates were at a lower-level than expected, and the probability of obtaining a faculty position was more forbidding. Out of the 20% of doctoral graduates seeking a tenure track position, only 3.5% actually obtained one (Dadonna et al., 2006). Not only is there a lack of upper-level positions available to student affairs doctoral graduates, but also the value and utility of a

doctorate in student affairs have also been called into question (McClellan & Stringer, 2009; Townsend & Weisse, 1990).

The value of doctoral education in student affairs. The literature suggests doctoral graduates in student affairs, higher education, and similar fields may need to prove their worth if they aspire to senior-level leadership. Debate about the utility of a doctoral degree in student affairs has been ongoing. In 1990, Townsend and Weisse reported a national representative study of college presidents, vice presidents, deans of academic affairs, and deans of student affairs to assess their perceptions of the utility of a doctoral degree in higher education. That study revealed that chief administrators perceive doctoral education in higher education to be useful, particularly in training doctoral students in certain content areas (e. g., budget and finance, law, organization and governance, policy development, student development). However, despite upper-level administrators recognizing the value of doctoral education in student affairs, some continue to view graduate training specific to student affairs to be unnecessary for the work (Townsend & Weisse, 1990). To date, the literature on doctoral education in student affairs does not reflect a differing opinion among that offered by Townsend and Weisse (1990). However, proponents of doctoral education in student affairs have argued doctoral graduates

bear some responsibility for demonstrating to upper-level decision makers how their skills in research, as well as in administration, have practical benefits to improve the quality of education and service that a unit can deliver. Likewise, practitioners need to become more involved with preparation program faculty, either through service as adjunct faculty and teaching in a program or through other forms of dialogue. (Saunders & Cooper, 1999, p. 191)

Doctoral programs can prepare students to engage this kind of demonstration of the value of their preparation in their work. This was the case in Engstrom's (1999) study, which found women learned important socialization processes through their student affairs doctoral programs that prepared them to advocate for their worth in the profession. However, it has been argued, if doctoral graduates are to advocate for their worth in upper administration, their motivations for the degree have to extend beyond professional advancement (Komives & Taub, 2000).

While some students may enter a student affairs doctoral program for the purposes of professional advancement (Komives & Taub, 2000), their experiences in that program could serve as powerful change agents to their motivations. Research on socialization processes in doctoral programs has revealed the influence faculty and other students have on shaping what incoming doctoral students expect to get out of the process (Hughes & Kleist, 2005). However, interpersonal socialization processes are engaged in at different rates in doctoral programs. Some students, particularly those from minority populations, find more meaning in their academic experience than through processes of socialization (Simpson, 2003). Yet, for both groups, those who engage more interpersonally and those who focus more on academics, faculty play a critical role in helping to shape expectations (Gardener, 2008). Through the process of guiding students to become independent researchers, faculty members serve as role models for students' post-doctoral work (Gardener, 2008; Turner et al., 2012). Faculty may also use these opportunities to coach students on how to advocate for their worth as administrators by highlighting their areas of specialization.

The growing complexity of higher education has created many opportunities for doctoral education to create specialists with expertise in the student experience and the administration of

student affairs (Komives & Taub, 2000). The difficulty for doctoral education in student affairs, however, is lack of agreement on the foundations of the field upon which to build specialization. Sandeen and Barr (2006), who synthesized literature surrounding foundational debates within the field of student affairs, indicated that a consensus had not been reached about the foundational concepts that undergird student affairs. This lack of consensus has made it difficult to define doctoral education (Dean & Jones, 2014).

In an early attempt to provide assessment guidelines for professional preparation programs in student affairs, Beatty and Stamatakos (1990) offered six competency areas for graduate education: theoretical competence, scholarly competence, functional competence, transferal competence, environmental competence, and human relations competence. However, these suggested competencies were not widely adopted, and discussion and debate continued to surround necessary course work for graduate education in student affairs (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009; Barr, Dessler, & Associates, 2000) with some critics calling into question whether or not “graduate programs in student affairs have been satisfactory in preparing student affairs administrators in the rapidly changing environment of student affairs” (Herdlein, 2004, p. 51). In 2010, the two major professional organizations in student affairs, NASPA and ACPA (2010), released a document detailing professional competency areas for student affairs practitioners. These competency areas were offered despite suggestions that defining a set of standards may be a fruitless effort due to the diversity of institutions in which practitioners work and the complexity of student affairs practice (Cuyjet et al., 2009).

Due to the autonomy given to students for original research and specialized foci, defining a common set of standards for doctoral education in student affairs remains a difficult task. While standards and competencies have been more robustly defined in master’s preparation

programs (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; CAS 2012), the same level of definition has not been offered to doctoral education in the discipline. Among some scholars, it remains debatable as to whether or not a consensus needs to be made on how doctoral students are prepared for the work, given the individualized nature of study and research (Dean & Jones, 2014; McEwen & Talbot, 1998).

Doctoral Education, Scholarship, and Practice

Doctoral education in student affairs lends itself to a more individualized experience in professional preparation (Gardener, 2008). Students are often presented with more options, than at the master's-level, to shape their curriculum in accordance with their research interests and career goals (Dean & Jones, 2014). Preparing students at the doctoral-level may include a set of courses that enhance students' content knowledge, but the true goal is to prepare students to be scholars (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). In the case of student affairs, where so few doctoral graduates go on to the professoriate (Dadonna et al., 2006), doctoral education becomes a training ground for the scholar-practitioner. While the scholar-practitioner concept has been written about in a number of ways in the student affairs literature (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Jablonski et al., 2006; Schroeder & Pike, 2001; Sriram & Oster, 2012), Boyer's (1990) conceptualization of scholarship is offered for this study.

Boyer's model of scholarship. Scholars in student affairs have advocated for the use of Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship to understand the nature of its use in practice (Blimling, 2001; Capenter, 2001; Capenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fried, 2002; Jablonski, Mena, Manning, Carpenter, & Siko, 2006; Malaney, 2002; Schroeder & Pike, 2001). In his model, Boyer (1990) argued for a more encompassing definition of scholarship and highlighted three areas not traditionally considered scholarly work (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). Boyer's (1990) broadened

definition acknowledged the scholarly process by which theory leads to practice and vice versa. So, in addition to empirical research, which he called the scholarship of *discovery*, Boyer offered three other forms of scholarship: *integration*, *application*, and *teaching*.

Boyer (1990) claimed there are four scholarships that have overlapping functions. To him being scholarly meant not only could a person engage in inquiry, but she could also look for connections in theory and practice, build bridges between theory and practice, and disseminate that knowledge to others effectively. Scholarship of integration was defined by Boyer (1990) as the ability to critically consume research, interpret it, and bring new insight to it in a way that shows its connectedness to a greater body of knowledge. Bridging theory and research to practice is at the heart of the scholarship of application, according to Boyer (1990). The scholarship of application also involves being able to look critically at practice and articulate how it can generate theory yet to be discovered or how it defies already existing theory. Finally, he claimed the scholarship of teaching involved a commitment to being well informed and steeped in the knowledge of the field and the “dynamic endeavor involving all the analogies, metaphors, and images that build bridges between the teacher’s understanding and the student’s learning” (p. 23). He argued the scholarship of teaching was a way for the scholar to not only transmit knowledge but also transform it.

Boyer’s model in doctoral education. Doctoral education focuses on Boyer’s (1990) scholarships to varying degrees. Much emphasis is usually given to the scholarship of discovery/research (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). Particularly, the scholarship of research is a major focus of socialization and training in Ph. D. programs (Scott et al., 2004). Students take courses on methodology and may work on various research projects to prepare them for the culminating event, the dissertation. Similarly, Ed. D. programs also focus on the scholarship of

discovery; however, the emphasis on training professionals for practice in these programs lends itself more to the scholarships of application and integration. As is true for most fields of study in education, the purposes of the Ph. D. and Ed. D. in student affairs are less stark than in many other disciplines (Shulman et al., 2006). Both focus on preparing students to engage scholarship in practice. In student affairs graduate professional preparation programs, the scholarship of integration and application find a natural marriage in what is referred to as *theory-to-practice*. The moniker, theory-to-practice, describes various efforts by student affairs practitioners to integrate and apply relevant theories to practice (Reason & Kimball, 2012). While the term is generally used to refer to formal theories, Love (2012) argued it can apply to informal theories as well. A focus on the use of formal and informal theories is offered in many graduate preparation programs and is mentioned in several textbooks such as *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Finally, according to Austin and McDaniels (2006), “The scholarship of teaching is typically less emphasized” in doctoral programs than other areas (p. 54). In recent years, more attention has been given to this area with developments in the study of teaching and learning as well as the realization that doctoral students need help in improving their teaching skills (Crede, Borrego, & McNair, 2010; Malaney, 2002; Phelps, 2010; Pruitt-Logan, & Gaff, 2004). However, much of the focus on the scholarship of teaching in doctoral education has been an avenue to prepare future faculty, not to improve practice. While doctoral programs may be introducing scholarly practice in student affairs to their students, the perception of many scholars in the field is that there is a noticeable absence of it.

Scholarship in student affairs practice. Two special edition journals were devoted to address the lack of scholarship among student affairs practitioners. In them, several scholars

detailed the dismal state of practitioners' engagement in scholarly practice (Blimling, 2001a; Carpenter 2001; Fried, 2002; Malaney, 2002). Since then, others have also written on the topic (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Jablonski, 2005; Jablonski et al., 2006; Sriram & Oster, 2012). It has been argued that not only is a focus on scholarship a necessary part of good practice (Jablonski et al., 2006), but the absence of it is an affront to practitioner standards. Carpenter (2001) offered this opinion and went on to write, "Professionals serve their clients. They cannot do so in the absence of a careful opinion based upon the client's interests in the context of the best thinking available. Anything less is unethical practice" (p. 311). Consequently, the perceived lack of scholarship among practitioners has been a cause of concern.

My review of the literature did not yield much information about the purpose of doctoral education in student affairs, specifically. Doctoral education, in general, has foundations in preparing both scholars and practitioners in their respective fields. With a lack of consensus on both necessary components of doctoral education in student affairs and contemporary suggestions for doctoral education, I chose to explore McEwen and Talbot's (1998) suggestion that doctoral programs should focus on preparing scholar-practitioners. To do so, I used Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship to undergird this study. Thus far, the literature on the state of scholarship in student affairs practice has been theoretical in nature and intimates practitioners are engaged in scholarship at less than satisfactory levels (Jablonski, 2005). However, very little inquiry-based research has been conducted to explore doctoral-level practitioners experiences with scholarship in practice and even fewer have explored factors that influence its use.

Method

Through this study, I provide greater insight into ways doctoral-level practitioners in student affairs have experienced scholarship and the connections scholarship has to their work.

In particular, I emphasize practitioners' doctoral programs and work experiences through the data collected while exploring the following research questions:

1. What experiences with scholarship do participants who hold doctoral degrees in the field of student affairs have?
2. What factors do participants who hold doctoral degrees in the field of student affairs believe influence scholarship in their work?

Research Design Overview

I used a *constructivist* paradigm to design this research. A constructivist paradigm assumes people construct knowledge and reality socially. In relation to research, knowledge and reality presented through data collection and analysis are a result of both the participant and the researcher's influence on the research process. Several theoretical perspectives are offered in the constructivist paradigm; for this study, I used the *symbolic interactionism* perspective, which offers a way of understanding how people make meaning through their interactions with different actions, events, and objects in their lives. It seeks to uncover the common symbols and understandings people use to make meaning of their interactions with others. When symbolic interactionism is used in research, four central concepts guide inquiry in an attempt to: (a) see the object of study as the participant sees it, (b) explore how participants look to others to make meaning, (c) illuminate participants' historical and present processes of meaning making, and (d) explain meaning making in more universal terms by connecting individual participants' accounts (Blumer, 1969).

Participants. This study examined the accounts of eight student affairs professionals (see Table 3.1), who were recruited through a combination of criterion-based and network sampling (Prasad, 2005). Research criteria were limited to student affairs practitioners who

graduated with a doctoral degree in student affairs (or a closely related field of study, e.g., college student personnel, counseling and student personnel services, student development, higher education). Demographic characteristics of participants showed some variance. One participant identified as transgender, five identified as women, and two identified as men. Participants also identified their race/ethnicity thusly: five as African American/Black and three as Caucasian/White. In terms of doctoral education experiences, participants represented programs located in different regions of the contiguous United States with concentrations in higher education and student affairs. At the time of study, participants had been working full-time as student affairs practitioners an average of 10 years.

Table 3.1 Participant Characteristics

Name	Years in profession	Master's (Geographical)	Doctorate (Geographical)	# of institutions (worked)
Channing	15-20	Southwest	Other	4
Tam	15-20	Midwest	Midwest	5
Phoenix	5-10	Midwest	Southwest	3
Dana	5-10	Midwest	Midwest	2
Elisa	5-10	Midwest	Midwest	2
Tiana	5-10	Midwest	Midwest	unknown
Karena	10-15	Southwest	Northeast	4
Karma	10-15	Midwest	Northeast	unknown

Data collection. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. Collecting data in this way allowed me to capture participants' *voices*. What Patton (2002) referred to as voice is the process of recording participants' views and perceptions of their world using their own words and terminology. Semi-structured interviews gave me an opportunity to provide both format and focus to the interview while simultaneously making room for participants to also determine the direction of the interview (Prasad, 2005). Interviews, in a symbolic interactionist framework, "are typically in-depth and meaning-centered" (Prasad, 2005, p. 25) focusing more on "how"

participants make meaning of the topic of inquiry as opposed to what is actually happening in their accounts. The interview guide was constructed with questions connected to Boyer's (1990) framework (see Appendix F).

Data Analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) described qualitative research as being inherently reflective saying, "data [are] sometimes pre-coded but continuously interpreted, on first sighting and again and again" (p. 242). Preliminary data analyses occurred simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998) in this study. As analysis proceeded, existent data were compared with previous data collected in the study and used to guide subsequent data gathering. Once all data were collected, I used the four central concepts of the symbolic interactionist framework in conjunction with qualitative coding methods offered by Charmaz (2000) in analysis. Because scholarship is the object of study here, I illustrate how the four conceptions of symbolic interactionism were used in this study to capture it. First, I attempted to see scholarship as my participants saw it. Second, I explored how participants looked to others to make sense of scholarship and readjusted their actions based on those interactions in positive, negative, or neutral ways. Third, I analyzed how participants' thoughts and actions toward scholarship were constructed as well as how they have changed or stayed the same over time. Finally, because symbolic interactionism is a study of group life and conduct (Blumer, 1969), I offered a group perspective by linking together individual participants' meaning making around scholarship in practice. To accomplish this, I used a coding process in order to break down data into concepts and then reassemble them into categories (Charmaz, 2000). During that process, I grouped data, in relation to the preceding concepts, that were related in meaning or conceptually similar in nature to form categories and combined those categories to form themes.

Measures of robustness. A couple of actions were taken to ensure results were robust and well-developed. First, participants were provided an opportunity to review their transcripts for the purposes of *member checking*. During this process, if they so chose, participants examined their transcripts for clarification and/or accuracy (Meriam, 1998). Member checking allows participants to verifying and validate information transcribed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998) and provide feedback on how their voice is being represented by the data. Additionally one method of triangulation, *triangulation of sources* was used with the data. I approached this task by examining the consistency of interview transcript data among interviews with the same participant, when multiple interviews were conducted, and between each different participants interview, in accordance to methods described by Patton (2009).

Results

Through my analysis of data from eight participant accounts, three themes emerged. Those themes were: (a) scholarship as a necessary function of practice, (b) mentorship as a motivator of action, and (c) the role of context in defining scholarship in practice.

In the first theme, scholarship as a necessary function of practice, most participants spoke of the many ways scholarship drove their practice. Keeping in mind Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship as the focus in this study, I find those accounts include anecdotes of research, theory-to-practice, and teaching. Participants mentioned these areas of scholarship as ways in which they went about their work.

The second theme, mentorship as a motivator of action, contains participants' stories of others who encouraged them toward scholarship in their work. Participants gave an account of at least one person who served as a mentor for them in their professional journey. However, many

reported multiple people served in the role of mentor to them both through their doctoral program experiences and in their practice.

The third theme highlights the role of context in influencing how participants defined scholarship in practice. Most participants had had work experiences in multiple institutions at the time of the study. Their descriptions of educational and work experiences revealed shifting ideas of what scholarship in practice meant to them. In the following section, I explore this theme along with the two aforementioned themes more fully, allowing excerpts from participant data to give voice to each.

Scholarship as Practice

Participant accounts gave credence to Carpenter's (2001) claim that the work of student affairs encompasses each of the scholarships offered by Boyer. Many offered detailed descriptions where they engaged research, theory-to-practice, or teaching as a function of their work.

Research. Research was the least frequently reported scholarship in which participants engaged. When research activities were reported, they showed up in the more localized form of assessment. Participants' efforts of assessment included use of various methodologies, with results being used to inform both small and large-scale decisions at their institutions. This is reflected in participants' responses to an inquiry after their use of research in practice:

We would try to do more focus groups and have conversations with students about needs and how we can be more effective at the job we were doing. I do know, because of those assessments, they were able to build housing for freshman. There was an emphasis on how important that first year was. ...I don't know if they would say emphasis on

research, they would never contextualize it that way. I think they would think about it as like assessment (Phoenix).

[Research] doesn't play a role in my life right now. I think doing assessment is the closest I come to doing research. But that's I think to justify what I do and why I do it. ...I think doing assessment, writing your learning outcomes, figuring out how you are going to measure them, using whatever tool it is that you are going to use to measure them, being able to interpret the information that you get, that's the closest I come to doing research within my job (Elisa).

Only one participant, Karena, spoke of engaging in non-assessment related research. As a function of her work, she was actively conducting research on the student population with whom she worked.

Many participants talked about gaining the skills of research and assessment through their doctoral programs. In addition to their dissertations, some participants were able to engage in multiple research projects, oftentimes working alongside faculty on the faculty member's own research projects. Participants spoke of these opportunities in ways that suggested they were meaningful in helping to develop their skills and research confidence.

Theory-to-practice. Participants also shared stories of integrating theory into practice. Some participants detailed uses of theory in practice when they felt "stuck" on an issue or problem. In terms of their day-to-day work, participants spoke of drawing from knowledge they had gained through their doctoral programs to apply to issues they were facing. This process was usually one of connecting knowledge that had been internalized from their graduate experiences. However, participants also shared instances in which they would look to external

information in the field's literature to help inform their decision-making processes. For many, their theory-to-practice work involved a combination of theoretical/research-based knowledge, expertise of their peers, and non-traditional information-gathering media.

[I use research] if I'm feeling we're going in this direction and we're getting stuck. ...So, one of my responsibilities is working with our student staff fall training and having oversight for that. There is a piece of fall training which is not going well, either evaluating it or certain sessions or the flow of the training or whatever it is. ...first [I] call to the different universities, which is great, and I might not have done [that] before if I didn't have those relationships from going to school with some of those people. Then I can also look into the research and see what other universities are doing and what's out there in the research on best practices or moving more towards online modules. Are they moving more towards whatever it is? It's more easily identified and [I] find ways of looking into some other options as opposed to feeling stuck and not knowing where to go or having to get creative on my own.

In the account quoted above, Channing not only looked to external sources of information that were research-based to apply to the issues he was facing in his work, but he also used information he gained from a network of his peers, many of which he had met in his doctoral program. Other participants also remarked about getting information in this way, oftentimes through listservs.

Another reason participants gave for engaging theory-to-practice was it allowed them to be innovative and stay current in field.

Every time I get my *JCSD*, I skim through it and skim through *Inside Higher Ed* and *the Chronicle* and try and stay aware of what's happening. The courses I took as a master's

or doctoral student, and even teaching now, all of that informs the work that I do on a regular basis. I don't know that I pull out my student development theory book every day and say, "oh well this student is in this state," you know? ...In a staff meeting we'll talk about having a new program or requiring it for our program for our students, thinking about all the consequences of everything that we do. So, if we have a required event on a Friday, does it end in time for our orthodox Jewish students to not be excluded, and if we make the decision to keep it on that day, who does it affect and how does it affect them? What are the implications of that? We're thinking about the courses that we teach, the first year course looks very different than the senior and thesis conference from sort of both cognitive and psycho social development models and it's certainly part of what we do.

In the preceding excerpt, Karena not only discussed *how* she engaged theory-to-practice but also *why* she did. She went on to mention additional ways she has gained information about and stayed connected to what is going on in the field. Many of those ways were through the use of journals and periodicals, but she also mentioned social media to mediate her learning in these areas as well. Other participants also mentioned using non-traditional methods of staying current in the field and finding information to apply in practice. As mentioned before, many participants talked about using listservs to exchange information with their peers and some, like Karma, also mentioned using social media. Karma, in a discussion on how she encounters information through social media, said, "I'm a big Twitter person, I tweet. I certainly enjoy other's tweets, and then that takes me to other information."

Teaching. Many participants described teaching opportunities as a part of their doctoral journeys. For some it was built into the program, and for others, opportunities were made

available to them through faculty in their department or their supervised practice sites.

Tam, who had an opportunity to co-teach a master's-level class with one of his professors, had this to say about how he has connected that experience to his current work:

[Teaching] was wonderful, it got me back in the classroom, which I loved. Teaching gave me an opportunity to hear what some of the younger professionals were thinking and how they relate their theory to practice and their experience working as a GA and their frustrations. So, it gave me some insight, and when I was ready to get back into the workforce, I knew what younger professionals were looking for and what they needed. That was a great experience, working with [my professor].

Other participants had similar experiences as Tam's, and many reported having opportunities to teach in their current work, as well. Tiana, who was also able to teach during her time in her doctoral program, was having a difficult time trying to figure out how to find prospects for it in her current work.

I taught at [my previous institution]. I enjoyed that, and I enjoyed teaching [in my doctoral program]. I guess here, the thought has crossed my mind, but, to be honest, I wouldn't know what to teach, because I feel like here, at a liberal arts college, I really don't know what topic I would be able to teach on. Actually, I should probably think more about that. I can't think what I would teach.

The desire to teach was fully present for Tiana, but she was having difficulty finding a place for it at the institution in which she currently worked.

While formal classroom teaching experiences were central to participants in this study, some also spoke of the importance of teaching in informal spaces in their work. Such was the

case for Phoenix, who was not engaged in formal teaching spaces but reported teaching in other contexts:

[Teaching is] a day-to-day thing. I feel like my job is mostly in that role between advocacy, teaching, and trainer/facilitator; these are the words that I think of. I do a lot of training. I do a lot of intentional one-on-one conversations with difficult staff members and faculty members, and so teaching and writing curriculum and doing training with nonprofit organizations as well as internally here is very much a part of our work. I feel like it's a large majority of it. When I think about all the groundwork, I'm doing a lot of teaching.

Thus, participants in this study viewed other work activities such as mentoring and advising, training, and consultation as additional teaching spaces outside of the classroom.

Motivation through Mentorship

An overarching theme in participants' accounts was the impact their mentors had on how they engaged in scholarship. This theme was present both in participants' accounts of their doctoral education experiences and their lives as practitioners.

Doctoral program mentors. Mentors played a role in how participants made decisions in their doctoral programs and also how they were able to engage in different opportunities. One participant, Elisa, spoke about how she established a relationship with her mentor and the opportunities that were made available to her as a result of that relationship.

I did a study tour and [he] made the comment, when we were on the study tour, "if you ever need anything, let me know." Don't say that to me if you don't mean it. ...I was constantly—I wouldn't necessarily say a nuisance, but—when I had opportunities to have

face time with him, I took it. I took it, and it when it came time for him to look for someone to co-teach his class with him, I was all over it.

Tam had a similar experience in his doc program. He had formed a mentoring relationship with one of his professors and was invited to teach several classes with him. Later, when Tam was presented with an opportunity to work in another area of the university, he negotiated to continue teaching with his mentor in addition to his new responsibilities. For him, working alongside his mentor made the extra investment of time worth it. Participants shared many more stories about faculty mentoring relationships they had established in their doctoral programs. In some cases, those mentors were also the student's advisor, but in many cases they were not. Yet, as a result of these relationships, participants reported being motivated to engage in activities such as teaching, taking risks in their research, and taking advantage of professional advancement opportunities.

Mentors in practice. Participants also reported the motivating influences of mentors in their lives as practitioners. They highlighted different people in those roles at various points in their journeys. Many reported supervisors as mentors, who helped them navigate scholarship in practice. Participants also described other student affairs practitioners as mentors for them. In most of the instances where participants mentioned mentors, it was connected to some encouragement toward scholarship, which was then followed by action on the participant's part. This was the case for Phoenix, who shared,

...my mentor from my alma mater was like, "I see a talent in you and I want to hone in on it. I want you to stop saying that you can't teach. I want you to stop saying that you can't be faculty, and I want to give you some hands on experience about what that means particularly as it relates to courses that you're passionate about." I was able to do that,

and I loved it. I was able to TA for qualitative research, and that was really important for me.

Tiana, in a discussion about the variety of things she reads to inform her practice, included this story, “a retired Dean of Students at [my previous institution] once told me in a piece of advice, she said, ‘You read the local newspaper wherever you are, read the local newspaper, you’ve got to know what’s going on in your community.’ So I do.” Karena, the only participant among those interviewed for this study who reported engaging in traditional research activities in her work, highlighted the role her supervisor and mentor played in those pursuits. “My supervisor is a faculty member who wants me to have publications as part of my performance review and supports research efforts on my part, so I feel like it’s a nice combination of theory to practice to scholarship,” she said.

Contextual Influences

The contexts in which participants found themselves had a notable influence on how they defined scholarship in practice. Each of the participants in this study attended different doctoral programs, which all gave varying levels of focus to Boyer’s (1990) scholarships. Three of the participants pursued their doctoral degrees while simultaneously working full-time some. Also, many of the participants in this study worked at multiple institutions for which values of scholarship in practice varied. In this section, I explore how participants talked about the influence of those contexts in how they defined scholarship in practice.

Doctoral program contexts. Although, each participant had received a doctorate in an area closely related to student affairs, the structures of each program varied. For some participants, structure made the task of connecting what they were learning and experiencing to their work more difficult. This was the case for Channing, who described his experience thusly:

There were different tracks. There was the K-12 track for people who either were getting their teaching credentials at the same time or who wanted to be in administration or be a principal or things like that, working in district office. Then, there was the organization and leadership track for people who either wanted to be in higher education or who wanted to go and work in some kind of private organization. And, so for me, it was trying to focus things – at that point I knew I wanted to stay in higher education, student affairs somewhere, so focusing on that.

Even when the structures of programs were described similarly, the cultures of those programs varied in many ways. For some participants, conversations around theory-to-practice were many and robust. For others, as in the case of Channing mentioned above, the quality of those conversations was lower. Teaching opportunities were plentiful and served to enhance skills, in some doctoral programs. Such was the case in Tam's experience, as previously mentioned in the theme on mentoring. Yet, others found few opportunities to teach through their doctoral programs. Opportunities to engage in research also varied by program, with some participants engaging in collaborative research with faculty and others struggling to find those opportunities.

If you wanted to do research beyond [your dissertation], it is something that you really had to seek out. ...It is not necessarily a program where you go there because there is this specific person that you know that you want to work with because this is the area of their expertise, and they are not accepting you based on the fact that you have said I want to work with this particular faculty member. I hate to use this term, but it is kind of loosey goosey, in that, if you don't seek out a research opportunity with a faculty member—

So, we had one faculty member who was doing some research with students with disabilities. That's not necessarily an area that I wanted to research, but now I wish I had just said "What can I do to help you? How can I be a part of this?" just for the experience of being able to research with a faculty. I think that there are some people who had that opportunity, because it was part of their assistantship. So, their assistantship was to be a research assistant with a faculty member. But then, I think that there were other people who had that opportunity because they sought it out. But it wasn't one of those things where faculty said I like what you are doing, let me work with you. It is one of those things where you have to say "I don't care what you are doing. I am interested in it. How can I help you? Or even I am not interested in it, but I know you need some help. What can I do?"

Work contexts. Participants' descriptions of their practice highlighted the role of work context in how they thought about scholarship in practice. When taken in the aggregate, each interview contained accounts of the participants' engagement in and value for scholarship. However, the way value and engagement of scholarship in practice shifted was a telling feature of the influence of the context in which participants found themselves. This phenomenon is best highlighted in two separate descriptions related by Phoenix. Both incidents are connected to how Phoenix thought about theory-to-practice. In the first description, he highlights an experience he had working at an institution where there was a large population of historically marginalized students.

I always remember either being a part of the hiring committees or a part of my own interview process, being asked about applying theory in practice. I always found it interesting, because, on the ground, while theory was really important, with *our* students,

particularly identity development just didn't fit. I'm like "You can quote Chickering all day, but that doesn't mean anything to my undocumented, deaf students who are struggling with their classes."

While he valued the use of theory in practice, there was not much theory in the literature that was relevant to the student population at that university. So, when Phoenix was in interview situations and encountering candidates who only displayed knowledge of broad sweeping theory that did not fit the student population, he found himself frustrated. Later, when Phoenix was working at a different institution, he often used theory to frame conversations about his work to colleagues. Particularly, Phoenix highlighted the usefulness of his doctoral experience in that process, saying:

I work in this institution now, and it's not a student affairs institution, it's just not. So, I value my Ed. D., so much more being here than I did at my other institutions, because I'm able to bring in conversations like when we're hiring folks who don't have the background and the knowledge around theory and student experience. I mean we just had a training last year on the learning outcomes, right? So, it was surprising to me, because of what you think this institution is, but when it comes to student affairs, we are not the student affairs institution. So the folks in my department who do have student background, we can say, "let's think critically about this. We should be setting some types of outcomes. We should be measuring them."

Discussion

Carpenter (2001) argued, while there is no right way to practice student affairs, there are "less effective ones that cost credibility, waste resources, and inhibit students' success" (p. 302). He then offered engagement in scholarship as a solution to avoid ineffective practice. His

argument added support to the assertion made three years prior by McEwen and Talbot (1998) that doctoral programs benefit the profession more by focusing on preparing students to be scholar-practitioners with skills to advance the profession, rather than on having a set curriculum. The findings of this study suggest these scholars were right. Despite differing curricula, participants' exposure and engagement in scholarship through their doctoral experiences, oftentimes, led to their use of it in their work as student affairs practitioners.

Considering Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship was originally intended for faculty, recognizing ways scholarship shows up in the lives of practitioners necessitates an understanding of their day-to-day work. The scholarship of discovery offered by Boyer is one that includes systematic study that links research and produces results that can be shared and understood by others. In the day-to-day life of a student affairs practitioner, this systematic study may happen more in the form of assessment than traditional research. "Assessment, in essence, takes our natural curiosity about our work's effectiveness and puts it in a systematic framework, where we explicitly articulate what we hope a student participating in a program will take away from the experience—the learning outcomes" (Bresciani, 2011, p.1). This was certainly the case for participants in my study, who used skills of inquiry they gained through their doctoral work to investigate issues on their campuses. Given the other finding in this study that many practitioners look to information shared among their peers about best practices on their campuses, assessment cannot be discounted as a form of scholarship in practice. In faculty culture, systematic inquiry in the form of research begins with curiosity in a phenomenon and ends with a report of findings surrounding that phenomenon to be shared with others, oftentimes with others either disputing or building upon those findings in a process of regeneration (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Malaney, 2002). The results of this study suggest that practitioner culture,

which includes conducting systematic inquiry whose results are used to inform the work and, sometimes, systematic inquiry of other practitioners, parallels the process of research typically engaged in by faculty.

The results of this study suggest that not only are practitioners engaging in systematic inquiry to improve their work, they are also integrating and applying interdisciplinary theory. It has been suggested that student affairs practitioners use a combination of formal, informal, and implicit theories to guide their work (Bensimon, 2007; Love, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012). The findings of this study support that and offer examples and explanations of how practitioners have made meaning of theory in their work with different student groups and in different organizational environments.

Results of this research also suggest that context and mentorship matter when it comes to scholarship engagement among practitioners. Participants' experiences in doctoral programs connected to scholarship and receiving mentorship influenced how they thought about it and engaged in it in practice. These findings support previous literature detailing the impact of socialization processes in doctoral programs (Gardener, 2008; Hughes & Kleist, 2005; Simpson, 2003).

Participant descriptions of their doctoral programs revealed differing structures, foci, and cultures. However, these variations did not have a significant influence on how practitioners engaged in scholarship. These findings support McEwen and Talbot's (1998) claim that doctoral programs may serve their students best through a focus on preparing them to be scholar-practitioners more than anything else. They also paint a very different picture than that offered by previous literature, which suggested very little engagement in scholarship on the part of

practitioners (Blimling, 2001a; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fried, 2002; Jablonski, 2005; Jablonski et al., 2006; Malaney, 2002; Sriram & Oster, 2012).

Implications for Practice

The results of this study imply that varied program focuses may not provide an impediment to scholarly practice. However, the findings suggest that in addition to program course offerings, students benefit from a doctoral program culture that encourages integration of different areas of scholarship in practice. As such, faculty may work toward fostering a culture in which students have an opportunity to integrate the knowledge and skills they are gaining into their practice. For full-time students, this may include collaboration with assistantship/internship providers to make space for applied practice. For part-time students, it may mean providing assignments that result in a tangible result they can use in their work. Likewise, course assignments or preliminary examinations could be structured to have students integrate and apply their learning to programs, interventions, or proposals for the work, assistantships, or internships in which they are currently engaged. The findings also suggest that, for both groups, being presented with opportunities to teach as a part of the doctoral experience serves as a way to strengthen practitioners' confidence in that area of scholarship. Particularly, students may benefit from a focus on teaching and learning that includes classes on pedagogy and curriculum design (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). Even outside the classroom context, the findings of this research suggest, the impact of faculty mentorship is an important factor in how doctoral graduates engage scholarship in their practice.

Similarly, those who serve as supervisors may play a critical role in encouraging scholarship in practice. The findings of this research suggest mentorship in the workplace helps practitioners find value in and make meaning of scholarship in their work. Supervisors who

encourage and recognize scholarship behaviors in supervisees have a powerful influence in their continued engagement. Those supervising doctoral students who are working in assistantships, internships, or full-time capacities, can partner with doctoral programs to help student fold their learning into their work. Finally, these findings suggest, supervisors can also have an influential effect by role modeling engagement in scholarship in their own practice.

The findings in this study have important implications for those who want to be scholar-practitioners in student affairs. Due to the size and scope of student affairs functional areas and the specialized purposed of doctoral programs, practitioners will need to navigate course content in a way that is most meaningful to their work. For those in doctoral programs, this may mean negotiating with professors on course assignments, suggesting activities that will help the practitioner ground her learning in her work. Similarly, practitioners may want to revise or renegotiated their professional development plans with their supervisors, in order to focus their time on incorporate course content in their day-to-day work. The findings of this research suggest that making the effort to learn how to integrate course content into practice while working on doctoral degree has long-term implication for navigating scholarship in practice post-doctoral degree.

Limitations

As is the case for most qualitative research, the findings of this study have the potential to be transferable but not generalizable. These findings are also not without limitations. The nature of constructivist research is that the results of the study are a product of the interaction between the researcher and the participants. Also, the findings generated in this study are a result of self-report. My own subjectivities and those of my participants affect these two aspects of the research. More research on this topic with multiple analysts and participants can add insight to

the findings presented here. Similarly, I chose to Boyer's (1990) conceptualization of scholarship to frame this study. As such, other conceptualizations may yield different results about the nature of scholarship in student affairs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore student affairs doctoral graduates' experiences of scholarship and their perceptions of what has influenced its use in practice. Using Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship, I inquired after participants' exposure to and uses of discovery, integration, application, and teaching in their work. The findings revealed that socialization processes around scholarship in doctoral programs influenced practitioners' use of it in practice. Additionally, mentorship both in doctoral programs and in the world of work served as powerful motivators for practitioner scholarship. Moreover, the culture of scholarship in organizations in which participants found themselves facilitated how they defined the use of scholarship in practice. Overall, the findings suggest the state of scholarship in practice could use more attention but may not be as dismal as it seems.

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CHAPTER 4

BOYERISTIC TENDENCIES: A LOOK AT LIFE HISTORIES OF STUDENT AFFAIRS SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONERS ¹

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ABSTRACT

Past literature in student affairs suggested very few student affairs practitioners were engaged in scholarship. However, very little is known about what the levels of scholarship engagement in student affairs actually are or what may be contributing to the perceived scantiness of scholarship activities among student affairs practitioners. This study examined the career histories and educational experiences of eight student affairs scholar-practitioners using a constructivist paradigm, the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, and a topical life history method, eight student affairs scholar-practitioners were interviewed. The results of which served to explore two gaps in the literature of scholarship in practice, an understanding of influences of preparation experiences and work conditions that support it. The findings revealed several important implications for student affairs practitioners, supervisors, and graduate preparation programs.

INDEX WORDS: Scholar-practitioner, Symbolic Interactionism, Scholarship, Boyer, Scholar, Practitioner, Graduate Preparation, Topical Life History

Leaders in the field of student affairs have voiced concern about the state of scholarship in student affairs practice (Carpenter, 2001; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fried, 2002; Jablonski, Mena, Manning, Carpenter, & Siko, 2006; Malaney, 2002; Schroeder & Pike, 2001; Sriram & Oster, 2012). Many of their writings on the subject are theoretical, rather than empirical. They offer differing perspectives on what constitutes scholarship in practice.

Student affairs is not the only field concerned about a disconnect between scholarship and practice. Other fields such as counseling (Karam & Sprenkle, 2010; Moran, 2011; Murray, 2009; Pilecki & McKay, 2013), nursing (Hatlevik, 2012), management and organizational development (Kram, Wasserman, & Yip, 2012; Tyler, 2009; Wasserman & Kram, 2009), secondary education (Bouck, 2011; Dooly & Sadler, 2013), and social work (Savaya & Gardner, 2012) have also expressed concern with the state of scholarship in practice in their fields. This list of areas is not meant to be exhaustive, as it is outside the scope of this research to introduce all fields struggling with the idea of scholarship in practice. It is, however, meant to provide a snapshot of the breadth of this issue in the world of practitioner work. Additionally, much of what has been written in these areas serves as the basis for this literature review, covering definitions and terminology relevant to the label “scholar-practitioner”; scholar-practitioner identity development; and challenges to enacting a scholar-practitioner identity. Boyer’s (1990) model of scholarship serves as a connection to the scholar-practitioner literature being reviewed.

Literature Review

A number of terms and definitions have been offered for the label scholar-practitioner. Wasserman and Kram (2009) offered a list of terms included in management literature on the subject as: “‘researcher–practitioners,’ ‘scientist–practitioners,’ ‘scholar–practitioners,’ ‘practitioner–theorists,’ ‘scholarly practitioners,’ and ‘reflective practitioners’” (p. 13). They

also provided a definition, which described the scholar-practitioner as someone who creates knowledge for the sake of other practitioners' use. Bouck (2011) referred to the scholar-practitioner as a *bricoleur*. A *bricoleur* is a person who takes composite pieces and combines them to make a new whole. In using this terminology Bouck (2011) explained the work of a scholar-practitioner as using a combination of scholarly work, theory, and insider knowledge of practice. Much of what has been offered in student affairs literature on scholarship in practice also provides many conceptualizations of the term scholar-practitioner (Carpenter, 2001; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fried, 2002; Jablonski, Mena, Manning, Carpenter, & Siko, 2006; Malaney, 2002; Schroeder & Pike, 2001). In addition to definitions that have been offered, it has been suggested that there is a continuum on which the scholar-practitioner may fall (Jablonski et al., 2006). That continuum, which is anchored on both sides by the *pure scholar* who has little connection to practice and the *pure practitioner* who has little to no connection to scholarship, offers a number of examples of how scholarship and practice intersect, included but not limited to a practitioner's use of and engagement in empirical research, academic writing, and inquiry into theoretical knowledge available in the field. Among the aforementioned writings in the field of student affairs, Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship has been offered as a way of conceptualizing scholarship's use in practice.

Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship included four areas in which scholarship occurs, *discovery, integration, application, and teaching*. Discovery was the term Boyer used for the process of conducting research. Integration was the process through which knowledge of different topics and disciplines were woven together in order to create new meanings for ideas. Application included taking knowledge gained through discovery or integration and using it to solve real world problems or issues. Teaching was the act of transforming and extending

knowledge gained to others. Each of these areas, Boyer (1990) argued, was a way of enacting scholarship. The connection of these four areas of scholarship is explored in more depth as they link to the broader literature on the scholar-practitioner.

Boyer (1990) made the argument that “in our complicated, vulnerable world, the discovery of new knowledge is absolutely crucial” (p. 18). The discovery of knowledge in student affairs through research has typically been a pursuit attributed to the academic enterprise (Young, 2001), and engagement in research by practitioners continues to be low (Sriram & Oster, 2012). Many scholars have offered reasons for the lack of research engagement by practitioners from gaps in research knowledge (Bishop, 2010; Jablonski et al., 2006; Kezar, 2000; Malaney, 2002; Sriram & Oster, 2012) to lack of time (Evans et al., 2010; Schroeder & Pike, 2001), and some suggestions have been made about how to address the issues preventing research engagement among practitioners. Kezar (2000) suggested that practitioners be involved in the process of deciding what issues or programs should be researched and argued practitioners are more likely to use research they have helped create and, thus, more likely to be aware of what research is available to them. Similarly, it has been suggested research that involves practitioners in the process has a higher probability of addressing the concerns of practitioners (Allen, 2002). It “demystifies the research process and makes the results more accessible; it has the potential of awakening practitioners to the possibility that research can legitimately meet their concerns, thus closing any perceived gap” (Kezar, 2000, pp. 445-446). Sriram and Oster (2012) also suggested, it will not only take individual agency but also a culture that encourages engagement in research. For them, a culture of research engagement includes not only conducting research, but also consuming it for their practice.

The scholarships of integration and application (Boyer, 1990) form the basis of what is

termed *theory-to-practice* in the field of student affairs. Theory-to-practice is the process by which formal, informal, and implicit theories are used by an individual practitioner or group of practitioners to inform personal practice or development of programs or policies (Bensimon, 2007; Love, 2012; Parker, 1977; Reason & Kimball, 2012). In the field of student affairs, integration of theory in practice has been highlighted as an important aspect of training future practitioners (CAS, 2012) and an important competency area for student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). However, translating theory into tangible practice is not always an easy task for the practitioner. Realizing this, several scholars have offered models and suggestions for translating theory into practice (Argis & Schon, 1974; Evans, 1987; McEwen, 2003; Reason & Kimball, 2012; Rodgers & Widdick, 1980; Stage, 1994). Yet, many of these models have come under criticism for not being useful to practitioners (Evans et al., 2010), and some scholars have suggested a lack of practitioner input keeps these models from being viable (Brown & Barr, 1990; Kezar, 2000). Reason and Kimball's (2012) model, however, includes elements such as theory-to-practice assessment by practitioners that have not been developed as fully by previous models. These elements include reflective practice and considerations specific to institutional context as practitioners go about the work of integrating formal, informal, and implicit theory into their work.

Little has been written about the role of teaching among student affairs practitioners. Boyer (1990) argued, "As a scholarly enterprise, teaching begins with what the teacher knows. Those who teach must, above all, be steeped in the knowledge of their fields" (p. 23). He goes on to explain that teaching is a communal process by which the teacher builds bridges from her understanding to the students' learning using whatever tools help her do that successfully. The scholarship of teaching is seen as a carefully honed craft that produces critical thinkers who also

go on to engage scholarship. This area of scholarship has little representation in student affairs literature, and what little is available addresses only the work of the professoriate (Malaney, 2002). However, understanding where transformative teaching is happening in the lives of student affairs practitioners could be a key to understanding another way a culture of scholarship can be fostered.

Scholar-practitioners have the potential to be powerful change agents or social justice advocates (Bouck, 2011; Wasserman & Kram, 2009). In a study they conducted with professionals in the field of management, Wasserman and Kram (2009) found scholar-practitioners reported using their consumption and production of knowledge to improve practices and effectiveness in their organizations. Bouck (2011) suggested that scholar-practitioners use their combinations of knowledge and skills to critically examine oppressive structures that may be present in the educational system. He went on to argue the powerful role scholar-practitioners can play in challenging these structures:

Unfortunately, harmful educational practices concealed under the sheep's clothing of mission statements that tout social justice and democratic ideals continue to promote the status quo. Therefore, scholar-practitioners' practices hinge on creating viable educational organizations through exposing such inequities and ensuring the fair treatment, which does not necessarily mean equal treatment, of all students." (Bouck, 2011, p. 204)

In using their continued knowledge and engagement, scholar-practitioners can impact the lives of students in powerful ways. Similarly, they can impact those who work with and for them. Wasserman and Kram (2009) reported role modeling these actions is a critical factor in creating conditions in which other practitioners engage in scholarship and work to affect change.

The problem in student affairs, however, is that student affairs theories have not kept pace with the complexities of ever-changing college demographics (Tanaka, 2002). Tanaka (2002) noted this is especially true when it comes to engaging critical approaches to examine issues of social justice, hegemony, and many other things that affect marginalization of student populations.

Engaging scholarship is not easy for student affairs practitioners, as they face a number of challenges in regards to professional preparation and practice. Schroeder and Pike (2001) suggested challenges and constraints to scholarship could be the result of prevailing mental models, fear, inadequate preparation, lack of clear purpose, motivation, institutional context, individual differences, tyranny of custom, institutional culture, and the tyranny of the immediate. Tyranny of the immediate, which often results in a lack of time to engage in scholarly endeavors, may present the biggest challenge to practitioners (Evans et al., 2010). Additionally, it has been suggested that graduate programs are not preparing practitioners with the skills they need to be successful (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009; Waple, 2006). Even when students have been exposed to training in some areas, such as research, as a part of their preparation program, they may continue to lack confidence in their skills and avoid engagement in research (Sriram & Oster, 2012) or they may be demotivated to engage in research, assuming it is the work of faculty (Tyler, 2009). This line of thinking is problematic, because articles written by faculty may not always present information in a way that is useful to practitioners. In a review of academic articles written in the field of management, Bartunek (2007) discovered only 64% offered implications for practice and out of those 64% only 15% were implications geared specifically toward practitioners. She went on to argue that the method for identifying research and presenting it is flawed. Whereas academics look for gaps in the literature and find ways to

highlight their importance, practitioners are more interested in information that has a tangible and resonant connection to their work. Kezar (2000) echoed this idea and offered a solution saying, “practitioners are often impacted by the results of research; thus, the quality principles suggest that it is critical for this group to be involved with the research team or to be seen as a part of the research process...” (p. 445). She suggested creating partnerships between faculty members and practitioners in student affairs to create new knowledge. As Wasserman and Kram (2009) suggested, these kinds of partnerships serve “the purpose of solving problems and generating new knowledge that will be responsive to leading-edge challenges” (p. 34).

Despite two special edition journal volumes dedicated to the topic, little inquiry has been conducted into the presumed gap that exists between scholar and practitioner in student affairs (Sriram & Oster, 2012). Scholars not only in the field of student affairs but also in many other fields that train practitioners have stressed the importance of the scholar-practitioner. The potential for scholar-practitioners to contribute to the wider body of knowledge of the field and affect change in ways that benefit students in the academy as a whole makes this topic a worthwhile one to study. Past writings have suggested that very little practitioner scholarship is occurring in the field of student affairs. Through this study, I examined the lives of several practitioners who are considered to be scholars by their peers.

Method

The purpose of this study was to provide more insight into the skills and support systems needed to encourage scholarship among student affairs practitioners. To accomplish this goal, I gathered the topical life histories of a group of student affairs scholar-practitioners. The following research questions guided my exploration, data gathering, and data analysis:

1. What experiences with scholarship do participants who regularly engage in it have?
2. What factors do participants who regularly engage in scholarship perceive to influence its continuation in their work?

Research Design Overview

The *constructivist paradigm* undergirds the design of this study. When used in research, it provides researchers a way of deciphering peoples' meaning making processes for certain situations or perspectives. Basic assumptions held in this paradigm are: construction of knowledge and reality is an ever changing social process and findings from research are the result of the interaction between the researcher and her participants. Within this paradigm there are several theoretical perspectives that offer more refined areas of focus; the *symbolic interactionist* perspective was used for this study (Mead, 1934). This paradigm gives particular focus to how people make meaning of interactions with significant others, events, incidents, and circumstances in their lives. This process of meaning making involves a constant renegotiation of how they think about and act toward the object of study, in this case scholarship in practice. Finally, given the breadth of participants' experiences, a *topical life history* methodology was employed.

Topical life history is a distinct narrative research approach that focuses on life stories (Ward, 2003). In research, life stories provide a comprehensive view of people's experiences over time, including but not limited to personal, social, historical, and geographical influences that have shaped people's experiences. Unlike the broader life history approach, topical life history is an in-depth look at the evolution of a specific topic in a person's life (Denzin, 1989).

Topical life history research has been highlighted as a way to "offer the advantages of

capturing subjectivity, providing contextualization, and allowing for the evaluation of the topic in focus” (Ward, 2003, p. 33). It focuses on subjectivity by capturing participants’ explanations of their behavior around the topic of study. It focuses on context by situating participants’ accounts within the context in which they occurred such as graduate preparation programs and offices, departments, and divisions in which participants have worked. Thus, the cultural aspects of those contexts are explored in the data collection process. Topical life history research offers rich enough data to allow for robust analysis of the topic of study for the individual and the whole (Ward, 2003). Also, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) suggested that life history is the best way to examine decisions people make as they relate to their work, saying, “Career decisions can only be understood in terms of the life histories of those who make them, wherein identity has evolved through interaction with significant others and with the culture in which the subject has lived and is living” (p. 33).

Topical life history research finds a natural pairing with symbolic interactionism, which seeks to understand people’s meaning making processes as a result of their interactions with significant circumstances, people, and events. The topical life history approach allows for data collection that yields rich stories that include the aforementioned elements of interaction. It has been argued that life history techniques are particularly useful for understanding all of the influences that shape a lifetime of occupational experiences (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Wicks & Whiteford, 2006). Moreover, it has been suggested “life history approach is probably the only authentic means of understanding how motives and practices reflect the intimate intersection of institutional and individual experience in the postmodern world” (Dhunpath, 2000, p. 544). Bouck (2011) suggested that examining the scholar-practitioner identity necessitates an understanding of how people understand their identity as it relates to themselves and their

relation to others. Similarly, Kram et al. (2012) explained “as individuals make meaning (and construct identity), they are likely to develop the multiple facets of their identities, including personal attributes, membership in social groups (e.g., gender, race, age, ethnicity), and various work roles” as they relate to being a scholar-practitioner (pp. 305-306). By combining symbolic interactionism and topical life history exploring was better able to explore how my participants understood their scholar-practitioner identity at different points in their careers. For this study, topical life histories of eight student affairs scholar-practitioners’ career experiences were gathered.

Participants. This study examined the accounts of eight student affairs scholar-practitioners (see Table 4.1). As the literature suggested, student affairs scholar-practitioners are a rare population (Carpenter, 2001; Fried, 2002; Jablonski et al., 2006); consequently, participants were recruited through a combination of criterion-based and network sampling (Prasad, 2005). I reached out to a network of people working in student affairs and solicited participant nominations. Nomination criteria were: (a) currently working full-time in student affairs and (b) active use of any one or more of Boyer’s scholarships in practice by the nominee. Twelve nominees were recruited to participate in the study, and eight consented to participate. Reported demographic characteristics of participants were as follows: (a) three participants identified as women and five identified as men, and (b) one participant identified as ethnically Hispanic and White raced, five as White, and two as Black. All participants had received doctorates from various institutions around the continental United States in higher education administration, student affairs, or a closely related field. At the time of study, participants had a collective average of 15 years of full-time experience in the field of student affairs with the newest professional at five years and the most senior at 28.

Table 4.1 Participant Characteristics

Name	Years in profession	Master's (Geographical)	Doctorate (Geographical)	# of institutions (Worked)
Bobbie	20+	Southeast	Midwest	3
Manning	10-15	Midwest	Southeast	2
Aiden	10-15	Southeast	Southeast	3
Artesia	10-15	Southeast	Southeast	3
Kyle	10-15	Other	Other	2
Sonja	5-10	Non-student affairs	Southeast	2
Fitzgerald	10-15	Midwest	Southeast	3
Winston	20+	Southeast	Southeast	3

Data collection. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect life stories. This technique allowed me to collect rich data from participants as they infused their own interpretations of experiences as practitioners over time as they related to their engagement of scholarship (Lichtman, 2006; Patton, 2002). For most participants, two 60-90 minute interviews were conducted. For one participant, a single 90-minute interview allowed me to capture the data necessary for this study. All interviews were conducted face-to-face. However, due to researcher or participant availability and travel, some interviews were computer mediated via Skype and others were conducted in person. The interview guide was constructed with Boyer's (1990) framework in mind (see Appendix G).

Data Analysis. For this study, preliminary data analyses occurred in conjunction with data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Due to the emergent nature of this study, data collected in interviews provided insight and direction for new interviews that followed. Similarly, as analysis proceeded, new data were compared with previous data collected and used to guide second wave interviews or any interviews that remained to be

conducted. Given the scant literature available on this topic, this method allowed me to strengthen the interview protocol in a way I was not able to do during the design of this study.

Once all data had been collected, I used a combination of data analysis techniques to bring focus to the data. First, as has been suggested in the literature on using life history research techniques (Seidman, 2006), I created profiles for each participant based on their interview data. While collecting life stories provided an opportunity to gather much rich data, not all of the data provided the necessary focus needed for this study. As a result, I employed coding techniques, in order to isolate data relevant to the focus of this study. The coding technique I used was detailed by Charmaz (2006) and included pulling out individual concepts related to the topic of study and, through a process of refinement, grouping those concepts into themes. I used the results of the coding technique both to construct individual participant profiles and also to describe all interview data as a whole. Profiles created from life history research serve as both a way to analyze and represent data. In creating profiles, Seidman (2006) said, “One key to the power of the profile is that it is presented in the words of the participant. I cannot stress too much how important it is to use the first person, the voice of the participant, rather than a third-person transformation of that voice” (p. 121). Consequently, profiles were created using first person narratives. Those narratives, alongside a second wave of coding across all interviews, were used to create a composite profile and the themes that are discussed in the results section.

Measures of robustness. To increase the probability of rich and comprehensive results, *member checking* and *triangulation of sources* were used with the data. First, participants were provided an opportunity to perform member checks by examining their transcript(s) for further explanation and/or accuracy (Meriam, 1998). This process allows participants to verify and validate information transcribed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998). Participants are also able to

give the researcher feedback on how their accounts are represented in the data and results. Also, triangulation of sources was used with the data. Participant interviews were examined among individual participants' transcription data and between data provided by all participant data (2009).

Results

Participant stories revealed a variety of influences, such as institutional context, mentorship, personal characteristics, and significant others, on their work as student affairs practitioners. Through the analytical process, it was evident how these influences directly and indirectly shaped participants' career opportunities and choices. Connections between how these influences and career opportunities and choices impacted participants' development of a scholar-practitioner identity resulted in a number of themes, which are detailed after a representation of the data as a composite profile.

Topical Life History: A Composite Profile

I chose to represent the data as a composite profile in order to offer a sense of the whole of the stories shared during data collection. The composite represents those storied elements that occurred across all or most of the interviews. A thematic discussion follows, providing fragments of data supporting the themes and offering divergent pathways or experiences. However, the composite life history's purpose is to provide a collective career life history snapshot. The composite, with the assigned pseudonym of Quinn, was written in the first person and is an amalgamation of *in vivo* (Van Maanen, 1974) participant accounts. In vivo accounts are those that stay as close to the origin as possible. As such, this composite profile is written using participants' words, with changes being made only to protect identifiable information. The profile is structured according to Dollard's (1935) seven criteria for developing a life history

narrative. He suggested a life history narrative should include the following:

1. Description of the cultural contexts that influence other storied elements of the life history.
2. Attention to any elements of the story where participants' physiological features interact with what is being studied.
3. Introduction of significant others in the lives of those whose stories are being told.
4. Descriptions of the choices and actions of participants in different points of the story.
5. Consideration of any historical elements that impact participants' stories.
6. Organization of the story to ensure it has a clear beginning, middle, and end.
7. Evaluation of the stories' clarity and plausibility as it relates to the structuring of various data into one cohesive narrative.

According to Dollard (1935) data represented as life history should do so chronologically and in a way that produces a sound narrative in which the fragmented nature of the raw data is not detectable.

Quinn's Story

I had each participant begin the interview by telling me their stories of how they came to the field of student affairs. For most, the stories then proceeded chronologically through their experiences ending with their current work and reflections of the use of scholarship in practice. Quinn's story is formatted similarly.

Journey to student affairs. I was an RA for three years in my undergrad and really enjoyed my experiences as a student, but also realizing that I was spending more of my time...more of my learning was happening through the RA job than was through my coursework. But, I was planning to pursue a different field of study. It never occurred to

me that you could have a career in student affairs. So, I pursued [the other field].

In my first semester, I realized I did not want a career in that, but I was still there and spent a good chunk of time, instead of studying for school, doing the soul searching, informational interviews that a lot of people do. I knew I may want to do student affairs work. And I thought, “Hmm, student affairs, that’s maybe where I’ll go.” So, that’s what happened. I was looking for other stuff and found that; I went for the on campus interview for the master’s program. I enjoyed the program much better than my previous area of study. It was more of the application and interacting with people spanning human behavior and development. It was purely practitioner based. We had comprehensive exams. There was no option to do a thesis, that I recall. So, they didn’t really focus on research. There was at the doctoral level, but at the master’s level the focus was not on research at that time. That part, for me, in terms of the application piece, was a perfect balance of theory to practice.

Master’s program experience. When I think back to being a master’s student, it’s hard to imagine being so green and young and how much I didn’t know about anything, in retrospect it’s pretty uncanny. I think the whole transition for me from being an undergraduate to a graduate student was pretty profound in retrospect. I was a graduate assistant, and what I remember about my assistantship is, I had really great but different supervisors. I had two different supervisors my first year and my second year and both of them were terrific, good at mentoring. I mean, it wasn’t the most theory-driven place or scholarship, but all of them were engaged in something that was scholarly related, either teaching a class or writing something on a research group. I think being at a school where there is a graduate prep program certainly helps you. They were reading

what we were reading. They knew we were in a particular class or they had been in a version of that class five or six years before. So, I think that they were able to connect with us in a slightly different way [than the faculty]. I remember mostly trying to translate my previous worldview with the worldview that was emerging and tried to make sense of what this was and what higher education is. You think you understand what higher education is. At the time I was 22. So, starting an assistantship at 22 and all that goes with your own identity development and your sense of self and your sense of what it means to be in higher education and to be in an institution of higher learning. I think of that as a really formative and confusing time. What I'm really grateful for in retrospect is the kind of people that walk alongside you and help you translate what you're experiencing. So I had good academic work to go side to side with the residence hall position. You know, just having this conversation reminds me of how incredibly fortunate I've been to work with great people who have taken me seriously even as a 23 year old, that took my talent or capacity seriously and included me. I can't recall, as a graduate student, anyone treating me in a dismissive way or not investing in me in a serious and intentional way. It wasn't the faculty as much as there were [practitioners], the people who were the adjuncts who were teaching our class who showed me—I mean you'd see their names in the journals and you're like, "Oh, wait a minute, you're the Dean of Student Affairs. What are you doing in the *Journal of College Student Affairs*?" So, their role modeling I think was very formative for me.

Post-master's working experiences. I had been in the profession full-time for like three months or four months. I think I didn't really know how I was doing at that time, but I was very confident that I knew what I was doing. That new professional

naiveté was alive and well. I got my feet wet, doing [my work] there. The culture was very collegial, very professional. I felt like it exposed me to a lot more stuff. If you had a good idea it was probably going to happen if you were willing to do it. There really wasn't much talk about assessment or accountability. I think there is now. I think times aren't as good as they were back then, but it was very collaborative, almost to a flaw, like collaborative in the sense of you could do all of the work you need to get done and you could socialize with the same people. So, what would be your impetus for having friends outside this group, right? Interestingly enough, and I think, ultimately, it influenced me leaving there, it wasn't as rigorous as I needed for my disposition. It was mostly a practical place. It was a comprehensive state university that had a student affairs program, but I wouldn't say it was robust or rigorous. I think it was very practical, primarily. So, in many ways, that was part of what didn't seal the deal for me there. Loving the place, loving the people, but it wasn't an intellectually striving place. Then, I left to work on my doctorate.

Deciding on a doctorate. You know when I started [as a practitioner], I didn't have a plan to get a doctorate. I mean I couldn't believe I had a master's degree, that sounded like something smart people did. I'd never really thought [a doctorate] was a possibility. Then, over my time there, I published things; I enjoyed that. I presented at ACPA. I was having these conversations; I enjoyed that. I was teaching; I enjoyed that, and I think I realized, compared to many of my peers, I was just more intellectually engaged with my job. I was just more interested in the big ideas. I was more interested in the arguments about the ethics of parental notification. Other people were like, "well that's just what we do; I don't care." I'm like, "I think that's wrong, and let me tell you

why. I want to have these discussions, I think that's bad education." So, I think I became known as someone who had opinions and had big ideas and wasn't just interested in doing the work. I was able to engage with people who also had supervisors at the next level, who also had disagreements with me about what we should do in the department, what we should do as a field, how should higher education look or not look, what's a good approach, what's a better approach, what's ethical, what's not, what does the future hold, and I really enjoyed that. I think the folks who engaged in that with me really enjoyed that. I learned a lot from them. So, I started to see that not only would I enjoy some of those conversations, but without a doctorate I was going to "ceiling out." I wasn't interested in stopping at where that ceiling would be. I really had a passion and commitment to higher ed. I had a lot of support from direct supervisors and other people in professional associations [to pursue the doctorate]. So, I started looking around at different programs and applying.

Doctoral program experience. It was great; it was a rich environment. I had a really good experience. The faculty there were very supportive. The faculty were there all day. So, they were very engaged—sit out in the lobby and engage with students. They had an open door policy. I had an opportunity to do some publishing with a couple of the faculty members in the department, co-teach some classes with them. So, I felt very supported. Not everybody completed the program. Some dropped out along the way, which typically happens, but it wasn't because of lack of support from the faculty. Actually my dissertation chair is someone I still consider to be a mentor. She was talking to me a lot about the faculty track and what all entailed me doing that. She told me about faculty culture, the tenure process. So, I felt like I had a very good understanding about

that whole process. Which was great.

I had opportunities to work on ACPA things with [my advisor], to work on other doctoral things and be a full-time doctoral student, which allowed me not just to take classes but to go to symposiums, be in research teams, and be on faculty committees and do all of those things rather than when you work fulltime you just kind of take your classes and that's it; you don't have time to do other stuff. I mean, [it] was really a theory to practice program. I think that interest and culture around research being important was there, but in comparison to theory to practice and being a good practitioner, that was definitely the focus of the program. It's definitely easier to get an administrative job based on [my school's] doctoral experience than a faculty job. I kind of figured out very early on that I wasn't interested in being a faculty member. I think I connected more with administrators, because that was kind of the path I was on. [At that school] the practitioners all have PhD's and all are bright, smart thinkers and leaders in lots of different associations. So, there was never any shortage of thoughtful conversations about what we did and how we did it and why we did it. I was surrounded by people who were scholar-practitioners, as I would call them, people who were in professional jobs, but also writing. Who were involved in research projects and were collaborating with faculty. It was the place where, the scholarship of the profession was talked about a lot and used to apply to situations. Very much the culture was that; it was robust in its culture of scholarship.

Like I said, I had a good experience. I wouldn't do it again, but I had a great experience going through the process. Even during writing the dissertation, my chair had very high standards, and it took me a while to meet her expectations, but eventually I got

there. There were a lot of tears in the process of meeting those expectations, but I could feel proud about my study. She was not going to sign off on me going to do some study where people fill out a survey. It was much more involved and in-depth. I can appreciate that. I am glad I went through the process; it wasn't fun going through the process. I can appreciate it now, and feel proud of the work that I did.

Post-doctoral work experiences. I think the whole division was growing. You have to, when you work at a smaller school, collaborate office to office. So, it's kind of an all-hands-on-deck culture. The culture of the division is very student focused, we do our work with students. There's not a lot of meetings I have that students aren't involved as co-partners with. We have a new vice president who is very dynamic. He's very engaged with students. He's now focusing on his engagement with faculty. So I think it's shifting. We're at a selective private institution so that changes the dynamic of student affairs and all that, and it's something that I enjoy. I think that in [all] my years here we have shifted a little bit away from the student experience and student satisfaction. I think we're moving in the direction of student learning. Those are not really oppositional but I think when I got here it was about happy students and students having a good experience and students feeling good. That was never not about student learning, but I think now it is more about student learning and students having a good experience which means they're getting a lot out of what they're doing here, finding value in that, making a difference.

I think that we have, within my units, created a real curricular approach to how we do things. We have designed learning outcomes, we have developmental sequence strategies, we have learning strategies, and outcomes and assessment that are mapped for

strategies and outcomes. So, how we do our work is, I think, very theory to practice. I feel like we're doing incredibly innovative theory to practice kind of things. That's not really talked about at the division level. There's not a lot of support for me and my research. I think it's very much an extra. I mean my supervisor is not involved in that, he's not involved in research and writing and scholarship.

Navigating scholarship in practice. Well, [scholarship] is kind of how I view what I do. Even in my administrative capacities is teaching, convening, facilitating conversations, incorporating things I am learning and engaging other people in that. My leadership group reads together, we discuss emerging things, and there are implications for our work. I would say that a lot of our practitioners don't actually ground their work, which they should. You shouldn't have to be a scholar-practitioner to ground your work, but I think that's that. I think a lot of folks get into systems and do things because it's fun, it's what's always happened, etcetera, etcetera. It's not because of something that they've looked up and seen. For me, it's that I want to contribute to the field, my research is something that I really care about and really think matters, I really do. It's not just the research topic I could get grant funding for; it really personally matters to me, and I love to learn. So, for me I just want to learn more and the best way for me to force myself to learn is to force myself into presenting things.

Research and theory-to-practice. I didn't want to go the faculty route, because I didn't want my job to be dependent upon doing research. Though I like it, I didn't want my job to be dependent on it. So, I like to be able to do it on the side, because I enjoy doing it not because I have to do it. Also, when you are writing it makes you keep up with what is in the literature, because you have to do a lit review. So, you do more

reading around that, because sometimes it is just hard as a practitioner to read the *NASPA Journal* or things coming through. So, I just get it and I look at the titles and I see something of interest and stick it to the side. I don't get to it, but when you are working on a project, that is a great opportunity to force yourself to do those things. I try, in my work, to use theory, to know literature to guide the work that I do. The work is grounded in theory. I did a professional development workshop on that, how to ground theory into the work that you do. All of our professional development workshops are aligned with the NASPA/ACPA professional competencies. Making those connections for staff is very important.

Teaching. I've always had a love for teaching. To me, teaching is done on many levels. It is done in the classroom for credit. It is done when you are working with students one-on-one. It is done when you are working with student staff to help them. It is done in smaller settings. Teaching is always there in my life. Sometimes students don't want to receive it. I just had a student get highly upset with me the other day, because I was trying to teach her something. She just didn't want to accept it, and I was like, "you have to understand, this is my role, student development." So, everything I do is to help develop people, when you leave these doors. So, in that way, I am always teaching. I sometimes dread going to class, but I always love driving home. I'm always super energized on my drive home. I am a better practitioner the semesters that I teach [in the classroom], because I am engaged theoretically/conceptually. It's just constant reminders, constantly holding my feet to the fire, I am much better about those things. The semesters that I don't teach, I can just see the theory and the concepts and the ideas going further and further into the background. Then, when I teach, it not only brings the

ones that I'm talking about but the other ones that I'm not talking about. So, I'm convinced it makes me a much better practitioner, and I think being a fulltime practitioner makes me a much better faculty member.

Two assumptions that are incorrect, or at least incorrect for me, is that as you move into senior positions you don't interact with students as much; which, for me, is not true. And, that you can't find time to be a reader of scholarship and a producer of scholarship. For me, that's not true, but I think they're not true because I don't want them to be true. So, they are priorities for me, and, truthfully, if I am not doing those two things I feel like I am not doing my work. I feel like I am not being successful. Whereas, I know there are other people where it doesn't feel that way, but to me it does. So, I make time for it, but part of the way I make time for it is integrating it in things I am already doing. I don't have a research agenda that is separate and apart from my work as a practitioner. They are informing one another in a way that helps me be better at both. If I had to have a research agenda and a publishing agenda that was guided by something other than my work, I think it'd be very problematic.

Thoughts about the state of scholarship in practice. I worry about this for our profession. I worry that what we primarily do is create doers, as opposed to doers and thinkers. I know that those things are not mutually exclusive and shouldn't be. I also think that I've been mentored to be a thinker, to be engaged in the scholarship and I think we're going to have to be more intentional about that in rising up. So my guess is that wherever you find a true scholar practitioner you're also probably finding someone who has been mentored in that way and is also probably in the business of mentoring others in that way. I guess that's pretty hopeful, I guess, because then there's probably going to be

an amplifying effect. I do see movement in our profession in this way and that is encouraging, but I think being a critical thinker in this work is awfully important to the kinds of influence and change that we are going to have to respond to, given the pace of our environment. I see a lot of senior administrators that don't really use scholarship. They're not up to speed on the scholarship. They're not on the cutting edge of new science about learning, about how learning takes place and my guess is we'll probably see more people that are able to do that in the years to come, that's my guess, I don't know.

Quinn's story represents the shared career history elements of all participants in this study. What this story represents are the pathways by which practitioners discovered their identities as scholar-practitioners. For many, despite being active student leaders, student affairs was not a career choice participants knew about, much less planned on pursuing. The process of coming to the field was wrought with information seeking and advice from trusted others. All participants, except two, ultimately received a master's in student affairs. It is interesting to note, participants highlighted theory-to-practice and the role of their assistantships more than any other aspects of the master's experience. In terms of work experience post-master's degree, most participants reported working in environments that were collegial/collaborative but not focused on scholarship. Due to a lack of challenge or a desire to learn more, participants decided to pursue doctoral degrees. Most participants made that decision as a result of personal consideration and encouragement by supervisors, mentors, and colleagues. All participants described having rich doctoral experiences. Some participants had entered the doctoral program with aspirations to join the faculty, which they maintained. However, most expressed little to no desire to pursue a faculty position post-doctorate, opting instead to be scholar-practitioners.

Participants' desires toward using scholarship in practice are illustrated in Quinn's account. For most, engaging in research, theory-to-practice, or teaching activities were inextricably intertwined functions of their work, and when the environment did not encourage it, there were mentors present who did.

Quinn's account provides a snapshot of participants' journeys toward becoming scholar-practitioners. However, the complex nature of the career trajectories of each participant presents deviations on specific details, such as types of educational experiences, number of jobs and institutions, and presence and absence of mentors. These nuances reflect the unique nature of each scholar-practitioner's profile. Detailing each profile is beyond the scope of this study. However, a thematic analysis was performed on all transcribed data to capture the particularities of each participant's experiences and draw connections among all participants' journeys. As such, data were broken down and reassembled to display overarching themes within them. The following themes emerged from that process: (a) environmental press, (b) intrinsic motivation, and (c) cultural change.

Environmental Press Resistance

Conflicts or congruence between a person's needs and the environmental press present in an environment can either be growth inhibiting or producing (Strange & Banning, 2001). For participants in this study, the environmental presses they faced had only marginal effects on how they shaped their identities as scholar-practitioners. The strength of environmental press' effect on participants weakened over time. In the beginning of their careers, participant's perceptions of environmental press influenced their engagement in scholarship. Many experienced this press early on through their student leadership experiences and their experiences in their master's programs. Particularly, participants' experienced environmental press toward integrating theory

into their practice through assistantship experiences. Fitzgerald illustrates this point, saying:

I can remember, for example, I had a person environment class and part of it was analyzing your assistantship experience and looking at that through a person environment in an ecology kind of model. I remember feeling like that that was something I could talk to my supervisor about who was a residence hall director who would kind of help me think about that. So what I do feel like is they talk to me a lot about what I was learning in class and we were learning all the fundamental student development theory kinds of things and we would talk about that and unpack that. So, in retrospect, I think there was a lot of informal conversation about what are you learning. I can't remember a time that I met with either of my supervisors they didn't ask about how my classes were going, what am I learning, asking the kinds of questions like, "how are you seeing any of that applied to what you're doing here?" So, that way I think I had really good supervisors who were helping translate the academic work into the practical environment as well.

This was similarly reflected in Aiden's account, part of which is also excerpted in Quinn's story:

I mean, it wasn't the most theory-driven place or scholarship, but all of [student affairs administrators] were engaged in something that was scholarly related either teaching a class or writing something on a research group. They had served the profession in some way. They were reading what we were reading. I think being at a school where there is a graduate prep program certainly helps you. You see what your grad students are reading, and so you're like, "Oh, there's a new green book!", "Oh, there's a new whatever." I think that helped, and they were interested.

Adien, Fitzgerald, and other participants' reported influences toward scholarship as a result of

those early exposures to practitioners who were engaged in or showed interest in using it in practice.

Environmental press toward or away from scholarship was present in participants' accounts of their post-master's experiences as well. Kyle's story represents how the same environmental press in the same environment can encourage some forms of scholarship and not others. Kyle spoke about making deeper connections to theory in practice through the culture of "best practice" in his first full-time position in student affairs:

I was very engaged in a lot of conversations, not so much about theory but about best practices. We revamped the diversity portion of RA training completely. I mean now I see this as theory based, but I didn't think of it at the time as theory. I'm thinking about it as finding really good ideas and best practices and finding what other places do and how we come up with an innovative plan to completely redo this. I did it with my staff, a lot around leadership theory. We read a book as a staff each year, we did a lot of staff development, we did a lot of things like that. So, that was probably a little bit more.

Even though he had not originally seen the efforts his department was engaging in around best practices as theory-to-practice elements, when he found himself doing the same with his own staff, Kyle was able to draw those connections. Kyle spoke similarly about teaching opportunities he was able to engage in as a part of his work. However, when it came to the scholarship of research Kyle said:

I don't know that there was a lot of support for that but it was all on my own time. It wasn't discouraged, but it was something that I was doing above and beyond. That wasn't the job expectation, wasn't part of the culture. It wasn't even really seen; some people are into that, some people are not. It would have been like if I was a hockey

player, then they would have been like, “oh yeah, that’s interesting that you do that too.” So, yeah, I didn’t feel particularly encouraged or supported, but I also didn’t feel discouraged or unsupported. It just felt like something that I wanted to do for my own learning and my own growth, and that was fine.

Kyle’s story was not unique in this regard. Throughout participant interviews were stories of how work cultures around using theory and engaging in teaching encouraged their own engagements in scholarship. Yet, emphases on scholarship were not perceived to be equal in the eyes of participants. Particularly, when it came to the scholarship of research, many participants, like Kyle, reported ambivalence toward scholarship in their work cultures.

The influence of environmental press was also a pervasive theme in participants’ doctoral programs and post-doctoral work experiences. Participants reported more scholarship engagement in environments in which they perceived a culture of engagement in research, theory-to-practice, or teaching. Artesia’s experience in her doctoral program presents an illustration about how environmental press encouraged her—and other students—toward scholarship:

I think [research engagement] was pretty high, overall, both research and teaching. I think the interest was high for most students. There’s a group of us that graduated within a year or two of each other that still try and come up with ideas. We are trying to collaborate on research ideas, when there’s things out there. I would say it was high. I think [theory-to-practice] was probably even higher. I think the program is very practice-based, or it was when I was there. The culture around research being important was there, but in comparison to theory-to-practice and being a good practitioner, that was definitely the focus of the program.

The level of environmental press on any given scholarship area varied between participants and the environments they encountered. When the press was toward engaging in scholarship behaviors, participants reported taking advantage of opportunities to engage in them. However, the effects of environmental press only tended toward the positive.

Resistance to the effects of environmental press away from scholarship could be attributed to the presence of mentorship in the lives of participants. Winston talked about the lasting effect of a mentor he had during his doctoral studies who influenced how he went about his work.

[He] taught a class on leadership that I needed to take and it was a three week summer class and the class was five hours long. Well he and I would share a ride...five hours of class and then share a ride back and forth for three weeks. Those discussions before and after class were very intense, and the most productive time that I had in my doctoral program. I felt like that's where I learned the absolute most, because I had his undivided attention. Either he was driving or I was driving and it was just the two of us.

Sometimes, those mentor relationships came in the form of peers at other institutions, as was the case with Bobbie:

At one point in my career, I had peer mentors because there weren't individuals who were familiar with the work. Most people weren't familiar with the intricacies of that position, the balance of trying to be a university employee and an advocate for students. There is a fine line, and you can go too far on either end. So, a lot of people had difficulty talking through...navigating that. So, I would talk to my peers who were in similar roles to, kind of, get that feedback. So, over the years I have had different kinds of mentors depending on where I was in my career path. It's been some good people,

throughout my career, who have tried to push me forward. It has been a good process, some of it formal and some of it informal.

Mentorship was an aspect of navigating being a scholar-practitioner that most participants felt was unparalleled and necessary. Sonja had this to say about the impact of mentorship:

Instantly what comes to mind is the MasterCard commercials. If I were to diagram it out it would be: commuting back and forth to campus, x amount of dollars; getting the degree, x amount of dollars; mentorship from those people, priceless. Honestly, it's priceless. I can call them about anything, anytime and I can be excited about something or crying about something and they are always able to guide me. So, I mean, it's priceless. That mentorship is priceless. The other key thing is, although some people think otherwise, the mentee has to choose their mentor. There is a lot of things that go into that, and if you don't respect the person, look up to the person, or see them as someone you aspire to be like, it is not going to work. My previous supervisor seemed to think that just because you're the supervisor that you're a mentor. I was like, "Um-mm, no. I will run from anything you tell me to do."

Mentors seemed to bridge the gap for practitioners when the environmental press was away from scholarship. However, another explanation for this phenomenon might be found in the second theme, intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation

Despite sometimes finding themselves in cultures in which a there was not high value was placed on scholarship, participants reported engaging in scholarly activities. For many, the benefit of engaging in scholarship outweighed the discomfort of going against the cultural norm.

Kyle's experience, parts of which appear in Quinn's story, demonstrates this in regard to the scholarship of research:

...I want to contribute to the field, my research is something that I really care about and really think matters, I really do. It's not just, you know, the research topic that I could get grant funding for, it really personally matters to me. I love to learn. So, for me I just want to learn more, and the best way for me to force myself to learn is to force myself into presenting things. So, when I get invited to co-write a chapter, I get super—"I don't know that I know enough" and they go, "no, I think you're plenty of an expert." I go, "well, I got to figure that out, so I'm not a fraud." I learn and talk by doing that. I love the learning that I do through the things that I'm engaging in. I've done some fiction [reading] and, although I enjoy that, it doesn't juice me up the way learning new ideas and new thinking and new research and being on the cutting edge of the psychology and leadership ideas. I just listened to a book on the notion of quantum physics and leadership and organizational development. I was just like giddy running through the streets of the campus in the morning. That was just great. I mean there's lots of different reasons to [engage scholarship]. You should do your scholarship differently depending on what those are. I think that my trouble is that I'm trying to do all of that and that's not really going to work. ...I learn tons through Twitter and things that get linked there and that is just amazing to me. If I were a faculty member I would feel like that is distracting me from the work that I need to be doing. Just say, "This is great. I'm getting a lot out of it." Give yourself permission to think outside of kind of traditional ways of what scholarship is. I think it can be really great.

For Artesia, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drive her work on research:

I think [research] plays a role [in my work], and my ultimate goal is to become [a] faculty member, at some point. So I think research is important to me, both as a contribution back to the field, as well as for my own development, but again, it's not rewarded in my job so it's when there's time.

Kyle and Artesia's stories reflect those of other participants who continued to pursue scholarship in spite of cultures in which there were no opportunities or support.

Even when support of scholarship was present at participants' institutions, engaging in it was oftentimes an added component of their work. Participants detailed the intrinsic motivations that cause them to pursue research, theory-to-practice, and teaching despite the added time and energy it takes for them to do so. Both Bobbie and Aiden's excerpts illustrate their willingness to put in extra time to pursue scholarship in their work:

I was actually just talking to a colleague the other day. She is a director who also has a doctorate and we said, "We need to start doing some research, doing some publications or something." I miss doing it, but it's a lot of work, because you have to do it above and beyond your own work and time. So your evenings and weekends are spent working on that, but I like doing that. (Bobbie)

The teaching also forces me to stay up-to-date on social justice issues and on assessment issues, two things I really feel passionate about but could probably fall off my plate if I didn't teach them once in a year. So, like right now I have books that I have posted that I am going to have soon to use, but I am probably going to tweak them a little bit. There are some new things that I have seen, but I do that during fall break. And, I do that during winter break and during spring break. I use my breaks to try to do some of that

teaching stuff. It can be a real pain in the butt to teach. There was one time where I was teaching this the assessment class and the social justice class and my [doing my] job all in the same semester, and I was just very naive to think— I did it and I did it fine, and there are other things that I didn't do that I probably should have done. (Aiden)

Intrinsic motivations provide participants with the wherewithal to engage scholarship when it was not supported or when it meant extending themselves over and beyond their day-to-day work. However, many participants used their engagement in and value for scholarship to create change within the culture of their institutions.

Cultural Change

Participants shared stories of using their engagement in scholarship for the betterment of the culture of student affairs at their institutions. These efforts were sometimes on a more interpersonal level, such as teaching a course for future student affairs professionals or coaching and mentoring their colleagues or supervisees. Other times, their efforts happened at the organizational level. Such was the case for Bobbie, who shared:

I try, in my work, to use theory, to know literature to guide the work that I do. The work is grounded in theory. I did a professional development workshop on that, how to ground theory into the work that you do. That was a pretty good session. I try to make sure I go to conferences. I actually go to sessions when I go to conferences. You learn a lot, and you bring a lot of things back to the institution. Just make sure your work is grounded in, not anecdotal information or informal theories, but based on formal theories that have been researched and proven to work. So, that's important. I try to make sure that colleagues here in student affairs are exposed to those kinds of things as well. I am on the professional development committee. All of our professional development

workshops are aligned with the NASPA/ACPA professional competencies.

Making those connections for staff is very important.

Bobbie saw an obligation to share her knowledge with her colleagues and to build programs that showed them how to integrate theory-into-practice.

Fitzgerald had a few different opportunities to use his knowledge and engagement of scholarship to affect change on one of his institution's campuses. He came to the campus during a time when the culture was shifting toward one with a greater focus on scholarship in practice. He describes his role in that shift thusly:

I was glad to be there during the time of a huge shift, a monumental shift in culture. I think part of it was first and foremost, helping the campus, not just people in student affairs, but helping the campus understand that there is a content, a science, an art to student affairs. It is being researched, there's literature, there are professional organizations, there are people who are studying—in a rigorous, systematic way—the development of students and under what conditions those are advanced. So, part of that was teaching people that you can't just throw anybody into that and expect the same kind of results. In the same way, you wouldn't take a physician off the street and say, "here you can do this!" You would want them to know the art and the science, to have training and be mentored.

In his role as a director, he decided it was important to make hiring changes to reflect the values he described in the preceding quotation. He made it mandatory for entry-level practitioners in his area to have a master's degree in student affairs. Throughout his time at that institution and others, Fitzgerald stayed active in promoting scholarship in student affairs, through engaging research, collaborating on research projects with colleagues and graduate students, staying

engaged in the student affairs literature and applying his learning to practice, and teaching courses and seminars on the various campuses he has served. Fitzgerald continues to engage scholarship in various ways on his campus and in the profession on a national level. The same can be said for most of the participants of this study. From Artesia, Winston, Aiden, and Manning's desires to train the next generation of student affairs scholars to Bobbie, Sonia, and Kyle's contribution to the larger profession and all the activities in between. Participants expressed an obligation to make an impact on the state of scholarship in student affairs.

Discussion

The themes identified in the study would appear to support the literature discussed previously in the paper and the theoretical framework identified for the study. The literature suggests that student affairs practitioners need to be more involved in the field's scholarship (Brown & Barr, 1990; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Jablonski, 2005; Kezar, 2000; Sriram & Oster, 2012). The theoretical framework suggests that behaviors are the result of a person's interaction with her environment. This study revealed that practitioners enact scholarship in practice in relation to their ability to resist environmental press, to be intrinsically motivated, and when they have a drive for cultural change.

It has been argued that when a person finds herself in a situation in which the environment is incongruent with her values, she either: leaves the environment, changes the environment, or assimilates to the environment (Strange & Banning, 2001). For the participants in this study, leaving the environment or changing it were the chosen actions. When confronted with environments that offered a press away from scholarship, participants stayed in those environments but looked for options to change environments and/or they worked to affect change in their work environments. While remaining in the environment, participants continued

to engage in scholarship behaviors that they found meaningful. Oftentimes, they were able to sustain their engagement in scholarship as a result of the presence of mentors in their lives. Additionally, practitioners reported having practical experiences during their master's degree program in which engagement in scholarship had been modeled for them. Both of these findings suggest that interpersonal socialization toward mentorship may be a powerful motivator toward sustained engagement in scholarship.

The findings of this study also suggest that who a practitioner is may influence if they engage scholarship in their work. Outside of the influence of others, participants reported feelings of satisfaction as a result of engaging in scholarship. Participants did report time as a big obstacle to engaging in scholarship, which supports previous literature of barriers to scholarship (Schroder & Pike, 2001). However, participants were willing to sacrifice their free time, when it came to make a meaningful contribution to scholarship, with one participant saying, "You stay up late and work on the weekends. A few phone conversations here and there during the workday but, typically, 10:00 at night or on Sundays or whenever you can make it happen." For many of them, making the sacrifice was well worth it, not just for the intrinsic benefits, but also for the potential impact their efforts made.

The findings of this study suggest that when practitioners want to affect change, they will engage whatever scholarship areas they need to do so. This adds support to literature on the power of scholar-practitioners to be change agents (Bouck, 2011; Wasserman & Kram, 2009). As previous studies have suggested, participants in this study used their knowledge gained from graduate preparation programs, professional associations, and their own pursuits after knowledge to improve practice and effectiveness on their campuses. Their efforts were both aimed at the policies, such as changing hiring practices, and at influencing the culture by mentoring others

into scholarship in practice. Social justice, particularly as it connects to marginalized populations, was an area of focus for a number of the participants in this study, with many of them citing it as a driving force for their work.

The findings of this study suggest practitioners willing and enthusiastically engage scholarship when they perceive it to be value-added. It suggests that the tyranny of the immediate can be counterbalanced by the desire to affect change. It supports assumptions that practitioners need to be involved in the processes of research (Kezar, 2000) and development of theory-to-practice models (Bensimon, 2007 Brown & Barr, 1990). This is particularly true when considering practitioners' interests in social justice work, as practitioners may be skeptical of the lack of inclusion offered by foundational theories in student affairs (Reason & Kimball, 2012). Reason and Kimball's (2012) theory-to-practice model may provide a way to facilitate these discussions as they highlight not only formal and informal theory, but also the impact of institutional context in translating theory to practice.

Implications for Practice

While these findings are not meant to be generalizable, they do provide some important areas of consideration. Overwhelmingly, participants in this study reported the powerful impact of scholarship role modeling by other practitioners. For graduate preparation programs, this could mean paying more attention to relationships that are built with assistantship, internship, and practica providers. According to these findings, students can only benefit from a robust program where the graduate preparation program and practical experiences providers are partnering in support of the curriculum. This may include assignments in which the direct benefit is an impact of the students' assistantship sites. Program faculty can arrange meetings with supervisors about projects that need to be completed in their areas and tailor assignments to

meet those needs and the course goals. Similarly, program faculty create more conditions for environmental press toward scholarship in practice by inviting students to share how what they are learning in class is showing up in their work.

These findings suggest it is important and necessary for supervisors to role model scholarship behavior. Partnering with students' academic programs can be an important way to facilitate students learning and future scholarship behaviors. As suggested in this study, inquiring after what students are learning in their classes and challenging them to apply that knowledge to their work is an impactful way to encourage scholarship engagement. Additionally, providing opportunities in which students can affect change may provide the greatest motivation for them to engage scholarship. When emerging practitioners believe their work is meaningful and will have an impact, they may be more willing to use all the resources available to them.

This study's findings also has important implications for practitioners interested in scholarship. It suggests practitioners need to negotiate time for scholarship in their practice. Intrinsic motivation was a large part of the practitioners in this study's abilities to sustain engagement in scholarship. Practitioners have to be prepared to work in culture in which scholarship among practitioners is not the norm and decide how they will be able to support their own efforts in scholarship. These findings also suggest the importance of establishing and maintaining mentoring relationships with others in the profession, particularly when practitioners are at institutions where their scholarship efforts are not supported.

Conclusion

Issues surrounding scholarship in practice have been an area of conversation in a number of fields. Even when viewed broadly, through Boyer's (1990) model, scholarship has been said to be absent in the work of student affairs practitioners (Carpenter, 2001; Malaney, 2002; Sriram &

Oster, 2012). Through this study, I wanted to explore the lives of practitioners who were also scholars, meaning they were engaged in one or more of Boyer's areas of scholarship. I aimed to examine the experiences these practitioners have had with scholarship and their perceptions of what has influenced its use in their practice. In doing so, I found that practitioners are willing and desirous to make an impact on the broader field; they just need a reason to do so.

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CHAPTER 5

Scholarship in Practice Among Student Affairs Practitioners: A Meta-Synthesis

The purpose of this manuscript-style dissertation was to explore student affairs practitioners' experiences with scholarship and their perceptions of the factors that have influenced scholarship in their work. Previous scholars have been curious about the skills and knowledge as well as support, coaching, and job modifications needed for practitioners to successfully engage scholarship (Jablonski et al., 2006, p. 197). Through this dissertation, I wanted to provide more insight into how this is actualized in practice. Given the possibility that the nuanced qualities of factors influencing scholarship could be enmeshed, I conducted studies with three different groups of practitioners, exploring their experiences of scholarship and perceptions of factors that have influenced it in their work. This final chapter pulls those findings together to answer the final research question: what are the differences and similarities among and between the three groups of participants explored in each study of this dissertation?

Method

To answer this question, I used elements of qualitative meta-synthesis on the three studies that make up the previous three chapters of this dissertation. The approach I refer to as qualitative meta-synthesis has been identified by different names, qualitative: meta-analysis, meta-ethnography, meta-study, and meta-summary (Finlayson & Dixon, 2008). I chose to use the term meta-synthesis here, because it most accurately reflects the process I used, which involved aggregating my findings across the three studies to provide a more complete understanding of the topic of inquiry (Bondas & Hall, 2007; Maher & Hudson, 2007). Differing

from a traditional synthesis of information, qualitative meta-synthesis involves analysis of all studies to identify meaning across and between them. In doing so, data were reanalyzed and findings from each individual study were reinterpreted and synthesized in light of the data and findings obtained in other studies (Bondas & Hall, 2007). This approach is particularly useful in enhancing the breadth and depth of synthesis when the studies it comprises have similar designs (McCormick et al., 2003). It has been suggested that the ideal number for meta-synthesis is 10-12 studies (Bondas & Hall, 2007); however, in the absence of additional studies on scholarship in the field of student affairs, I chose to employ these methods with the data collected throughout the three studies presented in this dissertation.

Table 5.1 Participant Characteristics from Meta-Synthesis Data

Name	Years in profession	Master's (Geographical)	Doctorate (Geographical)	# of institutions (worked)
Aiden	10-15	Southeast	Southeast	3
Alea	1-5	Southeast	n/a	1
Artesia	10-15	Southeast	Southeast	3
Bobbie	20+	Southeast	Midwest	3
Channing	15-20	Southwest	Other	4
Dana	5-10	Midwest	Midwest	2
Elisa	5-10	Midwest	Midwest	2
Fitzgerald	10-15	Southeast	Midwest	3
Jacqueline	5-10	Midwest	n/a	3
Jada	1-5	Midwest	n/a	1
John	5-10	Southeast	n/a	4
Karena	10-15	Southwest	Northeast	4
Karma	10-15	Midwest	Northeast	unknown
Kyle	10-15	Other	Other	2
Manning	10-15	Midwest	Southeast	2
Martin	1-5	Southeast	n/a	1
Phoenix	5-10	Midwest	Southwest	3
Sasha	1-5	Southwest	n/a	2
Sonja	5-10	Southwest	Southeast	2
Tam	15-20	Midwest	Midwest	5
Tiana	5-10	Midwest	Midwest	unknown
Winston	20+	Southeast	Southeast	3

Analysis. There is little consensus on what constitutes good analytic processes for meta-synthesis, though a few suggestions have been offered (Bondas & Hall, 2007; Noblit & Hare, 1988; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). Additionally meta-synthesis is rarely done when access to studies' raw data are available. As I conducted all studies used in this analysis, I had access to the raw data to use as an additional layer to my analysis. As a result, I used a combination of analytic strategies employed within the three studies as well as those suggested for use in meta-synthesis. To wit, transcript data from each study were reanalyzed together. Similar to the process used in each individual study, transcript data from all 22 participants were coded through a qualitative coding process that included grouping data into codes, categories, and themes (Charmaz, 2000). Additionally, I looked across the original themes that had emerged in the individual studies to see how they informed or extended one another (Noblit & Hare, 1988). The results of both analytic processes were collapsed into overarching themes that are discussed in the next section.

Results

The aforementioned process of analysis yielded three overarching themes, which highlighted the centrality of context, process of learning through action, and inaccessibility of student affairs-specific knowledge. I detail each of these themes in their respective sections to follow.

The Centrality of Context

As was revealed in each individual study, the context in which participants found themselves played an important role in how they thought about and used scholarship in their practice. Participants had a more difficult time finding motivation to stay engaged in scholarship when the context they were in did not support that engagement. Some were able to withstand the

pressure to conform to that culture, while others were not. For those who were able to withstand the pressure, oftentimes, it was the presence of important others, such as friends, coworkers, and mentors who offered them the support they were not able to find on their campuses. However, when participants found themselves in institutional contexts in which scholarship was supported, many were able to not only engage in it, but also build upon their knowledge and skills to further use it in practice.

The Process of Learning through Action

Engaging scholarship was not only a way for participants to engage in meaningful practice, it was also an avenue in which they learned. Whether it was through the creation of knowledge through formal inquiry, the integration and application of knowledge through theory-to-practice efforts, or the transformation of knowledge through teaching, participants reported all of these as ways of strengthening their own knowledge and practice. Scholarship, then, became a practice that not only served the institution but also the individual practitioner.

Inaccessibility of Student Affairs Specific Knowledge

One theme that emerged in this meta-synthesis was that participants found it difficult to find the kind of knowledge they needed for practice in student affairs specific literature. Much of what they were reading and using to inform their day-to-day decision making came from areas outside of student affairs. As one participant, Aiden, shared:

[I don't use student affairs-specific literature] as much as I thought. Actually it's painful. My first gut is 30% [of the time]. So, we will go with that. There is a lot of overlap with sociology and business, and I read the Harvard Business Review. I am fairly tapped in to the different social justice sources even those not in student affairs. I mean some of them

are, but most of them aren't. Most of them are some other field, and in my current job...there is some stuff out there, but it's not well developed.

I always think that there is not much of an incentive for student affairs faculty to write things that are practitioner-based, because they need to publish in places that are not practitioner-based. Like it's still backwards, I think social workers figure this out a lot better than we have. It's just this real issue that if [faculty members] were spending their time writing in the places and about the things that I care about or that I need them to be writing about they would not get tenure and they wouldn't be promoted.

Other stories like this emerged across the collective data of the three studies that echoed Aiden's thoughts. Participants had a difficult time accessing the knowledge they were seeking to make improvements on their campus or to work with their students, parents, or other campus constituents.

Similarly, sources for participant information emerged more strongly as a category within this theme more so than it did in any individual study. When looking across all the data, the phenomenon of turning to sources like listservs and social media provided more insight into where participants were more prone to go in search of data that were useful to them. Many explained that these sources allowed them to connect with other practitioners who were more apt than a journal to have information that could help them solve the issue they were facing.

Discussion

The three themes that emerged from this meta-synthesis were the centrality of context, the process of learning through action, and the inaccessibility of student affairs-specific knowledge. The themes of centrality of context and the process of learning through action were similarly aligned with the individual findings of the three studies comprising this dissertation. In

their discussion of their new theory-to-practice model, Reason and Kimball (2012) also highlighted the importance of institutional context in which they focused on “the way in which environment informs institutionally supported student development goals and provides guidance to student affairs professionals about how these goals are best achieved” (p. 368). They argued that the way these things are introduced to the culture impacts the way practitioners go about theory-to-practice work. The findings of this meta-synthesis support their argument and extend it to the scholarships of discovery and teaching as well. The results of this meta-analysis adds even more strength to the previously reported findings in the three studies that engaging in scholarship benefits both the practitioners and the institutions in which they work.

The theme highlighting the inaccessibility of student affairs-specific knowledge emerged more strongly through this meta-synthesis than it did in the individual studies. When data for each study were pooled and analyzed together, this theme showed clear prominence. This finding in the data supports the argument made by Allen (2002) who wrote:

What if we believed our future depended on our ability to access and use knowledge from different disciplines? I find this suggestion somewhat paradoxical in a field that probably has staff members who reflect the highest degree of diversity in undergraduate majors working closely together within a college environment. It is paradoxical that despite this reality, when we write about ourselves we often stay within the discipline of higher education and the specialty of student affairs. ...In student affairs, many of the innovative practitioners often do not write, because they are too busy “tinkering” or innovating. We need to create new ways to bring their voices to the field. (p. 154)

However, introduction of knowledge from other disciplines introduced in academic spaces was not the only issue presented in this theme. The other issue highlighted in this theme was the

inaccessibility of knowledge as mediated through academic journals. When practitioners were engaged in the scholarships of discovery and teaching, they used journals articles because they saw it as a necessary part of the process. However, when many of them went about integrating knowledge in their day-to-day work, journals were often the place they were least likely to turn for information. This finding is not surprising in light of other literature arguing an absence of practitioners' voices in student affairs literature may result in a lack of practitioner desire to use it (Kezar, 2000). Additionally, this supports a body of emerging knowledge on the integration of social media and other networked spaces in scholarship in practice (King, 2011; Tenopir, Volentine, & King, 2013; Veletsianos, 2011; Veletsianos, 2013), in which Veletsianos (2013) suggested "social media can be viewed as a place where scholars can congregate to share their work, ideas, and experiences" (p. 648).

Implications for Practice

In light of these findings, I offer a few added implications for practice not previously offered in any of the individual studies. These findings suggest that practitioners benefit from using an interdisciplinary approach in their practice. As such, graduate programs can help students develop this skill by introducing knowledge from other disciplines as a part of the curriculum. To wit, I echo the suggestion made by Allen (2002) on the goal of preparing practitioners for navigating the complexity of the interdisciplinary focus of their work; "Graduate preparation faculty who would use at least one book for each class from outside the field could help support this goal. Encouraging multidisciplinary approaches to learning in our classrooms thus can become a model for this kind of exploration in practice" (p. 154). Another suggestion for graduate preparation programs is a focus on integrating social media and other networked technologies into assignments and pair their use with traditional classroom readings.

Given the mediating effects of institutional context in scholarship in practice, those in a position to influence institutional culture should pay attention to messages about how the values of scholarship are communicated. Creating space for practitioners to engage in scholarship may yield greater long-term benefits for the institution and work satisfaction as well as serve the purpose of shaping a scholarship culture. However, it is important to note that given the increasing on-line community of scholars (Veletsianos, 2013), institutional context should not be the sole focus of scholarship culture building.

For those working as practitioners, the results of this metasynthesis suggest that support may be found in communities outside of your institution. With the advances in technology, it will only become easier to find community across the United States and even the world. However, with that also comes exposure to a lot of information that may not be of good quality. Diligence must still be paid to accessing and using sound knowledge and practices. Having a network of other scholar-practitioners both in person and virtually can help you shift through information and point you in the direction of knowledge yet to be discovered. If being a scholar-practitioner is your goal and you are not finding support at your institution, look for those counterspaces such as the Student Affairs Collective, various different listservs, and even social media spaces—Twitter.

Conclusion

The purpose of this manuscript-style dissertation was to explore the scholarship experiences of student affairs practitioners. The findings suggest that, contrary to previous writings on this topic, practitioners are engaging in scholarship in various ways as a part of their practice. However, different contexts in which practitioners find themselves can serve as sources of support or roadblocks to practitioners' engagement with scholarship. Yet, when practitioners

find external support through mentors and colleagues in the broader field, they feel empowered to continue in their pursuit of scholarship. Of all the areas of scholarship considered throughout this dissertation, the scholarship of discovery was least represented in practitioner accounts. Previous literature on this topic, as well as the findings of this study, support collaboration and critical discourse between faculty and practitioners. However, much more research needs to be conducted on this topic in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of both the state and scope of scholarship among student affairs practitioners. What has been presented here serves as a contribution to an ongoing conversation aimed at bettering the practices of student affairs and its impact on student learning and development. Yet, even it has raised even more questions to be inquired after.

Researcher Reflections

I came into this study in strong agreement with previous writings that the state of scholarship among practitioners was an abysmal one. I emerge from the research much more optimistic. As such, an additional finding for my study is that exposure to scholarship in practice serves as a powerful motivator for increased engagement. So much so, I am struggling with making career decisions as I near the end of this doctoral journey. Given my interest in scholarship, I had determined the only way I could fully fulfill those desires was as a faculty member. I find myself, currently in pursuit of such a position and also surrounded by these stories, questioning where I can be a part of what I hope is a movement gaining momentum. Do I serve my profession better as a practitioner engaging in scholarship or as a faculty member creating and leading learning contexts that prepare emerging practitioners to engage in scholarship? Where will my reach have the most impact?

I thought I had an idea of what it meant to be a scholar-practitioner, but my participants have changed me, inspired me, and encouraged me to think more deeply and broadly about what it means to be engaged in practice. However, the pendulum has not swung all the way to the other side for me. While I am encouraged by the stories shared by participants, I still believe there are problems of voice when it comes to practitioners. I still believe our profession largely saves the designation of scholar for faculty and a select few practitioners. We still continue to hold journal articles as the pinnacle of scholarship and basis of the field's knowledge. As a person who loves a good journal article, I am in no way suggesting the abolishment of this space for knowledge dissemination. Yet, the process of conducting this research makes me question whether or not we are doing ourselves a disservice in not looking at other spaces where knowledge is being created and even peer-reviewed. I think there is a body of knowledge that is out there waiting to further transform our field, but we will only find it in counterspaces. My hope is that this research will be one sign of many directing our paths to those there.

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APPENDIX A
Recruitment Email (Master's Study)

My name is Ginny M. Jones, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling and Human Development Services department at the University of Georgia. I am currently conducting dissertation research, under the direction of Dr. Merrily Dunn, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

I am looking to conduct interviews with student affairs practitioners who have received a master's degree in student affairs, counseling and student personnel services, or other related degree program. I was given your name and email address by <name>, a mutual colleague, who suggested you might be a good fit for my study. The purpose of this study is to better understand factors that encourage or impede scholarship in the practice of student affairs.

If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will:

- meet individually me for 2 interviews either via Skype or face-to-face based on your availability and proximity to the researcher. The first interview will last 60-90 minutes and will involve answering demographic questions and participation in a semi-structured interview.
- be provided the opportunity to review your interview transcripts for accuracy or clarification; however, you may waive your right to do so.
- potentially be asked to respond to follow-up questions that may arise as the researcher conducts the study.

Interviews will be audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription. All recordings, however, will be destroyed upon completion of transcription.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation in the study will also remain confidential. After the interviews have concluded, individually-identifiable information will be stripped, and you will be assigned a pseudonym to be used on all of the data that could have been identified as yours. I am happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. You may contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or gmjones@uga.edu.

If you would like to participate, please respond to this email. In the email, please include the phone number that is best for contacting you. When I receive this information I will contact you (through whichever means you deem most appropriate for you) to set up the date, time, and location for the first interview.

Thank you for your consideration!

Ginny M. Jones

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email (Doctoral Study)

My name is Ginny M. Jones, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling and Human Development Services department at the University of Georgia. I am currently conducting dissertation research, under the direction of Dr. Merrily Dunn, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

I am looking to conduct interviews with student affairs practitioners who have received a doctoral degree in student affairs, counseling and student personnel services, or other related degree program. I was given your name and email address by <name>, a mutual colleague, who suggested you might be a good fit for my study. The purpose of this study is to better understand factors that encourage or impede scholarship in the practice of student affairs.

If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will:

- meet individually me for 2 interviews either via Skype or face-to-face based on your availability and proximity to the researcher. The first interview will last 60-90 minutes and will involve answering demographic questions and participation in a semi-structured interview.
- be provided the opportunity to review your interview transcripts for accuracy or clarification; however, you may waive your right to do so.
- potentially be asked to respond to follow-up questions that may arise as the researcher conducts the study.

Interviews will be audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription. All recordings, however, will be destroyed upon completion of transcription.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation in the study will also remain confidential. After the interviews have concluded, individually-identifiable information will be stripped, and you will be assigned a pseudonym to be used on all of the data that could have been identified as yours. I am happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. You may contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or gmjones@uga.edu.

If you would like to participate, please respond to this email. In the email, please include the phone number that is best for contacting you. When I receive this information I will contact you (through whichever means you deem most appropriate for you) to set up the date, time, and location for the first interview.

Thank you for your consideration!

Ginny M. Jones

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Email (Scholar-Practitioner Study)

I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling and Human Development Services department at the University of Georgia. I am currently conducting dissertation research, under the direction of Dr. Merrily Dunn, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

I am looking to conduct interviews with student affairs practitioners who are considered scholar-practitioners by their colleagues in student affairs. I was given your name and email address by <name>, a mutual colleague, who suggested you might be a good fit for my study. The purpose of this study is to better understand factors your experiences with scholarship throughout your career thus far.

The reason for this study is to better understand factors that encourage or impeded scholarship in the practice of student affairs. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will:

- meet individually with the researcher for 2 interviews either via Skype or face-to-face based on each of our availabilities. Both interviews and will involve participation in a semi-structured interview will last 60-90 minutes; the first interview will also include a demographic survey.
- be provided the opportunity to review your interview transcripts for accuracy or clarification; however, you may waive your right to do so.
- potentially be asked to respond to follow-up questions that may arise as the researcher conducts the study.

Interviews will be audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription. All recordings, however, will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Your participation in the study will also remain confidential, if you so desire. After the interviews have concluded, individually-identifiable information will be stripped, and you will be assigned a pseudonym to be used on all of the data that could have been identified as yours.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. You may contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or gmjones@uga.edu.

If you would like to participate, please respond to this email. In your response, please indicate the best way to contact you (via phone number or email). If phone is the best mode of contact, please include a phone number where you may be reached. If email is the best mode of contact, and you would prefer I use a different email address, please provide that as well. When I receive this information I will contact you to set up the date, time, and location for the first interview or Skype contact details; if there is someone who mediates this process for you (an administrative

assistant), I would be more than happy to coordinate with him or her. This study will be ongoing through the rest of the year. So, if your schedule is busy at the time of this initial contact, but you are still interested in the study, I am happy to schedule interviews later in the year.

Sincerely,

Ginny M. Jones

APPENDIX D

Consent Form (In Person)

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled Pathways to Scholarship: An Exploration of Factors Influencing Scholarship in Student Affairs Practice by Ginny M. Jones from the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX; gmjones@uga.edu) under the direction of Dr. Merrily Dunn, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. If I decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as mine will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless I make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

The reason for this study is to better understand factors that encourage or impeded scholarship in the practice of student affairs. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will:

- meet individually with the researcher for 1-2 face-to-face interviews based on my availability and the availability of the researcher. The interviews will last 60-90 minutes and will involve answering demographic questions and participation in a semi-structured interviews.
- be provided the opportunity to review my interview transcripts for accuracy or clarification; however, I may waive my right to do so.
- potentially be asked to respond to follow-up questions that may arise as the researcher conducts the study.

Interviews will be audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription. All recordings will be destroyed upon the completion of transcription.

I may potentially benefit from an active reflection on the role of scholarship in my practice and the impact my participation in this research might have on the field. The researcher also hopes to learn more about the factors that can influence an increase of practitioners' engagement in scholarship. No risk is expected as a result of this study.

Standard confidentiality procedures will be employed to my research information. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with anyone other than the researchers without my written permission, except if it is required by law. Following data collection, Research data will be stripped of individually-identifiable information, and I will be assigned a pseudonym to be used on all of the data that can be identified as mine.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Ginny M. Jones
Name of Researcher
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Signature
Email: gmjones@uga.edu

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX E

Informational Consent Form (Skype)

I agree to participate in a research study titled Pathways to Scholarship: An Exploration of Factors Influencing Scholarship in Student Affairs Practice by Ginny M. Jones from the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX; gmjones@uga.edu) under the direction of Dr. Merrily Dunn, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. If I decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as mine will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless I make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

The reason for this study is to better understand factors that encourage or impeded scholarship in the practice of student affairs. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will:

- meet individually with the researcher for 1-2 interviews via Skype based on my availability and the availability of the researcher. The interviews will last 60-90 minutes and will involve answering demographic questions and participation in a semi-structured interviews.
- be provided the opportunity to review my interview transcripts for accuracy or clarification; however, I may waive my right to do so.
- potentially be asked to respond to follow-up questions that may arise as the researcher conducts the study.

Interviews will be audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription. All recordings will be destroyed upon the completion of transcription.

I may potentially benefit from an active reflection on the role of scholarship in my practice and the impact my participation in this research might have on the field. The researcher also hopes to learn more about the factors that can influence an increase of practitioners' engagement in scholarship. No risk is expected as a result of this study.

If I elect to have my interview conducted via Skype, I am aware that internet communications are insecure and there are limitations to confidentiality due to the technology itself. However once the materials are received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with anyone other than the researchers without my written permission, except if it is required by law. Following data collection, Research data will be stripped of individually-identifiable information, and I will be assigned a pseudonym to be used on all of the data that can be identified as mine.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

At the beginning of my interview the researcher will confirm that I have read this informational consent letter and ask me if I have any questions. Then, I will be asked to verbally indicate whether or not I agree to: 1) participate in the research and 2) give my permission for my interviews to be audio-recorded. I will print a copy of this letter to keep for my records.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol (Master's and Doctoral Studies)

1. How did you get into the field of student affairs?
2. Tell me about your decision to pursue a <master's/doctorate> in student affairs.
3. Tell me about your <master's/doctoral> program.
 - a. What skills do you use most often from that experience in your work?
 - b. What skills would you have liked to gain from that experience that would be helpful to you now?
4. Tell me about your work in student affairs past and present.
5. Describe the culture of your division? Department? Office?
6. How would you describe the overall interest of student affairs research in your division? Department? Office?
7. How would you describe your personal interest in student affairs research?
8. What role has conducting student affairs related research play in your life?
9. What role has/does consuming research literature play in your work?
10. How does literature inform your work?
11. Describe the role of teaching in your work.
12. What role does your knowledge of the field play in your teaching?

APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol (Scholar-Practitioner Study)

1. How did you get into the work of student affairs?
2. Tell me about your graduate school experiences.
3. Tell me about your work (to be asked for each position over the span of career).
4. Describe the culture of your division? Department? Office? (to be asked for each position)
5. How would you describe the overall interest of student affairs research in your division? Department? Office? (to be asked for each position)
6. How would you describe your interest in student affairs research?
7. What role does conducting student affairs related research play in your life?
8. What type of research do you engage in most often? Why is that research topic of interest to you?
9. How do you find time for research?
10. What role does consuming research literature play in your work?
11. What type of literature do you find most useful to your work? What do you find useful about it?
12. What percentage of the literature you read is within the field of student affairs?
13. In what ways does literature inform your work?
14. Describe the role of teaching in your work?
15. What role does your knowledge of the field play in your teaching?
16. What challenges have you encountered being a scholar-practitioner?