Winter 2022

Student Affairs Professionals as Tempered Radicals: Lessons on Action and Advocacy

Devin A. De Both
Eastern Illinois University

Student Affairs Professionals as Tempered Radicals: Lessons on Advocacy and Action

Devin A. De Both

Department of Counseling and Higher Education

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

Modern universities are intricate organizations with many stakeholders each with their own goals and objectives. In a time of resource scarcity, student affairs professionals are tasked with advocating on behalf of their students, staffs, departments, and priorities against more solvent operations. Effective managers and administrators must align their priorities with other actors on campus and in accordance with institutional values. This study asked how professionals engage in the advocacy process, including the strategies that they use. Utilizing the *tempered radicals* perspective, this qualitative study was conducted through four interviews with experienced senior level student affairs professionals.

Keywords: Advocacy, tempered radicals, activism, student affairs, higher education

Dedication

This is written for the radical student affairs practitioners who are making change the quiet way-- the professionals whose means have been tempered, but their spirit has not.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

The role of student affairs professionals has evolved over time, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of higher education. Throughout the 20th century, American higher education has grown exponentially not just in enrollment but also in the number of staff hired to serve the increased enrollment. With more staff, procedures were "formalized to ensure consistency" and students began to feel less of a connection to their university (Meyerson & Thompkins, 2007). When an individual feels their values, priorities, or mission is incongruent with their greater organization there are reported lower rates of satisfaction and higher rates of attrition from the institution (Miscenko & Day, 2015; Hirschy et al., 2015). This personal connection piece is important to the work of student affairs, especially as the role of higher education continues to shift in the modern era.

As higher education continues to grow in its complexity, the role of student affairs professionals has become that of institutional conduits between various interest groups, such as faculty, other administrators, local community members, parents, and the student population. As discussed in Trow (1989), American universities are dependent on student enrollment to fund operations . At the same time, the economic conditions, particularly in the corporate investment into higher education, made college administrators more accountable to run their department as a

business entity (Trow, 1989). As a business, colleges must compete for limited resources such as money, space, and time (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Since our first colleges, American Higher Education has served as an institutionalized conduit between "The State, the Market, and the Culture", facilitating or silencing dialogue occurring in the greater social context (Scott, 2000; p. 4). The increased access to colleges diversified the student population which resulted in more specialized care and support to students during a time of state disinvestment. This study utilized the Bolman and Deal (2017) framework of academic organizations to situate professionals into the political, symbolic, bureaucratic, and human contexts of their work. This study utilized the Tempered Radicals Framework (Meyerson & Scully, 1995) in understanding how professionals enact change on their campus through their advocacy efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of student affairs professionals in their advocacy. On behalf of students, their staffs, and themselves, professionals must identify and advocate for the needs and wants of their people. The purpose of this study was to better understand the challenges faced, goals achieved, and lessons learned by professionals in their career. By interviewing seasoned professionals, this study aimed to collect strategies used by accomplished advocates.

The purpose of this study was to better understand how professionals move their work forward at every stage of their career. With increasingly complex students and less resources to support them, student affairs professionals are being stretched thin. Decisions about what staff stays when there are budget cuts, what offices will move into a new building, and which students will be dismissed will all leverage, in growing part, on the ability of managers to speak on behalf of their staff, staff for their students.

Since the field of student affairs was established in the 1930s, there has been ambiguity, if not inconsistency, in the expectations of professionals (Ward, 2015). Furthermore, the culture of the field has rewarded professionals who overextend themselves, valuing sacrifice for the sake of our work. As stated by Kuk and Hughes (2003) “many new professionals also appear to know little about how organizations function and how change and political processes work within higher education settings” (para. 11). A final purpose was to better understand how organizations function, specifically by utilizing the Bolman and Deal framework of academic institutions (2017).

This study focused on professionals in roles that position them as advocates. This positionality of advocate is intentionally broad, as professional's advocacy may take many forms. In limiting this study to mid-level professionals and above, this study aimed to collect strategies used by those who have completed eight or more years as a student affairs professional. This study was conducted through four interviews with individual participants.

Research Questions

With these issues in mind, this study aimed to answer, centrally, how student affairs professionals engage in advocacy work.

1. How do experienced student affairs professionals describe the purpose of their work?
2. How do experienced student affairs professionals describe their role as advocates, and how has it evolved over the course of their career?

Significance of the study

Institutions of higher education are experiencing shrinking budgets and resources for departments on campus. In a time of resource decline, effective advocacy is a necessary skill for all managers. With a greater emphasis being placed on student retention and alumni fundraising,

student affairs professionals are positioned well to advocate for themselves and their staff and programs if they know how.

For Professionals. Much of student affairs work is focused on student advocacy, and as professionals rise in ranks, their mentality towards and focus on advocacy shift. While they once advocated for students, managers and executives must advocate for their staff who are advocating for the students. At the executive level, effective advocacy revolves around tangible resources such as spaces, money, and staffing, as well as the students.

There is a growing body of literature on the experiences of student affairs professionals, although it is still limited regarding the topic of advocacy. Much of the present research on the experiences of student affairs professionals focus on dissatisfaction and burnout (Silver & Jakeman, 2014; Stewart, et al., 2020). This study aims to add to the body of literature that outlines how to avoid burnout by studying the professional purpose and motivations of participants. In doing so, this study explored the relationship between student affairs professionals, their values, and their work as advocates.

This study utilized the *tempered radicals* framework, a theory first applied to academic affairs professionals, such as professors and academic deans (Meyerson and Scully, 1995). This framework offered a structured approach to effective advocacy by professionals, and the findings of this study reinforced the theory of the tempered radical outlined by Meyerson and Scully (1995). This study aids professionals by offering practical strategies to utilize for more effective advocacy.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study. First, there was a limited sample size with four participants. Being a qualitative thesis, keeping this study small was deemed appropriate. Three of the participants were white while one participant was Black. There were three women and one

man. This study was focused on experience and thus an effort to further diversify the small participant pool was not made. The interviews were only about one hour each, meaning there was not much time to build personal rapport with the participants. Establishing a sense of familiarity with participants helps to establish trust, leading to more authentic responses. The interviews were crafted in a way to best establish trust and respect and get authentic responses from the participants.

There was no standard definition of advocate provided to participants which limits the consistency of participants' experiences, particularly their level of involvement in advocacy work. In choosing to interview more seasoned professionals, the intention was that they would have had the professional experience and necessary time to provide perspective on past events that has helped them shape their own definition of advocacy. While entry level professionals engage in advocacy, this research aimed to study the progression or change throughout a professional's career. Furthermore, while senior level professionals also engage in advocacy efforts, they are less organizationally engaged compared to their direct reports.

Another limitation of self-identification is the inherent bias towards self that each participant will hold. Having professionals reflect on past experiences gives room for opinion and warped perceptions of their experiences. This limitation was heightened as respondents were aware of the research topic when they decided to participate. In limiting this bias, this research was sent to professionals with at least eight years of experience in the field of higher education, and all participants were 15 or more years in the profession. Questions asked participants to describe specific scenarios, including their own role. Interviewees were asked to reflect on their decision-making processes, the role of their own values in that decision, as well as any long term, unintended, or continual changes that resulted from them. Selecting a population that has a

greater personal perspective and a greater number of professional experiences aided in collecting more forthright responses than younger professionals. Schneider (1987) identified that midlevel professionals have experienced enough to help them understand that there is not a best system, but one that they must strive to improve by thinking strategically and working with various constituents to improve their structure.

Furthermore, as a graduate student, there was a possible perceived distance between myself and those who serve in upper administrative roles. My perspective of higher education was more limited compared to their experiences, as well. To account for this, I worked with a thesis advisor and committee members who were organizationally and professionally similar to the participants so they could help me to better understand my data.

Definition of Terms

Advocate. Broadly speaking, advocates are individuals who are motivated to create change (Kezar, 2010). Within the context of this study, advocates are professionals that may recognize their institutional positionality to leverage organizational change.

Advocacy. Within the framework of the tempered radical, advocacy challenges organizational norms, institutional policies, or social issues (Kezar, 2010; Meyerson & Thompkins, 2007).

Entry-level professional: Professionals who are organizationally situated closely with students. They often supervise or advise students directly. Some entry level professionals have graduate degrees but often entry level professionals have a bachelor's degree minimum requirement. Hirschy, et al. (2015) outlined new professionals as also having less than five years professional experience.

Mid-level professional. A professional who has had five or more years as a full-time student affairs professional. Mid-level professionals have had the experience of supervising full

time or student staff, and they are organizationally situated between senior most and grassroots actors (Fey & Carpenter, 1996; Mather et al., 2009). Mid-level management roles often have a Master's degree requirement, signaling a shift in the role's perspective and leadership.

***Senior-Level Administrator*.** Professionals who are organizationally situated closest with the President, Board of Trustees, and university executives. These professionals have greater institutional authority through their budget oversight and role in the policy process. The level of senior professionals often require a doctoral or otherwise terminal degree.

Values. This study utilizes the definition of values used by Fawcett (1991) in their research on community organization and action. In this framework, values center the core issues of our lives including our race and gender, as well as personal morals and decision making. Finally, values relate to our greater social roles in organizations, including how we conduct relationships with others.

Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). Vice President/Provost of/for Student Affairs. These individuals are typically the senior level professional administrator for the division of student affair and report directly to the President.

Tempered Radical. A term coined first to describe activists working in academia, this term has been used to describe professionals more broadly who are dedicated to their organizations, although their values, beliefs, or vision do not align with that of their department or field. These individuals seek to create change that will positively impact their environment, but they "must temper their strategies" to reduce resistance to their ideas (Kezar & Lester, 2011; p. 29).

Summary

This research incorporated many phenomena, many with their own substantial literature on American higher education institutions have historically been important hubs for social

movements, especially as the size and scale of universities grew (Gusfield, 1971; Herr, 1967; Wilkinson, 1994; Scott & El-Assal, 1969). American universities are also dependent on student satisfaction, as they are often largely funded by student enrollment. Because of this, university administrators are accountable to many constituencies. As student affairs professionals, they hold a key role in the advocacy process. While entry level professionals are situated closely with students, they have little organizational credibility, professional networks, or adequate understanding of university politic. Mid-level professionals have a vested interest within their department, and they are situated to engage with multiple campus groups. Having spent time at their campus, or in the field, mid-level professionals have a greater understanding of the political bargaining process, and they have the perspective to see the larger picture. The field of student affairs depends on the longevity and resilience of its professionals. By listening to the experiences of mid-level professionals, this research aimed to give practical advice to entry-level professionals as they acclimate to the realities of student advocacy work.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In identifying how mid-level managers engage in advocacy work, this study utilized Bolman and Deal's four frames to understand the structure, culture, and behaviors of organizations as well as those working within them (Tull & Freeman, 2011). Colleges and universities are highly institutionalized environments, uniquely situated amongst a wide range of distinct and influential interest groups. Highly institutionalized environments are slow and resistant to change, making progress dependent on the persistence and resilience of institutional entrepreneurs (Meyerson, 2004). Mid-level managers are institutional conduits, learning and translating messages across a wide range of groups including students, faculty, and upper administrators. Having knowledge of a university's structure, being familiar with the informal rules, and building rapport with others are all tools that a mid-level manager can provide in advocating for change. Higher education was once rooted in holistic student development, but modern universities more closely resemble multiversities—a conglomerate of separate entities roped together (Scott & El-Assal, 1969).

History and Development of Higher Education

The history and progression of higher education within the United States was deeply influenced by the social movements, economic conditions, and political affairs of the time. Since the first established college in 1636, institutions of American higher education have increased in size and scope in response to population boom, technological advancements, and an increased investment from public actors and private industry (Nye, 2005; Scott & El-Assal, 1969). Alongside the increased investment of government and industry into higher education, legislative acts expanded accessibility of college to many Americans. As the student population continued

to increase in both size and diversity, universities saw the financial, legal, and political complications with the new size and diversity of their student's needs (Cohen, 2007).

With growing populations and increasing enrollment, modern universities have become increasingly complicated due to the exhaustive scope of their duties, hierarchical governance structures, and the far range of their constituencies (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Their internal processes reflect the equally complex network of federal policies that are overseen by a range of agencies, Congressional committees, or other departments which results in inconsistent messaging, priorities, and funding (Keppel, 1987). This diversity is broadened further by the distinction of private and public institutions, each having their own cultures and expectations. Because American universities were built and designed for White, young male students, universities, even today, struggle to adapt their policies, protocols, and procedures to meet the needs and expectations of a more diverse student population.

Prior to 1860s.

This diversity of American higher education is marked not just in student population, but also from the wide variety of structural functions between colleges as well. Because the American Constitution limits federal powers in regulating education, there was functionally no involvement of the federal government within the field of higher education until the start of the second World War (Eckel & King, 2004). Because of this, there is little consistency within the American system of higher education. Modern academic standards, admissions criteria, and student supports vary considerably at each individual institution, and governance of institutions are legally complicated and complex to understand (Eckel & King, 2004). This multiplicity was a concern of the American founding fathers who had originally pushed for the creation of a national university in the hopes that it could serve as the model flagship of a unified nation rather

than split allegiances to state schools (Trow, 1989).

By the start of the American revolution, the colonies already had nine colleges formed, compared to England's two (Trow, 1989). By the time the Civil War began in 1861, it's estimated that up to 700 colleges were formed, but because they were competing for scarce resources, most had consolidated or closed entirely (Trow, 1989). This expansion, and oversaturation, of higher educational institutions is unique to American system in that it resembles the pattern of small businesses, highlighting the influence that capitalist markets had on the development of American higher education (Trow, 1989). This relationship was warned of by George Washington in his address to Congress (1783):

> Our Country, much to its honor, contains many Seminaries of learning highly respectable and useful; but the funds upon which they rest, are too narrow, to command the ablest Professors, in the different departments of liberal knowledge, for the Institution contemplated, though they would be excellent auxiliaries"

These first colleges were, in part, a response to life in the new world, as they were closely tied to religion and morality, partially to balance the barbarian lifestyle of the American frontier and the perceived culture of local native populations (Trow, 1989). As stated in Scott (2000), "[The university] cannot be separated from the phenomenon of imperialism" (p. 5). The establishment of Harvard College in 1638 was an act of Western, colonial conquest; not unlike the Spanish universities that were being established in Central America (Scott, 200). Furthermore, the exclusion of people of color, and investment in American slavery, from institutions of higher education is historically undeniable. The vast majority of colleges upheld segregated practices, even those in northern states, with some exceptions including Oberlin College and Amherst College (Brown & Davis, 2004).

There was a recognition that society needed more than religiously educated leaders, and in 1810, over 85% of enrolled students were attending a religious institution (Burke, 1982; as cited in Cohen, 2007). The purpose of these colleges was to develop religious leaders who could go out and develop religious communities. By 1860, enrollment dropped to 50% at the traditional religious institutions, with the other half of students attending non-majoritarian religiously affiliated schools, such as Catholic or Methodist colleges (Burke, 1982 as cited in Cohen, 2007). Up until the Civil War, the role of university administrators was to advise students' moral and religious values along with supervising their academic pursuit, and the cultural understanding of higher education's role was to preserve, transmit, and enrich culture in the hopes of bettering society (ACES, 1937).

The 19th century.

As a developing country, there was a greater need for advancement compared to the long-established European institutions whose academic interests were more philosophical, rather than towards the expansion of scientific and technological advancement (Trow, 1989). The 1937 report from the American Council on Education Studies described in detail how the Civil War directed governmental and industry interest, especially the development of the agriculture industry. The federal government passed the Land-Grant College Act of 1862, or Morrill Act, that funded public universities that focused on agriculture and engineering technology (Cohen, 2007; Rief, 2007). As stated in Goldin & Katz (2011), "State institutions in the 19th century were more practically and, often, more scientifically oriented than were their private counterparts, in large measure because of the commitment to provide goods and services of value to citizens and local industrial interests" (p. 51). In the late 19th century, the rise of Normal schools, whose interests served a more local population, training teachers and other educators.

Religious institutions fell in popularity in the early to mid-1800s as “the triumph of the scientific method and other aspects of secular thought” stood contradictory with religious doctrine (Goldin & Katz, 2011; p. 47). This rise in secular thought was fueled by the creation and expansion of public colleges and universities. Even prior to the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862, 80% of the states already had an established state school (Goldin & Katz, 2011). By the start of the Civil War in 1861, there were more than 250 functioning colleges in the United States (Cohen, 2007). Between 1790 and 1869, enrollment at institutions of higher education surged from approximately 1000 students to 63,000 (Cohen, 2007). This expansion in enrollment can be related to several factors including continued population boom, increased investment into higher education institutions, and increased access to marginalized groups. This access can be seen through several pieces of legislation including the second Morrill Act as well as the rise of the Normal school. Following the Civil War, government leaders “feared that citizens were not educated enough to maintain the democratic virtues of the United States” and, in response, the rise in teaching colleges aimed to serve the general population began (Remenick, 2019; p. 116). Throughout the 19th century, American colleges and universities were serving an increasingly diverse student group, including African American and Black students, female students, and older adults from lower socioeconomic classes. In 1893, the first Normal school was opened, and female enrollment at these teaching colleges grew (Remenick, 2019). Normal school administrators knew that their student populations were “generally atypical and transient”, and they worked to meet their needs through small academic program sizes as well as offering student clubs and activities (Remenick, 2019; p. 116).

The second Morrill Act provided funds to states to open Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or to otherwise allocate funds to African American students attending

HBCUs (Brown & Davis, 2001; Cohen, 2007). Passed during the American Civil War, the effects of this were seen predominantly three years later when the war ended, and southern states were mandated to provide public education to African American persons (Brown & Davis, 2007). Alongside increased access to Black and African American peoples, the first college for the Deaf and Blind was opened in 1864, and in just two years, had "twenty-five students (including two women) from thirteen states and the District of Columbia" (Madaus, 2011, p. 5).

Early 20th Century.

The students of the 20th century were increasingly diverse in their gender, ethnicity, age, and ability status, predominantly as the result of international conflicts. . The ending of the first World War sparked the passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1918 which expanded the rights of disabled veterans. In 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the G.I. Bill of Rights, essentially funding collegiate expenses for veterans to "integrate servicemen back into the U.S. workforce" after the ending of the second world war (Eckel & King, 2004; p. 3). In its original form, the GI Bill was for veterans who had left college to fight in the war, although lobbying and advocacy efforts expanded this educational grant to all veterans (Remenick, 2019). Furthermore, Congress wanted to initially limit this grant to veterans under the age of 25, but pressure from veterans and colleges themselves lobbied to allow veterans of any age to be eligible (Remenick, 2019). This meant that colleges had to identify ways to support this increase in population who were federally funded to attend college.

America's first colleges were established before the Declaration of Independence was signed, and the number has only grown since then. A number of factors contributed to this expansion including increased access to student populations to include students of color, students with disabilities, and student veterans. With wider diversity in the student population, university

administrators were tasked with supporting more students in unique ways.

Development of Student Affairs

The field of Student Affairs is relatively new in title, although it reflects the historical values of education. As stated in the 1949 Revised edition of the Student Personnel Point of View:

> From the Middle Ages until the beginning of the 19th century, European higher education and its American offshoots gave as much attention to the social, moral, and religious development of its students as to their intellectual growth. The rise of the modern research-centered German university early in the nineteenth century led to the abandonment of this personal concern for students and centered on intellectualistic concern (p. 3).

With the rise of intellectualism on American campuses, professionals began organizing to protect the rights and experience of students and provide impactful out-of-class experiences. The first modern student affairs professionals were the deans of men and deans of women who were "typically charged with keeping order on campus by enforcing disciplinary codes" (Renn, 2010; p. 133). Many of these roles had little structure or guidance. In 1937, a group of professionals serving in dean positions came together to write the original Student Personnel Point of View. This document was the articulation of their day-to-day responsibilities, particularly how they contribute to overall student experience. This document also underpinned the purpose and values within their work as well.

The original 1937 Student Personnel Point of View outlined the technical responsibilities of administrators to their student population. The philosophy of student affairs as a profession was outlined in this document such as holistic student development and importance of self within community. The document described how universities within higher education had become

preoccupied by social and industrial forces that pushed scientific research. Colleges thrived following the second World War as the federal government flooded money to individuals, institutions, and states to develop and attend programs in technology, engineering, and sciences. It benefitted the professionals and students by more clearly delineating tasks, it was also a major step in formally prioritizing efficiency in the university operation. While the student affairs profession began to take shape, academia's role and relationship within society continued to expand. As stated by Goldin & Katz in 2011, "For most of the 19th century, American institutions of higher education were centers of learning, not research. That began to change in the latter part of the nineteenth century with the founding of the Johns Hopkins University in 1876" (p. 45). While colleges were once places of education, their focus had slowly shifted away toward research output and capital productivity. The increased specialization within academic disciplines, the influx of funding from public and private donors, and the increased size of colleges all contributed to a shift in the culture of higher education through the late 19th to mid 20th century America (Flood et al., 2013; Scott & El-Assal, 1969; ACES, 1937; Rudolph, 1990).

In 1949, the American Council on Education Studies met again to revise the 1937 SSPV document, refining the language and specifying the values, motivations, and purpose of student affairs as a profession. In this document, the objective of educational processes within democratic society was to develop people as whole persons to better interact with one another, their social systems, and other complexities of modern society.

Advocacy in the 20th Century

In the early part of the 20th century the student affairs profession was in its infancy, with few staff to manage the many needs of the students. Great attention was paid by these professionals toward developing the whole students (SPPV 1937; SPPV 1949). By doing this, professionals developed close relationships with students as mentors, guides, and colleagues.

One of the unintended/unexpected outcomes was supporting and teaching students to engage in a changing society leading to student activism. As student activists engage in a variety of ways, including staging campus demonstrations, sit-ins within administrative buildings, and marches through campus streets, institutions have had to find ways to manage this while also encouraging and supporting the students (Altbach & Cohen, 1990; Gusfield, 1971 Herr, 1967). The American system of higher education is internationally unique in that it is extremely sensitive to the demands of its students (Trow, 1989). Understanding how societal issues presented themselves on the college campus is important in identifying the role administrators played in helps students develop as advocates.

Research has shown that many leaders within higher education, as well as the scholars and administrators who work at them "strive to understand and address campus issues" (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019; p. 10). In doing so, they can better improve their support to students, boosting the likelihood of retaining them as a student. Universities have financial incentives to keep students enrolled through their tuition payments, student fees, and state appropriations (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019).

1950s

In 1947, President Truman's report on higher education framed education as a right that should be for all Americans. At the same time, the cost of attending universities was rising, and the general economic conditions of the time meant that many could not attend (Remenick, 2019). However, in the post WWII era, much was changing in the American society. The G. I. Bill provided an avenue to higher education that for many populations had previously been unattainable.

Increased funding and greater access to college meant institutions were faced with a more diverse student body (Trow, 1989). As this was occurring, the country began to experience the rise of the social justice movement which gave voice to many previously underrepresented populations (Altbach & Carlton, 2020: Cohen, 1990; Trow, 1989). On the college campus the gap between student affairs and academic affairs grew. While faculty were spending more time on their research and teaching, there was a greater demand for individuals to manage the student experience, especially as the students became more vocal (Reif, 2007; Scott & El-Assal, 1969).

1960s

During the first half of the 1960s, students were graduating from high school at the highest rates in American history at roughly 61% (Karen, 1991). Enrollment at post-secondary institutions continued to rise, and in 1963, the federal government passed the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, which gave colleges federal funds for "classrooms, laboratories and libraries"(Keppel, 1991; p. 53). Two years later, the federal government passed one of the largest and most expansive pieces of legislature in education: the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Brown & Davis, 2001). The 1965 act “reflected the needs of colleges that were expanding rapidly to meet an onrush of students” (Keppel, 1987; p. 53). The coming-of-age Baby Boomer generation was entering college, and they were graduating from high school at higher rates than ever (Karen, 1991).

The 1965 Higher Education Act was just one tenant of a larger social movement, and societal reckoning, happening into the mid-1960s that involved an increased awareness of, and investment in, civil rights, power relations, and institutional accountability (Altbach & Cohen, 1990). “Even the 1965 act was designed not so much to strengthen institutions themselves as to further a social cause — providing equal opportunity — through higher education” (Keppel,

1987; p. 50). At public and private colleges alike, student protests were erupting across the United States during the 1960s (Altbach & Cohen, 1990). The movement for Civil Rights pushed student organizers to demand change not only to campus policies, but institutional traditions, values, and culture (Altbach & Cohen, 1990). Administrators at these colleges were being called upon issues such as the Vietnam war, but also the issues surrounding free speech and racism within higher education. Colleges such as Bennett College, North Carolina A&T, and Howard University were three Historically Black Colleges where students protested against their campus administrators and local authorities (Aiello, 2012). In some, these non-violent protests by students were met with violence, as seen at colleges such as Kent State (Aiello, 2012). Wheatle and Commodore (2019) discuss how many of the student protests were less about specific actions, and they were more focused on challenging the American ideal of free speech on college campuses.

The social unrest challenged many ideals, including the role of college as *in loco parentis*. As discussed in Wheatle and Commodore (2019) this role meant that institutions were expected "to be responsible for or, in some cases, discipline students who may have been viewed as speaking out of turn" (p. 13). When students staged protests, administrators were "regarded as failing." They struggled to navigate treating students as adults with Constitutional rights or as students needing developmental guidance (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019; p. 13). This was a difficult balance to find, especially considering the expanded access of higher education. In 1968, the first piece of legislation was passed for individuals with disabilities, the Architectural Barriers Act which specifically targeted issues of accessible design in buildings and facilities across society, including in universities and colleges (Silver, Bourke, and Strehorn, 1998). This trend of greater access continued into the 1970s with the passage of further legislation.

1970s.

In 1973, the Rehabilitation Act was passed to protect the rights of disabled peoples, including section 504 which protects those in any program receiving federal funding, including most post-secondary institutions (Lee, 1999). Section E specifically required public and private institutions to consider qualified students with disabilities during their admissions process, as well as provide them with the appropriate accommodations (Lee, 1999). For colleges this meant that they had to look at what services and accommodations would be needed to support this population on their campus.

The common practice of administrators during this time reflects the laggard nature of environments as institutionalized as colleges (Renn, 2010). The religious foundations of American colleges can be seen in the philosophy held by administrators during the first half of the 20th century, which sought to eradicate deviance from campus. Just as college officials engaged with students during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the 1970s saw similar protests regarding prejudice against the homosexual community. Even into the 1970s, those who "demonstrated homosexual traits including carriage, mannerisms, voice, and speech" could be dismissed from university life, including faculty and staff (Renn, 2010; p. 133). If students were caught, or otherwise suspected of engaging in homosexual activity, they would often be expelled (Renn, 2010). As stated by Renn in 2010, "Deans were instrumental in the process of removing students identified as homosexual deviants… Yet they and their colleagues in the growing field of college counseling sometimes took a treatment approach rather than a disciplinary approach" (Renn, 2010; p. 133). By framing homosexual behavior as a disease to be treated, rather than an immoral stain, university professionals had a greater flexibility to keep students on campus (Renn, 2010). The removal of homosexuality from the DSM-5 in 1973, even further protected

students from facing disciplinary or medical intervention (Renn, 2020). The actions of deans during this period reflect the role of the student affairs administrator as advocates on behalf of homosexual student populations.

The Combahee River Collective, a collective of Black feminist Lesbian scholars, released their 1977 statement on the issues of Black women highlighting overlapping and interlocking systems of oppression. During this time, they also began actively organizing on college campuses on issues such as dating violence, health care, and sexual assault (Jessup-Anger, Lopez & Koss, 2018). These efforts were often met with racism from the white men and women attending, teaching, or otherwise working at the college.

During this time in American society, the federal government began to shift funds to colleges more substantially through grant allocations and by providing direct loans to students. In doing so, the federal government aimed to strengthen the relative power of the student, as a consumer in the market, rather than the college as producer (Trow, 1989). These financial supports included the Pell Grant as well as the federal work-study grant, alongside establishing a national student loan service agency (Keppel, 1987). This increased investment from the federal government into higher education was the result of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program (Keppel, 1987). Between 1969 and 1975, roughly 800 new colleges were formed (Trow, 1989). Between 1960 and 1984, there were over 600 community colleges built to sustain to meet enrollment demands (National Institute of Education, 1984). While many colleges were opening, many others were closing or otherwise consolidated (Trow, 1989). The high rate of colleges opening and closing since the country's founding, in correlation with government support, highlights the link between higher education and the American economic market. (Trow, 1989; p. 9).

President Johnson's Great Society Program flooded higher education with money and resources, but there remained divisive social issues on campuses across the country. In 1970, the National Guard was called to Columbus after students at Ohio State University protested the lack of Black student enrollment (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). That same year, the Columbus National Guard killed four students protesting the Vietnam war at Kent State (Aiello, 2012). Later that year, two people were killed, and twelve others were injured, after campus police opened fire at Black students protesting at Jackson State Mississippi (Aiello, 2012). Alongside the racial tensions building on campuses, gender equality was on the national stage with the first adoption of Title IX in 1972 to promote equity in collegiate admissions and sports (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019; p. 11). While the 1970s pushed forward the rights of students with disabilities, queer students, and other marginalized groups, the 1980s ushered in a new era of governance, and a new set of challenges, for higher education.

1980s

During the 1980s, the culture and function of education within the United States was experiencing a shift to "especially quantitative, measurable standards" including standardized tests (Karen, 1991). The belief at the time was that raising our standard test scores would "restore us to our proper place atop the world" (Karen, 1991, p. 226). As stated in Keppel (1987):

> By 1986, the federal government had become the largest investor by far in what had earlier been described as a "partnership" for a national program of student aid. At the same time, the states and private sources contributed a far smaller proportion than they had in 1965 (p. 59).

The decline in state support was due to, in part, an ideological shift in American culture at this time (Rosenstone, 2004). While higher education was once seen as a public good for all,

the recession in the early 1980s supported the shift to seeing college as a private good, taken on by individuals (Rosenstone, 2004). The 80s within higher education was marked by a decline in federal involvement, both in a decreased funding to student financial aid programs but also in the "active neglect in the enforcement of affirmative action" by the Reagan administration (Karen, 1991; p. 226). The college students enrolled during the 1960s "had yet to take on roles in which mainstream culture would heed their cultural critiques" (Contreras, 2019; para. 7).

Of these, violence against women rose during the 1980s. The 1986 murder of Lehigh University freshman, Jeanne Clery, led to the creation of the Clery Act which requires all colleges and universities who receive federal funding to report campus crime statistics (Jessup-Anger et al., 2018). The term "date rape" was first coined by Mary Koss, a professor at University of Arizona, in 1987 after a national survey found 7.7% of male students had anonymously responded that they "had engaged in or attempted forced sex" and did not consider it to be a crime. When she did her own research in the 1980s, her data found 11% of male undergraduate respondents admitting to being perpetrators (npr.org). By the early 1990s, many campuses had established their own sexual violence crisis centers (Jessup-Anger, Lopez & Koss, 2018).

1990s

The Campus Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights was signed into law in 1992. This federal act required university officials to create and distribute policies regarding sexual assault including information on prevention, resources offered, and processes of the institution. The act also put more regulations into the adjudication and hearing process on campus, extending more federal reach into higher education and role of administrators. It was not until the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that colleges were given additional funds to achieve the

expectations that began with the Clery Act in 1990 (Jessup-Anger, Lopez & Koss, 2018).

Another major phenomenon was the ongoing AIDS epidemic. By 1992, AIDS had been the top cause of death for American men between the ages of 25 and 44 (Bowler et al., 1992). Not only did the widespread misinformation, sickness, and death devastate students, but it also took a toll on university faculty and staff; some of whom had been forced "out of the closet" after keeping their professional and personal lives separate (Renn, 2010). University administrators were impacted by this in numerous ways, depending on their role on campus. Those who were working in university housing, dining, and facilities were tasked with preventing or minimizing transmission. More students needed counseling services and further turned to cultural centers and student groups for support. Siblings, parents, and other familial members of individuals across campus were dying rapidly, causing widespread grief, decline in mental health, and sense of security on campus. The AIDS crisis continued on campus into the 1990s and, in part, fueled protests on disability rights.

The emergence of the internet in the 1990s revolutionized accessibility in higher education (Remenick, 2019)**.** Distance learning had existed in some form since the 1800s through telegram, telephone, and eventually the postal office, but the internet expanded access to millions of Americans who could not be on campus (Remenick, 2019). These students included those with disabilities, children, or other professional responsibilities, such as a full-time job (Remenick, 2019; p. 119). As stated in Remerick (2019):

> As the popularity and implementation of online course offerings grew, institutions saw online learning as a way to attract nontraditional students. It offered a platform to reach out to a population who had the desire and the means but not the ability to attend in-person classes. For these students, such as single or stay-at-home parents, full-time

> working professionals, and persons with disabilities, online learning provided access, community, convenience, and flexibility (p. 119)

With an increased accessibility gained through online learning, university personnel were being spread thinner than ever, although improved communication made for more consistent and more efficient collaboration across campus. With more efficient communication, students began to expect more expedient service from their colleges. While students once had to wait weeks for their course schedule to arrive in the mail, students were refreshing their email to see if it had arrived.

2000s

American history will forever be marked by the attacks of September 11th, 2001. This incident triggered several things to occur, both in the United States and abroad. An increased recruitment to the American military began, impacting high school students and traditionally college aged men. There was further involvement into the middle East and a rise in hate crimes against Middle Eastern people living in the U.S., including those on college campuses. This rise in social extremism was furthered by the economic recession hit as the United States elected its first Black president (Hartig & Doherty, 2021). Students attending American colleges at this time were deeply impacted by these events, just as the professionals who were working to support them.

Just as with previous wars, veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq were a growing demographic in American colleges during the 2000s (Eckel & King, 2004). In 2008, President George W. Bush signed the Veterans Educational Assistance Act, sometimes referred to as the Post 9/11 G. I. Bill (Bush, 2008). This bill covered the full cost of any public college in their state for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan (Ford & Vignare, 2015). Furthermore, this

bill could be used by the spouse or child of a veteran, expanding educational access to military families for decades after its passing (Ford & Vignare, 2015). The Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program similarly provides the families of veterans who have been injured, disabled, or killed by their service 50 months of educational funding towards college, apprenticeships, and other certification programs (Ford & Vignare, 2015). These veterans and their families were a population on campus that required greater support and services than the average student. Unlike the traditional student, veteran students are less likely to get involved on campus and establish community, and they are more likely to struggle with mental health and addiction (Flink, 2017; Ford & Vignare, 2015).

The diversifying student body required institutions to compare the services provided to students with the supports that they needed to be successful within the classroom. In 2003, a third of American university students were of racially or ethnically minoritized groups (Eckel & King, 2004). This population meant that institutions had to work toward diversifying their faculty and staff, examining how resources were being distributed, and what resources and services they were providing their students. These conversations were directly tied to their hiring practices, budget allocation, and departmental priorities and initiatives. It was during this time that the First-Generation Student (FGS) term became popularized, further emphasizing the needs of low-income students (Eckel & King, 2004). In 2003, roughly 20% of postsecondary students were from homes either at or below the federal poverty line which meant that colleges must consider how the needs and experiences of low-income students impact student supports such as health clinics, textbook rental services, and break housing accommodations (Eckel & King, 2004).

An increased enrollment of Veteran, low-income, and/or minoritized students led to an

expanded awareness on the unique and diverse needs of these students on campus. Often it fell on the already busy student affairs professionals to help these increasingly diverse and niche student groups find community and support on campus.

2010s

The election of President Barack Obama in 2008 was not only the result of a changing social landscape, but it shed light on long existing racial tensions within American society, including on college campuses. In 2010, two white students were found guilty of scattering balls of cotton outside the University of Missouri's Black cultural center. University administrators gave the students a fine and community service hours for littering (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). There were resulting student protests calling for harsher sanctioning for racially motivated acts of violence. Similar incidents have occurred at public and private universities, in various sizes, across the United States.

Alongside the continued support given to Black and First-Generation students, the passage of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in 2012 represented a larger awareness around the Latinx student population within higher education. This required staff on the campus to become familiar with the policies and language around this program and develop support services to help this population navigate through college. In 2012, English Language Learners (ELLs) were the fastest growing population on American campuses, comprised of students who are not native English speaking and range in their fluency, sometimes only proficient in academic specific terminology. Despite an increase in awareness, Latinx students experience higher attrition rates from colleges across the United States (Venegas, et al., 2017). A visible shift in the language and culture of Latinx student support can be seen as colleges and universities strived towards becoming Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) rather

than the predated Hispanic Enrolling Institutions (HEIs) (Venegas, et al., 2017). Colleges began to shift their goals and missions towards retention efforts of marginalized students during the 2010s, rather than simple recruitment.

2020s and beyond

The students of today are increasingly diverse in their age, country of origin, race, economic status, and gender and sexual identities. Nontraditional students made up almost 75% of the undergraduate student enrollment in 2012, using the standard currently set by the U.S. Department of Education (Remenick, 2019). This standard outlines several characteristics to define nontraditional students including those that have postponed enrolling into post-secondary institutions by one or more years after graduating high school. They also include those who are enrolled in classes as a part time student, those who support themselves and/or spouses, family members, or other dependents. Students who are parents and/or have a full-time job were also considered to be nontraditional students by this standard (Remenick, 2019). Wheatle and Commodore discuss the unique positionality that universities, their staff, and their students stating:

> Over time, as more students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds entered American higher education, campuses were compelled to address societal ills, including lack of educational equity and disparate civil rights. Hence, institutional leaders have historically and contemporarily needed to navigate local, state, and federal policies and laws. Because of lawsuits and legislation, public institutions carefully developed and implemented institutional policy… Likewise, as the demographics of college campuses have transformed, institutional administrations have had to confront the ways their campuses have enacted and perpetrated practices and policies that instill, enforce, and

uphold discrimination, oppression, and inequity (p. 11)

The issues protested, and the strategies used, are deeply influenced by the economic, social, and political conditions of the time. Continued growth in both access to higher education institutions, as well as investment from external partners, have further complicated institutional hierarchies. Campus demonstrations are often organized through student organizations such as student governmental bodies, identity-based coalitions, and student unions (Carlton, 2020). Demands in past student activist efforts for direct calls to university administrations to divest from corporate partnerships, political entanglements, and institutional policies and practices that encourage discrimination and intolerance (Altbach & Cohen, 1990; Burke, 2020; Chambers & Phelps, 1994; Herr, 1967).

Just as they had done for the Black Panther Party in the 1960s, universities provided the venue and resources to the movement for Black life not just in messaging, but in fundraising, organizing, and active membership recruitment (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). Recent responses to the BLM-aligned groups have resulted in resignations from university administrators, further investment into intercultural centers, and the renaming of campus property named after racist American figures (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). When student leaders and their organizations hold demonstrations, student affairs professionals, as advisors, are situated between student protests and the department, or university, that employs them (Harrison, 2010). While activism in academia, or scholar-activists, have been a central topic of discussion for decades, it has not been well researched within the role of student affairs professionals (Astin, 1975; Ardoin et al., 2019; Apple, 2010; Choudry, 2020; Flood et al., 2013; Rhodes et al., 2017).

The field of higher education has become increasingly complicated with the increased

investment from private industry, multiplicity of institutional values and goals, and the ever-diversifying student population. This study will utilize Bolman and Deal's (2017) organizational lens to view the role mid-level managers play within an organizational structure, especially as it relates to advocacy efforts.

Theoretical Framework

Organizations are powerful tools within the political, societal, and economic arenas, especially ones as formally institutionalized as colleges and universities (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Colleges are positioned to not only educate but encourage critical reflection and investigation into knowledge both inside and outside of the institution. "In American political life, higher education has a familiar role as home of the cultural critic of the established political order and the nursery of radical and even revolutionary student movements" (Trowe, 1989). Universities provide a unique opportunity in "serving as the nucleus of ideological transitions" even naming it as instrumental in social development and societal reform (Wilkinson, 1993, p. 326-330).

As discussed in Kezar (2010), much of the literature on activism within higher education has focused on the most radical examples of student activism with little attention to the role that faculty and staff play, particularly in their subtler activist efforts. University faculty, staff, and administrators all play an important role in changing institutions as they have previous exposure with other institutions, meaning they have the simple ability to imagine how their organization could be different. Exposure to multiple institutions can loosen the cognitive embeddedness of institutionalized structures, meaning individuals are more able to imagine how a system could change (Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007). Research on institutional theory once centered on how institutions are formed and maintained, more recent studies have focused on how they grow and change. As stated in Scott (2000):

> In the transformation of modern society into something new, whether categorized as late modern or post-modern, the fundamental categories of modernity are being interrogated. It is not only actual institutions, such as universities, which are being reengineered, but also the grand overarching categories such as the State, Culture, and Market… The frontiers between State, Market, and Culture have been breached. As a result, State institutions, Market institutions, and Cultural institutions are more difficult to distinguish… and the very idea of stable organizations is being undermined by technological innovation and organizational volatility (p. 6)

Institutions of higher education are uniquely situated between and amongst powerful societal interest groups. Corporate investment to campus infrastructure and funding educational research can alter the mission of a university. The American College has historically been a setting for social change and dialogue amongst student groups, the professoriate, and administration (Allen & Cherrey, 2003). At the same time, the formalized institutional structure can legitimatize outdated or regressive socioeconomic classes thus "ensuring the passage of power and privilege across generations" (p. 19). For example, necessitating that requests and communication go through formal processes, even with a wide consensus that it is for formalities sake.

There are several factors that increase de-institutionalizing efforts, including what Meyer (1982) names "environmental jolts." These jolts can be phenomena such as technological developments, economic crises, or because of ongoing social or political movements. Trow (1989) compared the behavior of modern universities to resemble an ecological system that is "competitive for resources, highly sensitive to the demands of environment, and inclined, over time, through the ruthless processes of natural selection" (p. 12). This natural selection process

within a university system can be seen through budgetary cuts, department consolidations, and the encouragement of individualist thinking. The role of mid-level managers "occupy a central position in university organizational hierarchies and play a critical role in shaping workforce culture" (Adams-Dunford et al, 2019). Examples of advocacy can be seen through intentional curriculum design, unofficial mentoring, and by being a mediator between students and upper administration (Kezar, 2010).

Bolman and Deal's Organizational Frames

Bolman and Deal's (2017) book Reframing Organizations was published after extensive research on how organizations function, thrive, are organized, highlighting the unique positionality of institutions of higher education as organizations. Their framework outlines four lenses to view organizations: the structural, political, symbolic, and human resources frames. These are intended to explain how higher educational organizations are complicated in their structure, design, and function.

Bolman and Deal (1991) acknowledged that organizations face major issues that can become problematic and messy and are often based on divergent conflicts of values which require those in the organization to act and think creatively. These four referential frames can be used to understand the structure, culture, and behaviors of organizations as well as the roles and relationships of those working within them (Tull & Freeman, 2011). Each of the frames centers a separate, but equally important, interpretation of an organization.

The structural frame of organizations focuses on the clearly defined objectives, roles, and policies within a department (Bolman & Deal, 2017). When organizational plans are delineated, the structural leader sees opportunity in how the work can be made more efficient, but it also offers the ability for individuals and departments to be held accountable in achieving results (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Professionals working within the structural frame in their advocacy are

focused on re-organizing, re-negotiating, or otherwise re-working formal policy, roles, expectations, processes, or budgets (Bolman & Deal, 1992).

This is compared to the human resources frame which focuses on the active involvement of leadership and centers the individualized needs and interests of its members, even highlighting that organizational effectiveness is dependent upon it (Bolman & Deal, 1992). Within this frame, there is an acknowledgement that departments run more smoothly and effectively when their members feel valued. The human resource frame also highlights the importance of relationships within the university. From this frame, an institution is the people who work within it, including their histories and complexities.

The symbolic frame centers the role that traditions, stories, and social creations of campus life play, especially as a forum to create shared meaning and identity (Bolman & Deal, 1992). Symbols such as a university's mascot, traditions, and legends are all part of the symbolic aspects of a university. Furthermore, the mission, values, and priorities of the university are often informed by these symbols, stories, and narratives. The values of an organization, the stories they choose to tell, the symbols that they hold, all contribute to the culture and operating systems of a university.

Lastly, the political frame focuses on the way that power interacts with resource allocation and social systems (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Departmental managers make decisions about how to allocate their budgets and what programs to fund. Executive leadership, such as Presidents and Vice Presidents, compete for resources at the state and national level through grant funding.

In order to solve complex issues, groups of people from throughout the organization must come together to incorporate their own niche understanding of the issue. "Collaborative groups

are important because we can test our own understanding and examine the understanding of others as a mechanism for enriching, interweaving, and expanding our understanding of particular issues or phenomena" (Lueddeke, 1999; p. 247). Bensimon and Neumann (1994) assert that reflective dialogue remains one of the most important tasks to facilitate by managers. This thinking together "is likely to involve listening to voices that have not traditionally been at the center of the decision process rather than favoring conventional (and dominant) views" (p. 245). Reflective dialogue has been critiqued by activist and organizers for focusing too heavily on introspection and not enough of actionable items with tangible results.

Bolman and Deal (2017) provide four frames for organizations help in understanding the manager's role within a larger organizational structure. In each frame, leaders engage within the advocacy process, whether in the budget negotiating process, leveraging a campus crisis, or through utilizing student groups. Experienced student affairs professionals engage with institutional actors at all levels, and they often have developed the most professional experience, personal connections, and political knowledge to successfully engage in the advocacy process.

When environments are competitive for resources, as Trow (1989) described colleges, managers are tasked with being an advocate for themselves, their departments, and their staffs on a “field with many players representing many interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 197). When resources are thin, student affairs professionals are asked to support an increase in students, both in size and in their diversity. Mid-level managers engage in the negotiation process for greater funds towards their department, they build coalitions with community groups, and they leverage power to achieve organizational goals (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Mid-Level Professionals/Managers. Mid-level managers have encountered a variety of situations that have put them in the middle, serving those above and those below them in the

structure they function in. “The organizational position of many mid-managers provides unique access to both the decision-making processes and the on-the-ground realities within the institution” (Mather et al., 248). Over time they have learned to look at the mission of the institution and their role in supporting and developing it. Through their past experiences they have learned to look for many things and recognize their role within the structure and have identified what they like and do not like toward finding a good fit (Schneider, 1987).

Schneider (1987) identified that these individuals have experienced enough to help them understand that there is not a best system, but one that they must strive to improve by thinking strategically and working with various constituents to improve their structure. They have also likely learned to cultivate relationships with those in the organization they see helping to move their efforts forward. The middle manager is often the spokesperson, relaying information from senior administration to their teams. For those in management positions, the largest challenge is learning how to integrate and manage conflicting groups (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The Tempered Radicals Framework highlighted the learned skills of relationship building, strategic thinking, and coordinating their messaging as well (Meyerson, 2004).

Mid-level professionals play a significant role in processing and filtering information from their staff, and then deciding what should be communicated to whom in the organizational chain, as well as sometimes, more critically, how it is communicated. Many professionals are aware of this unique positionality, even naming their role as a translator between students and upper administrators (Adams-Dunford, et al, 2019; Mills, 2000; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004). As stated by Adams-Durnford, Cuervas, and Neufeldt (2019),

> Mid-level managers play a key role in communicating information between senior and entry level professionals and bridge the gap between senior student affairs officers who

> are policy makers and entry-level personnel who are generally responsible for executing policy, programs, or initiatives (p. 29).

Structural Management/Advocacy. Bolman and Deal's (2017) structural frame emphasizes the importance of clearly defined goals, metrics, and missions of the organization. The structural frame also stresses the formal roles and relationships that are at play within an organization (Lueddeke, 1999; Tull & Freeman, 2011). By clearly defining goals, department heads are held accountable to meet standards for their work. Managers are then also able to utilize the data collected in their own efforts to advocate for a change in departmental resourcing.

Structural advocacy within student affairs involves developing new procedures, reworking organizational positions, or implementing new policies (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Managers operating within this frame may be concerned on budget allocations, evaluation procedures, and they may leverage the clarity or lack thereof expectations, roles, and goals (Bolman & Deal, 2017). **Human Affairs Management.** Within Bolman and Deal's framework, the human resources lens centers the individual within the organization, including their needs, feelings, and values (Lueddeke, 1999). Individuals have their own beliefs and expectations on organizational culture or goals, and that influences how they engage with the organization. In Bolman and Deal's (2017) work, they outline two dimensions to the human resources frame: the supportive and the participative. Supportive managers center their attention on others' feelings, while participative managers emphasize community involvement and engagement.

When feelings, goals, values, and expectations conflict, student affairs professionals in mid-level positions can be caught with every level (Harrison, 2010). This role stress is well documented within the field of student affairs as professionals balance juggling the various daily roles they perform with a wide range of stakeholders (Harrison, 2010; Mills, 2000; Adams-

Dunford, 2019). For mid-level student affairs professionals these stakeholders can include a campus committee with senior administration, giving tours on admissions open house day, and attending a student open forum that evening.

Typical entry-level positions within student affairs are positioned to interact closely with students, often directly advising student organizations and/or supervising student employees. Mid-level managers are further removed (Mathers et al., 2011). Human resources advocacy looks like balancing the needs of individuals against institution, department. Bolman and Deal (1992) discuss the role that open forums, such as student organizations or unions may hold, in empowering and validating the emotions and experiences of individuals, even helping to establish their own networks. Professional development funds, workshops, and staff retreats are all ways that managers engage in human resource support, and their advocacy efforts may be focused on staff recruitment, retention, and involvement.

Political Management. Whereas the previous two frames focused on the structures of an organization, both formal and informal, as built and sustained through human relationships, the political frame focuses on the invisible forces such as reputation, time, and power (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). Politics is the functional result of power negotiation in a finitely resourced environment, and it is an unbending reality of organizational life (Tull & Freeman, 2011). Bolman and Deal (1992) outline two dimensions of politics within higher education: the powerful and the adroit. Managers who are skillful in the power dimension of this frame are mobilizing forces and are effective at building coalitions (Bolman & Deal, 1992). Adroit managers within the political frame can aptly manage tension between various interest groups, especially in negotiating through conflict (Bolman & Deal, 1992).

The political frame views organizations as arenas in which actors compete for resources (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Mid-level managers engage in political advocacy by networking with other interest groups such as campus partners or key faculty. Managers can also leverage their people skills to leverage bargaining power, and they may have built enough professional credibility to stake decisions on it (Bolman & Deal, 1992).

Symbolic Management. Organizational culture can be characterized when its stakeholders share a common set of assumptions, values, and beliefs, transmitted through symbols such as myths, stories, and traditions (Schneider, 1987). The symbolic frame looks at the role cultural artifacts, such as ceremonies and architecture, have on organizational behavior (Tull & Freeman, 2011). On campuses, these symbols can include the traditions of opening weekend, the school's historic mascot, or the annual events held on campus. Student populations have a high turnover rate, with the average student experiencing and recreating the traditions of the previous three years. While students may be most involved with the symbolic aspects of the university, they have the least amount of understanding and investment into sustaining the historical context of their traditions.

Administrators, faculty, and staff often see the university over longer periods of time, and they are gatekeepers of institutional knowledge and history. Stakeholders who have a personal stake in the longevity of the school's success can also include alumni, governing boards, and the local community. Each of these groups have their own personal history and relationship to the university, and they are invested in keeping the organization as they remember it to be. The symbolic frame helps to understand some difficulties associated with change from the perspective of groups such as future and current students, administrators, alumni, faculty, and other constituents of the university. As stated by Bolman and Deal in 1991:

> Change also produces loss, particularly for those who are the targets rather than the initiators of change. Old patterns, familiar routines, and taken-for-granted meanings are all disrupted by organizational change. The deeper the loss, the more important it is to create rituals of transition-opportunities to both celebrate and mourn the past and help people evolve new structures of meaning (Bolman & Deal, 1991; p. 401)

Change is "necessarily a social, dialogical process in which communities of practitioners socially negotiate the meaning of phenomena" (Jonassen et al., 1995, p. 9; as cited in Lueddeke, 1999, p. 252). Changes being made to organizations are more likely in times of crisis, especially when there exists ineffective hierarchies and inequitable resource distribution dependent on outdated power differentials (Allen & Cherrey, 2003; Everley & Smith, 1996; Lueddeke, 1999). Systems that are highly connective, dynamic, and complex, like colleges and universities, produce events, roles, and problems that are “messy and ill-structured and cannot be easily delegated”, similar to those found on college campuses (p. 32). Decisions cannot be made, and issues cannot often be solved by one individual, or even one office, requiring close collaborations across the system (Allen & Cherrey, 2003, p. 32). This is true for any large organization, but there is an additional layer of messiness due to the ambiguity of educational missions, priorities, and values across the institution.

A lot of these changes have been overdue, but university administrators often lack the ability to instill radical change at their university (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). Lack of funding, complicated political ties, and bureaucratic red tape often leave administrators reliant on protests initiated by students in order to make changes to university leadership or policy (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). Beside student protests, professionals engage in their own advocacy, finding ways to make changes where they can. The Tempered Radicals Framework

establishes four strategies used by professionals in their workplace to promote change.

Tempered Radicalism

The second theory that will be utilized in this study is that of the *tempered radical*. Like Bolman and Deal's (2017) human resource frame, this theory focuses on the experiences of individuals within a greater organization. Meyerson and Scully's original 1995 study interviewed female professors who felt a tension between their professional life and their personal values. While these professionals are dedicated to their mission, their institutions, departments, or colleagues were not making decisions that aligned with their values and vision. Meyerson and Scully's 1995 theory of the tempered radical originally centered marginalized academics, and their findings stated that, "separatism and surrender are not the only options. While frustration may be inevitable, individuals can effect change, even radical change, and still enjoy fulfilling, productive, authentic careers" (p. 586). This theory, as the authors state, is not about whether the tempered radicals ultimately win, but "rather how she remains engaged in the dual project of working within the organization and working to change the organization" (Meyerson and Scully, 1995; p. 586). Meyerson and Scully continued to describe the importance of these individuals and the role they play within organizations.

> [The] focus is on the individuals themselves, the perspectives they assume, the challenges they face, and the survival strategies they use. It is important to understand these individuals as central figures in the battle for change because if they leave the organization, burn out, or become coopted, then they cannot contribute fully to the process of change (p. 587).

The theory of tempered radicals was based on the research of Debra Meyerson and Maureen Scully, both professors of organizational management. In their professional experience, they had witnessed colleagues leaving the field of academia for many reasons, including feeling

out of step with the culture of their institution. Overtime, their research expanded past academics to incorporate many fields, such as business, healthcare, and industry. “Tempered radicals gently and continually push against prevailing norms, making a difference in small but steady ways and setting examples from which others can learn. The changes they inspire are so incremental that they barely merit notice” (Meyerson, 2001). Meyerson’s further research outlined commonalities held by tempered radicals including their approach to and perspective of leadership (2003):

> Tempered radicals reflect important aspects of leadership that are absent in more traditional portraits. It is leadership that tends to be less visible… more local, diffuse, opportunistic, and more humble than the activity attributed to the modern day hero” (p. 31)

The thought of tempered radicals’ approach is to rock the boat in ways that feel like the usual ocean current, slowly and steadily. Meyerson uses the example of an employee who persuaded their company to place green recycling bins in their office (2004). She then used the success of the recycling program to implement further green initiatives such as replacing energy efficient light bulbs, installing a bottle recycling station, and buying office items that support fair trade suppliers. As Meyerson (2004) stated: “Each initiative was unremarkable. Together, they created a stir” (p. 17).

> Tempered radicals bear no banners; they sound no trumpets. Their ends are sweeping, but their means are mundane. They are firm in their commitments, yet flexible in the ways they fulfill them. Their actions may be small but can spread like a virus. They yearn for rapid change but trust in patience. They often work individually yet pull people together. Instead of stridently pressing their agendas, they start conversations. Rather than battling powerful foes, they seek powerful friends. And in the face of setbacks, they keep going.

> To do all this, tempered radicals understand revolutionary change for what it is—a phenomenon that can occur suddenly but more often than not requires time, commitment, and the patience to endure." (Meyerson, 2001).

According to Meyerson (2001), *tempered radicals* engage in activism in four ways: disruptive self-expression, verbal jujitsu, variable term opportunism, and strategic alliance building. By engaging in activism in these ways, they exercise a form of leadership that is "more localized, more diffuse, more modest, and less visible" than the traditional forms of activism that can be seen as too direct and confrontational (Meyerson, 2001; para: 4).

Disruptive self-expressions are the personal actions that individuals can make to question the status quo (Meyerson, 2004). Meyerson uses the example of an employee who decorates their office with fair trade memorabilia, and she talks to her coworkers about the customs, cultures, and experiences of other countries. These conversations can be an entry point into conversations around corporate responsibility, economic investment, and global appreciation within the office (Meyerson, 2004). Similarly, professionals may choose their clothing and styling with intention, such as wearing a dashiki to the office (Meyerson, 2001).

Verbal jujitsu is another strategy that tempered radicals use to highlight and reframe issues for their target audience. Those using this strategy may offer to serve on a committee that is updating the policy book, paying attention to shifting the language in their departmental priorities (Meyerson, 2001). Professionals who are strong communicators may take it upon themselves to engage in more sensitive conversations with key actors, leveraging their strengths towards achieving consensus (Meyerson, 2001).

Another venue that tempered radicals engage in advocacy work include variable-term opportunism (Meyerson, 2001). Variable term opportunism highlights the importance of timing

in advocacy. Effective advocates can spot, and even create, short- and long-term opportunities to address issues. Short term opportunism can include strategic timing of funding requests, the creation of new positions, or highlighting importance of personnel or offices in the wake of campus emergency (Meyerson, 2004). Alongside short-term opportunism, there are also advocacy efforts that span over the long term, seeing general trends and preparing to address issues before they arise (Meyerson, 2001).

The last way that tempered radicals engage in advocacy is in partnership with other strategic actors, or alliances. These actors can be peer professionals on and off campus, such as current or former employees, invested student groups, community members, senior administrators, or meaningful alumni. As stated by Meyerson (2001), “With the help of strategic alliances, an individual can push through change with more force” (para. 6). Not only can these alliances provide momentum, they can also provide insight, perspectives, and ideas as well.

Rather than using positional or formal authority to challenge the status quo, tempered radicals rely on the cumulative effect of incremental actions to foster more just, humane, and empowering organizational cultures. By choosing from among a range of strategies for fostering change that differ on dimensions of intent (i.e., exhibiting personal congruence or challenging statements versus collective action and organizing) and scope of impact (i.e., influencing a small number of individuals versus swaying the opinions and attitudes of many organizational members), tempered radicals or bottom-up leaders construct a personalized and contextualized change framework (p. 9). This personalized approach to advocacy efforts allows individuals to tailor their response to each case.

Summary

The American system of higher education has always been unique in their societal positionality between culture, market, and both the federal and local state. Through the

development of industry, expansion of population, and increased public investment, higher education is a hub of social, material, and economic capital. By the 1960s, the rise of popularity in institutional accountability measures within American society, paired with student activist demands of increased independence and autonomy led to a more diversified and specific approaches to student affairs. Throughout the 20th century, universities had more closely resembled a multiversity, with an increased emphasis on individualism.

In this rapid growth and expansion, universities were needing more specialized professionals to supervise and guide the student populations. Where once faculty served in mentoring roles, the rise in expectations of research output created the positions of deans of men and deans of women. Since the first deans of students, the student affairs role has changed on campus. In the relatively short amount of time the profession has existed, university administrators have been parental figures, law enforcement, educators, counselors, and mentors to students. The role of universities, and their staff, is deeply tied to the social and economic conditions both domestically and abroad.

The theory of the tempered radical was first developed by speaking with activist-academics, such as female and BIPOC faculty in predominately white institutions. The challenges faced by these educators included the potentiality for backlash from even the quietest resistance of assimilating into the institutional culture. In their everyday, these professionals experience higher levels of anxiety, avoid repressed feelings, and employ strategic ambivalence (Kezar and Lester, 2011). In further research of the tempered radical, strategies to endure were developed. This study aims to bridge this gap in the literature in studying how student affairs professionals engage in advocacy work as professionals within a greater institutional structure in hopes to gleam common practices, strategies, and approaches based on their experiences.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the experiences of mid to senior level student affairs professionals in their role as advocates. Phenomenological research seeks to explore a common phenomenon, or experience, amongst a group or individual (Creswell, 2014. This study aimed to better understand the experiences of these professionals and their experiences as advocates throughout their career.

Design of the Study

This study took a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that centers the lived experience of participants and seeks to better understand a phenomenon. In this study, the participants experience as advocates within student affairs was explored (Creswell, 2014). This study utilized a semi-structured interview approach with individual candidates. Interviewing is the best practice for research that asks participants to recall and reflect upon lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). These interviews were held virtually via Zoom video conferencing.

Participants

As stated in Creswell (2014), the purpose of qualitative research is to select participants with purpose, rather than through random sampling. Within this study, all participants met the selected criteria including having at least eight years of experience as a student affairs professional. All participants were in a type of upper level managerial position including Executive Directors, Associate Vice Presidents, and Assistant Deans of Students. Creswell (2014) stated that the ideal number of participants in a phenomenological study is between three and ten participants. This study incorporated four participants with each interview lasting from sixty to ninety minutes. Recruitment of participants included a snowball method. Members of my

thesis committee provided potential participant names through their professional networks. These professionals were sent an email (Appendix A) seeking participation. Participants were asked to forward this opportunity to their networks, as well. After each interview participants were asked to provide additional names and emails of individuals they think would be good participants for this study until the desired number was reached.

Angela. Angela identifies as a female with over 30 years in the profession. Currently an Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at a public university, with about 30,000 students in the Midwest. She has been at that institution over 25 years.

Blair. Blair is a female, African American who grew up on the west coast but has lived in other parts of the United States. She has been at her current institution almost three years as an Associate Vice President for Student Life at a mid-size institution on the West coast.

Carol. Carol is a white female from the Midwest. She has worked in higher education for over 30 years, with most of them in residence life at the same institution. Her institution is a large, private, religiously affiliated institution. Carol describes her career in student affairs as accidental which was typical in her time. Her current role is the Executive Director of Housing and Residence Life.

Darren. Darren is a white male from the southern United States. He has been working in higher education for over 20 years. He is currently a Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at a small public college in the South.

Location

The participants of this study were not limited to any specific geographic region. Interviews were held via the online video conferencing platform Zoom. Participants were instructed to be alone in a quiet space where they would not be interrupted or overheard.

Interviewer was alone, as well, in a quiet space where the participants could not be overheard or interrupted.

Data Collection

Data was collected through individual interviews with participants, utilizing an interview protocol (Appendix B). Questions in this study revolved around participants' reflection on experiences and values. Data was collected through the stories told by participants in the form of feelings, experiences, values, and lessons learned by participants. All interviews were audio-recorded, throughout the data collection process. At the beginning of each interview the Consent to Participate (Appendix C) document was verbally addressed, and the participant was asked to affirm their desire to participate in the study. At the conclusion of the interview the participant was assigned a letter: A, B, C, and D. This letter was used in the coding process. Participants were assigned the names Angela, Blair, Carol, and Darren in the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed fully and then cleaned up to remove verbal pauses such as “um” and “like.” Further, a mixture of pre-determined and emergent codes were utilized in analyzing each of the transcripts (Creswell, 2014). The pre-determined codes were based on the strategies outlined in the tempered radical framework as well as in Bolman and Deal (2017). Meyerson (2001) defined the strategies as verbal jiujitsu, variable term opportunism, alliance building, and disruptive self-expression. This study reframed these as: understanding self and others, learning institutional context, building networks, and strategically coordinating messages. Emergent codes were determined after conducting and transcribing interviews, and they included common values held, strategies used, and lessons learned by participants. Lastly, a thesis director as well as a thesis committee of three additional faculty staff members were consulted as needed. Having multiple co-researchers helped to minimize personal bias in all areas of this research.

Treatment of Data

Data collected during the research process, including interview recordings, transcripts, and other raw data was anonymized. While analyzing the data, each participant was given a corresponding letter. As analysis was written, pseudonyms were created for each participant. Along with this, all identifiable information was removed, and locations are anonymized. All research files are kept on password protected hard drives owned by the researcher and thesis director. Lastly, per IRB regulations, all data will be kept on a password protected flash drive for three years and then destroyed.

Chapter Summary

This chapter briefly outlined the methods this study followed, including conducting semi-structured interviews with participants. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. After transcription, data was analyzed and coded with some changes from the theory of the tempered radical.

Chapter 4

Analysis

The goal of this research is to gain insight into how student affairs administrators view their work in upper management positions as well as how they engage in advocacy work. This chapter aims to analyze the responses given by the four participants of this study in response to the two research questions. By exploring the perspectives of these professionals, this research intends to learn about how they describe their purpose and goals. The second question analyzes how they describe their role as an advocate from their position as a senior level student affairs practitioner.

Development of Career Path

Each of the participants were asked to describe their professional career path, including significant moments, experiences, or people. Throughout their career paths, the responsibilities changed, but often their mission remained consistent. Below each of their career paths are explored.

Angela

During her time as an undergraduate, Angela was the president of her sorority, as well as was involved in other activities across campus. She described herself as the typical, overly involved student leader. While completing her master's degree in counseling at a nearby university, Angela was asked to return to her undergraduate institution to serve as a residence hall director. Beginning a career long trend of saying, "why not?" Angela accepted the position despite never having lived in the residence halls previously. Within four years, Angela was serving as the Director of Residence Life at the age of 26. She went on to describe the evolution of her role as Director of Residence Life over the next ten years.

> A couple years after I was Director of Residence Life I said, "Hey, why don't I just take over fraternity and sorority life?" "Why don't I just start doing this, that, and the other?" Within that 10-year time block of working at that small private, I was responsible for the early alert system, for students of concern-- this is like 80s- early 90s maybe—advising, orientation, and Greek life. So, I went to my VP, and I said, "You know, if the director of admissions is an Assistant VP, I think I should be in an Assistant VP." They said, "Yeah, you're probably right." So, I became an assistant VP because I talked them into it.

After serving as an Assistant Vice President, she and her partner decided to move, and she transitioned into an Assistant Director of Residence Life at a large, public university. She describes this as a significant moment in her career in which she learned humility.

> I worked for four years in housing, and it was a significant growth opportunity for me. I helped create learning communities, and I got involved in all sorts of different initiatives. That same asking, "What else is happening that I can get involved in?" Three and a half years later, the interim VP knew my background and pulled me into the VP's office and asked if I would serve as the interim Assistant to the VP. I was like, "Sure, that'll be interesting. Why not?"

In her role as Assistant to the Vice President, Angela helped to organize student life programs such as welcome week, family weekend, and other division wide initiatives. She describes the evolution of her career during the time as a series of negotiations.

> I helped create all sorts of initiatives within the division and then I negotiated to get rid of the "to the" and became Director of Parent and Family Programs, and Students and Transitions. I made up the title, completely made up the title. I created first- and second-year programs, spun that off into our orientation program. A few years later, I negotiated

> an Assistant Dean of Students title, then was promoted to Associate Dean of Students, then promoted to Dean of Students, and then eventually promoted to an Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. Then in the next month, I'll be promoted to Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

Blair

Blair began her higher educational experience as an undergraduate at a large, private R1 university within the Midwest. She then attended a large public, R1 university for her master's degree in student affairs where she worked in the Dean of Student's office. After graduating, Blair described struggling to choose what to do next in her career.

> My supervisor said, 'Why don't you consider something adjacent to higher ed?' She said 'Once you are on a campus, you're going to be on the campus for the rest of your life so try something little different.' So my first job actually was working for a collegiate honor society. My role was called the Regional Director and focused on chapter management. I requested the Northeast region.

She described the decision to work with the Northeast United States because she had never lived, worked, or experienced the culture of that region. In her two years of traveling, she eventually met the woman who would hire her for her next role as a Residence Director at a large, public R1 university in New England. After three years, Blair was accepted into a doctoral program in educational leadership in the Southeastern United States with a fellowship in residential education assessment. While in her doctoral program, a member of her faculty connected her to a Vice President who was looking for an Assistant/Ombudsmen dual role.

Blair described that role, and the six years that she spent in it, as the most enjoyable of her career.

> The way I describe that position is that it was what made me an institutional leader. It put me into that space of not just being focused in an area. I had to know all of the policies and procedures of the institution. I had to work with every stretch-- to advancements to the president's office to lots of special projects. I was able to leave a legacy at that institution because I was able to create and define and help students.

Blair eventually was promoted from that role to the Executive Director of Student Life where she had the opportunity to gain supervisory experience of professional staff. Blair described that this lack of experience in supervising was what was holding her from advancing professionally. Her VPSA saw this and helped reorganize so Blair oversaw four departments, giving her the opportunity to supervise as well as define a new unit. It is from this position that Blair interviewed and was offered her current position as the Associate Vice President for Student Life.

Currently the Associate Vice President of Student Life at a public university with over 15,000 students in the western United States. Traditionally, Blair's institution was a commuter campus located in an urban area, although the college has made a marked shift to build a more traditional student life experience. The changing landscape of the institution was ultimately what influenced her decision to accept the position as Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, compared to pursuing opportunities with more established colleges.

Carol

Having graduated from a mid-sized regional public university in the Midwest with a marketing degree Carol worked for a couple years coordinating the hiring process for a company's college internship process. Here she realized how much she loved working with college students. She moved back to work at her undergraduate institution as a hall secretary.

While she enjoyed working with the Hall Director, she described feeling frustrated and stuck, knowing that she could do more. The Hall Director asked her if she considered working in residential life professionally. They explained that the department had noticed her, and they thought she would be great for the position and the graduate program.

Less than a month later, a graduate student decided not to return to their position for the following year. Before selecting candidates from the alternate list, the department offered her an interview. Carol described it as a whirlwind experience, stating, “The next thing I knew I was packing up this little two-bedroom, four-room house that I lived in to move into Residence Hall.” From a graduate resident director, Carol became a full-time hall director at this same mid-sized public institution in the rural Midwest.

Soon after, she was promoted to an Area Coordinator role, managing several halls and supervising graduate students at a larger, urban campus in the Midwest. Carol’s husband, also a student affairs professional, was offered a position in another city, and so they moved. During this time, Carol took a part time role working in a university counseling center.

> Again, I always like to say that these little stop outs along the way are really helpful. I learned a lot about students when I sat in that “secretary” role. In talking with them across the front desk, I learned a lot about students and troubles that they sometimes hide because I did all the outreach programs. I also sat in on the case conferences, and I listened to some of the troubles that students are dealing with.

While in that role, an Assistant Director of Residential Life position opened up and then she was promoted to the Associate Director. She describes holding that position for a significant amount of time, but she describes how she still developed and grew professionally. Carol

described this period in her career as a time where she found professional fulfillment while maintaining personal and familial balance.

> I sat in that role for a really long time. I say that a lot to people who are part of a dual career couple. I felt like I loved the work that I was doing. I was garnering really excellent experience working and volunteering in leadership roles through ACUHO-I. At the same time, we had a wonderful daycare provider. Our kids were in an outstanding school district. We loved our neighbors and our home. So, it felt like the combination of my life was good. There were times where I knew that I could be doing more, but then this Executive Director position opened. And [the position] was really just sort of offered. I had proven myself that I would be the next best leader.

Carol currently works as the Executive Director of Housing and Residence Life at a mid-sized (~12,000) private university in the Midwest.

Darren

Darren attended a relatively small, public institution in the Southeastern United States for his undergraduate degree. While in college Darren was an orientation leader, involved in Greek Life, as well as a member of a campus performing group. His senior year, he was elected president of student government, as well as held a work-study position in the Dean of Students' office. He described talking to his Dean about not knowing what he wanted to do after graduating. His Dean introduced him to the field of student affairs, as well as later offered him a position after graduating.

Darren described completing his Master's degree with the intentions of becoming a college president,

> At the time, I thought I wanted to be a college president because I'd been a part of the search committee for our new president. I was just excited and blown away by the glitz and the glamor and all the cool stuff that the presidents get to do. That's what I thought I wanted to be; so to do that you need to go on and continue your education. Again, just really haphazardly, I fell into the program at [large R1 public university] … It just had worked out. I found out later that it was a pretty good program. It was nationally ranked and all this kind of stuff. I was like, 'Oh, wow. That's great!'

While completing his Master's degree, Darren worked in residential life. After graduating, Darren returned to his undergraduate institution to be the Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of the Career Center. He describes this as the role that he enjoyed the most because of the connections and bridges he was able to form amongst students, professionals, and the community.

After a relationship prompted a move, Darren was back looking at doctoral programs and was accepted with a position as a graduate assistant to a faculty member. At this time, he also tutored in the athletic student success center. After completing his doctoral degree, he became a Dean of Students at a small, private college. He was in that role for five years before making the most recent career move, stating: "I know I keep saying this, but really the wind just kind of blew me this way… I had three people send me the job description and say, 'hey this sounds like something that you could do.'"

Darren talked about struggling with the decision to apply for the position of VPSA, feeling that he wasn't qualified. He thought back to his role in the Career Center, where he would tell students, "Let them tell you no. Don't tell yourself no before the potential employer has the opportunity to do so. So I kind of took my own advice." He went on to apply for the

position, interview for it, and as Darren described it: “It just so happened that I liked them, they liked me, and the next thing I knew I was here.” This was in 2014 when Darren was hired for his current role as the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at a small (<5,000) public college.

Descriptions of their purpose as student affairs professionals

In understanding the development of professional purpose participants were asked to describe their career path which is explored above. Each of the participants’ career paths was unique in terms of the positions and responsibilities they had with one common element, all participants worked in Residential Life at some point in their career. As participants were describing their career paths and how they see their professional purpose, there were several major themes that arose. First, all participants approached their work with an opportunity mindset. This perspective incorporated looking for ways to learn as professionals and understanding that they did not know everything.

The second theme was that each participant emphasized the importance of relationships in their work. Each of the participants discussed professionals that they collaborate with to move their work forward. These relationships were developed within the department, across campus, and/or across the profession through professional networks and organizations. No matter the space, these relationships were built on common values, perspectives, and approaches to their work. Connecting with others through their values and goals was discussed in each of the interviews.

Opportunity Mindset

Participants spoke consistently about their experiences as opportunities. Participants described situations, experiences, and responsibilities as opportunities for personal and professional growth. Angela, as described above, saw opportunities throughout her career to step

up and become involved in various situations that helped her take on more responsibility, learn new skills, and develop as a professional. When participants were approached with a challenge, or an ask, each participant viewed it as an opportunity either to learn or to move their organization forward. Carol described hiring processes as an opportunity to better herself, her department, and her university. This perspective on hiring is something she learned from a supervisor she had early in her career.

> Surround yourself with people that are better than you because two things will happen. Number one, you'll learn, and you'll rise to the occasion. And number two, they'll always make you look good. I've secured some really extraordinary hall directors that I think are going to be such hot properties. Other people who may sit in those hiring positions want to be the smartest person in the room. I want to surround myself with a lot of smart people so we can all get better.

Darren told his story as a pattern of opportune timing rather than the result of personal planning. Darren described his path forward as landing in the right places at the right times with the right people. This applied both to his career path and his educational pursuits, as he stumbled into well respected master's and doctoral programs. Darren describes the wind blowing him towards his Dean of Students role, as well as his VP of Student Affairs role.

Learning

Education was a central value to participants of this study. Angela, Blair, and Darren have doctoral degrees, and Carol has a master's degree. Darren described himself as a perpetual learner. Blair stressed the importance of committing to learning and developing as a professional. For Blair, she said that once you have a fixed mindset and you lose the flexibility to learn, that is when professionals struggle the most.

For Carol, professionals who are searching for their next position must consider how their next role is going to challenge them to grow, develop, and learn.

> Look at the job description. Yes, I want to have some areas where I will be successful right off the bat. Where I know that I can contribute, that I'll be able to weigh in, that I'll have some suggestions, that I'll feel confident in doing these portions of my job. While also, how is this going to challenge me in the areas I haven't had as much experience? I've never done that before. Can I do that? What training will I get?

Carol goes on to describe the consequences and benefits of working in a role in which you are not learning, being challenged, and actively encouraged to grow.

> If you've done everything in that job description, you're going to grow wary of that job in about a year. Maybe 18 months. You're going to want to leave. But if you're garnering new experiences and testing the waters and refining who you are as a professional as well as the comfort and safety of having some things that are familiar, and it's an institution that you like. Then, it's like. 'Yes, I'm finding my way here while I'm also challenging them a bit to make some changes.' I think that's really the beauty and the best of all worlds for how you can progress throughout your career.

Darren described learning opportunities coming in the form of mistakes that he has made. Making mistakes and learning from them also keeps Darren humble in his role which helps hold him accountable.

> Inevitably, something will come along, and I will, we will not perform the way that we need to or something will go wrong. That, as mama would say, keeps me from getting too big for my britches. Honestly, that I don't ever want it to go away because I do think that

being aware of where you are, the place that you're in, and quite frankly, the influence that you have; now I don't think is a bad thing.

New experiences

As professionals took on additional roles, were introduced to different corners of campus, and developed relationships with other professionals on campus, they spoke about how they garnered greater perspective and deeper understanding of the institution. Participants also took on entirely new roles in order to learn and develop their skills. The most extreme example of this was when Darren talked about how he went into a meeting as the Vice President for Student Affairs, and he left with the title of Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Organizationally, this meant that he supervised admissions as the result of one conversation, and Darren saw it as an opportunity to get involved in a side of campus that he had little experience with.

For example, when Angela transitioned from senior administration back to an assistant director in housing, she described it by stating, “I worked in housing for four years, and it was a significant growth opportunity for me. I helped create learning communities and got involved in all sorts of different initiatives.” In this example, rather than bemoaning the demotion in rank, Angela described her professional transition as an opportunity to learn, to grow in an area that she had not had much experience with. Carol similarly agreed to take on more responsibilities the longer she held her role as a midlevel manager in the housing department. Being part of university strategic planning and serving with the Higher Learning Commission are two examples in which Carol described as opportunities for her to learn and grow herself as a professional.

Angela's career was a series of asking questions and taking on additional responsibilities to learn and be involved. Angela said to always do the job that you are getting paid for well, but she encouraged professionals to keep their eyes up and ears open to the greater institution. Other participants, such as Blair created opportunities in which she was forced to learn and grow professionally. When she was a hall director, she requested to be transferred in her third year to a new area in order to learn how to work with upperclassmen students. Furthermore, she sought out her next professional roles to broaden her experiences. Examples of this include her intentionality in working in different regions, at different types of institutions, and in different sectors of higher education.

Relationships

Every one of the participants described the importance of getting to know the people around you within the organization. The relationships that they had formed were the reason for each of them entering as well as staying within the field of student affairs. Blair described the basis of her work as relationships by saying, "What I think is so important is that this is a relationship, whatever it is. So it's not just about you. You or me. It's how do we both enhance each other?" Darren described how establishing relationships has been key to being an effective administrator.

> I was able to do that first, because I did the work, right? I knew my stuff. I did the homework. But it was really all of those relationships, all of those, quite frankly t-shirts that I would go handout to some of our faculty members. I mean, it's simple stuff like that.

In reflecting on her career, Angela described how accidentally hurting relationships on campus with partners inhibited her because she was too focused on her own goals. The example

she gave discussed a time in which she had unintentionally left her mentee's supervisor out of the loop on a project for their office. Angela talked about how difficult it was to rebuild the relationship that existed with that colleague who had felt undermined. She had to put intentional effort to rebuild the trust of her colleague, and even years later, that trust was still fragile. Angela described how she had good intentions and wanted to help her colleague, but how her coworker was unwilling to accept her help because of the hurt relationship.

> I went to her and said, "Hey, you know, I know you're going to be sailing. You're also midway through your PhD. If you would like me to supervise orientation and transition programs. I'm happy to do that for you while you're gone.' All that did was raise up all of those flags again. My boss like blew a gasket. She was so mad at me. She was just like, "You have got to give that a rest. That is never going to happen."

While Angela held good intentions, both her colleague and her boss were frustrated by her persistence. Angela described backing away from orientation while keeping her ears open for other opportunities. Navigating relationships with colleagues was a skill Angela learned in her career. Angela also prioritized the feelings of her colleagues over her own ambition which helped contribute to her eventual success. During her interview, Angela announced that her newest promotion included overseeing Orientation. She smiled as she said "Give it a rest? No, no, no." She saw her persistence and establishing connections as beneficial.

Supervisory Relationships

Each of the participants spoke about the role of supervisors. In some cases they spoke about their own supervisors and the influence they had on them as professionals. They described their relationships with these people in different ways depending on the position and time in their career. They are further explored below.

Supervisors as gatekeepers. For some participants, professionals in their network were often the link connecting participants to future career opportunities. Carol was able to step up into her supervisor's role as the Director of Residential Life when he decided to take his own professional step forward. Angela had a similar experience when her Director of Residence Life stepped down without enough time to conduct a search. Both participants credit these major career moves in large part to the relationships they built with their colleagues, supervisors, and staffs through their work. They also were dependent on their supervisor supporting and encouraging them to make their own decision to take on new challenges and develop themselves professionally.

Blair credits her supervisors as taking a chance on her. Blair described a supervisor early in her career who hired her as a hall director despite not having the traditional qualifications.

> I worked in residence life which was very unique because I was never an RA. I was just a resident. It was that background of conduct and student leadership that opened the door for me to potentially have this position, but it was also a supervisor who said, 'listen, are you a good person? Can you make ethical decisions? I can teach you the rest. I just need you to have that core of common values.'

Blair described her supervisor as being critical to her success because she was willing to give her opportunity to gain experiences rather than expecting her to have already had them.

> That was really eye-opening to me because everybody wants you to have all this experience, but at some point, you're going to have to get the experience. She was willing to take a chance and say, 'Okay, yeah, I can teach you.'

Another example of this was seen later in her career when Blair was struggling to move up in the field because she lacked professional staff supervision experience. To help her advance,

her supervisor restructured her title and role to oversee professional staff members. These types of decisions made by professionals in Blair's life gave her the chance to learn the skills that she needed to progress professionally.

Supervisors as supports. For each of the participants, supportive supervisors were important to their professional satisfaction. The participants described various ways that supervisors provided support, including sitting down to process with them. Carol described her professional role models as those who cared for her and supported her when she needed it.

> Who are those people that care? Who are those people that when you're struggling might notice? The ones you don't have to ask. Who are those people that when you actually find the courage to go and talk to them, they're the ones that sit down? Who are the ones who help you break down the pieces until you can make some sense out of it on your own?

Angela described her supervisors as supporting her in her life changes. She described this support as being offered primarily through flexibility. Angela described taking a year leave from her department in order to have a child. While she was earning her doctorate, Angela also took one work day each week to write her dissertation. Having the support of her supervisors provided Angela the opportunity to progress professionally, just as Blair and Carol's had.

Supervisors as role models. One difference in the role of supervisors included the influence they had in the personal development of participants, as told in their interviews. Participants spoke of how they looked to these individuals as they learned about how to lead. Blair, a Black woman, discussed her supervisors as supporting her in her hardships as well as connecting her to opportunities. Angela described intentionally modeling her values after many of her former supervisors and mentors. Carol spoke consistently throughout her interview about

the directors she witnessed early in her career, including their influence and what she has learned from them. More specifically they learned to care for others and to take initiative.

***Care*.** Participants spoke about how others cared for them as staff members and role modeled how to care for students, staff, and others. Carol described her perspective on her work by saying, "Sometimes our work is in taking that time and care that I learned early on to really listen to what is at the heart of this and finding a way." This perspective was influenced by the leadership of her housing department during her undergraduate experience and graduate assistantship.

> From the beginning, they demonstrated to me how you care, how you listen. What is your mission, and what is the policy? Is there a reason to make an exception? How do you lead with care?

In the quote above, Carol discusses how she learned to integrate values, such as compassion while also learning what it means to work in residential life. Carol described how she tried to embody the values that she had learned early in her career, such as being empathetic towards others. Angela described having supervisors who prioritized the wellbeing and care of their students and staff. She described modeling herself after these professionals working in residential life at a smaller private school. Angela later described her experience working with a supervisor who did not center care in their work as being extremely difficult. She described them as not liking students or their staff very much, and how morale suffered because of it. Angela saw how the rest of the university backed away from her department because of her supervisor's unkind nature.

Initiative. Besides care for others, they also learned the importance of stepping up when necessary and take responsibility. Angela saw the value of taking initiative and doing your job

well as role modeled through professional staff. Carol described the leaders in her residential life department, stating “they did an outstanding job of exemplifying somebody who raises their hand to say, ‘I’m willing to do this’ or somebody that comes and says, ‘I think this needs to be done.’ Or ‘Would this be helpful for the department?’” Both Angela and Carol describe these role models as having a lasting impact on how they approach their work including their perspective and priorities.

Mentorship. All participants described professionals who helped them in developing their professional direction and purpose. There were several differences in how the participants discussed their experiences including what roles mentors held. Darren, the only male participant was the only professional for whom mentorship was not a major theme. While Darren mentioned both a teacher and a Dean having influences in his career path, the references were not described in as much detail as were by the women in the study. Blair stressed the importance of mentors to new professionals, stating: “Make sure that you find that individual who can be that guide on your campus. Someone who can tell you where those things are because you're gonna hit a lot of walls.” For the female participants, this guide was seen as influencing their professional development and their mentors served in two key ways: providing them opportunities and serving as role models. Only the white female participants described learning values through their mentorship. Darren described a more recent transition from being a mentee to now taking on active mentoring and teaching roles. He has looked for opportunities to engage in his professional organizations.

As Conduits. Mentors were described as professional conduits, not just connecting young professionals to opportunities, but guiding them more intentionally and connecting them to environments and colleagues they knew would support their development. Blair describes

finding the right environment by stating, “That's what is most important. Trying to find that environment and the people that will help you and support you in fulfilling what you've been tasked to do and how that connects with your own internal passion and goals.”

Blair described how she met one of her mentors, stating: “My mentor was my supervisor first. She actually took an interest in me. I absolutely adored her.” Blair discussed the advice, people, and experiences that her mentor offered. These opportunities included taking her to meetings and introducing her to colleagues. At one professional luncheon, Blair’s mentor sat her next to a professional who she would work for in her next role. Blair’s mentor was intentional about bringing Blair into spaces where she could expand her professional network.

Student Affairs Professionals Descriptions of their work as Advocates

The participants were asked a variety of questions related to their work as student affairs professionals around the topic of advocacy. The interview was geared to understand how they have become advocates, what they see as their role as advocates, and how that has evolved over their career. This required understanding first how they define advocacy along with what they see as their purpose or mission in their role as a student affairs professional.

Advocacy defined

As participants were asked to share their experiences as advocates it was important to understand their working definition of this term. Angela defined advocacy as central to her role as an Assistant VPSA, stating:

> [Advocacy] is a big part of what I do. I'm looking out for people's wellbeing and holistically. How do I use the place where I am, my skills, my strengths, and my education to be able to smooth things out for other people, for clearing red tape. At a large institution, there's so much bureaucracy.

Blair described advocacy and service to others as being at the core of who she is, stating "Self-advocacy is asking the questions that help you understand and not being afraid to ask the questions in the right space."

Darren, a white man who has worked across the southeastern U.S., reflected on his graduate education in which he was first introduced to his role as an advocate, through the lens of socially just practice.

> My instructor said, 'There's nothing you can do about you, your history, and what happened, but because you now have this knowledge, this socially just awakening, what you are called upon to do is to utilize your space and your privilege to do that advocacy work.'

Darren reflected on the responsibility he feels as a white, cis-gendered man in executive leadership in how messages are communicated and who is hearing them,

> I'm at the table, and as I look around the room at other people most all of them look like me. So, I do feel that sense of need or drive to advocate for students and for those people that aren't in the room. I don't always do it. I don't always do it the way that I need to. I don't always remember to do it sometimes. That helps me to snap back and remember that that's my job.

Carol described her advocacy as looking many different ways. "It [Advocacy] can be really formal and particular part of my job description that may put me in that position. I think it can also be in just the everyday connection." Carol believed in learning how to navigate a larger system to make change rather than fighting it.

> I think a good lesson that I learned that I really tried to impart on younger professionals is you can spend all of your efforts and energy fighting the man, fighting this system. Or,

> you can spend some effort and energy trying to understand the system, how that system exists and what's it's about. Then how do you work through that system to still get to your end result. For me, that's been much more successful than trying to be the angry person because if I lose my seat at the table, right? If I get uninvited, then my voice is lost. So how can I understand what's important to others?

Carol described several of the common strategies used by participants including relationship building, understanding the organizational context, and coordinating her message to be better received by others. All of these communication strategies were identified as helping the participants in their roles as advocates, and they are further explored below.

Examples of Advocacy

There is not one exact way that professionals engaged in advocacy. Instead, they provided examples that were specific to the people and circumstances in order to increase their efficacy. Blair described a handful of the various ways that professionals can engage in advocacy.

> [Advocacy] looks different for everyone, right? But it's something that has a sweet spot that you got to figure out. You got to know your audience or you've got to research. Your advocacy could look like a face-to-face meeting. It could look like an email with lots of data… It can be different. So it's not just one way to advocate for yourself or for your team. As you go through your career, it's in observing and understanding.

Darren highlighted the importance of positionality in his advocacy. “No matter where I’ve been in the organization, it’s about utilizing your space and place, no matter where you are or your sphere of influence, to do that advocacy work.” For young professionals, their advocacy will focus on their students whereas senior level administrators may be advocating for various different groups in a variety of different situations.

Students. In their entry level positions, participants described their personal interactions advocating for students. Blair described her advocacy work with students as sometimes unpopular, saying: “It is advocating for them when they don't know how to advocate for themselves.” She gave an example of a student who was struggling to pay for school. Instead of pushing them forward, Blair described telling the student, ‘Hey, you can't afford to be here. That doesn't mean you're not capable, but you want to go to medical school. Where do you want to spend your money?”

Carol shared how early in her career she had worked as a secretary at the university’s counseling clinic, and it was here that she learned the most about students, their issues, and what they need. Having direct contact with students without a perception of organizational distance allowed Carol to have a more intimate look at the student populations, including the troubles that they will try to hide.

Staff. Each of the participants in this study was responsible for supervising a number of individuals. They identified this as a major part of their work in building alliances. The participants recognized that they are advocates for their staff as much as they are role models for advocacy and understanding their position in the institution. Along with this the participants identified that balance in the work place and professional development were areas they needed to advocate with for their staff.

Helping staff understand their role and position at the institution was identified by the participants. Angela described a time in which a coworker of hers spoke with the president about their supervisor, advocating for the needs and reputation of their department.

> I'll never be able to really thank this colleague enough for this. There were about four of us, and we said we've got to do something. The rest of the university is now doing

> workarounds so they don't have to work with us. Duplicate services are popping up in other divisions so they don't have to use our units.

Angela went on to share

> You have to have that status to put your voice out there. This person had a lot of seniority, had a lot of trust with the president so she was able to go to him and say, 'Yeah, all is not good in the division of student affairs and things changed pretty quickly.

For Blair, it is recognizing the role the staff play and utilizing that in her work,

> We are not a private institution or a well-off institution. We are state funded, and one of the younger campuses that doesn't necessarily have that foundation yet, and so my advocacy is focused on my professional staff who are advocating for their students.

Angela also addressed how sometimes being an ally to your staff means protecting them from those above or below them in the organization. She describes a situation with an unpleasant supervisor,

> It was really weird to work with my colleagues at my level to shelter all the people below us from that person. To navigate that person while doing the work that we knew we needed to do. It took a lot of strategy. Some of the things that I did was I got really good at lifting up people and telling my boss about all the cool things that people were doing. Another way we would strategize is who would communicate information up to that person.

The participants also identified that they saw their role as helping their staff find balance and being safe was important. Carol described similar, every day actions that she takes to advocate for her staff to themselves, suggesting that they take a day off to focus on their life outside of work.

> It's not uncommon for me to say to the hall directors, as I read a weekly report, 'It sounds like to me like you could use a comp day. Get one scheduled. Take a free day and go run your errands, clean your apartment, whatever it is that you need to do.'

Angela gave examples of the everyday advocacy she does to help keep her professional staff members safe and working in the best way.

> Yesterday, it was blizzarding so I sent the office staff home and said that I would take care of the office and close it down. You all get on the road and get out of here soon. Same thing, this morning. All the staff are home. I said that I would come in to cover the office. So it's the little things like that. Our executive assistant just had a baby, and she's on day two of sending her child to daycare. So, we've adapted her hours so that she's able to work from home, and they both can adapt to being in childcare. So there's that kind of stuff.

Another area addressed by the participants was advocating for their staff's own personal and professional development. Identifying ways to keep them engaged and motivated to do their work. Carol shared how much of a challenge this can be,

> Sometimes I feel like my greatest resistance to change rests with the mid-level professionals. They don't want to change. They know what they're doing now. They feel competent. My harder sort of battle is to say, why do we do it this way? Why do you have to be the only one? Why can you not share this responsibility? Would you be more effective if you brought in other people?

Institutional/Policy Advocacy. Participants spoke about how understanding policies was key to enacting them as well as challenging them. They spoke about this advocating for students in a broader way. Angela described her advocacy around students and staff with disabilities,

particularly chronic health issues and the accommodations policy. She described how she had learned that their university required doctor's notes and other justification for excused absences. Angela described working with the faculty council and other actors on campus to educate them on this topic, as well as herself. With that knowledge acquisition they could then have discussions about ways to change or improve the policy in place.

Another example that Angela gave was helping to create a Faith and Belief Council on campus, including Christian, Jewish, Wiccan, Muslim, and Hindu students. Angela described how the initial decision to create a council on faith was formed out of her own personal values.

> I strongly believe that a student's faith and belief system is critical to their identity development and their human development, even the decision that they don't believe in something. It is important for them to discern that so we created a council.

She described this council as being the first step to creating a religious accommodation policy for students. This policy would excuse students from their classes to observe holidays and otherwise practice their faith. She went on to list some of the other actions she took to move this policy forward, including important stakeholders she included.

> I gathered the literature. We did some assessments on the campus around students' identities, what they were looking for. We involved our philosophy department because they had a couple of faculty that had backgrounds in religious studies. Our vice president was totally good with it. Our president was also very supportive, and now we have a new president who has embraced it as well.

Self-Advocacy. Participants also identified moments that they chose to advocate for themselves in order to better advocate for others. Blair described this phenomenon stating, "Self-advocacy is in asking the questions that will help you to understand and not being afraid to ask

the questions in the right space." For Blair, this included advocating for herself to be present when her budget was being discussed in meetings. Through efforts of self-advocacy, Darren better positioned himself to be near the students whom he is advocating for.

> I don't have as much connection with students as I would like to. Of course, it's one of the perils of moving up in the organization. So I do have to be very intentional and specific about that. One example of that is that I'm the only vice president that's not in the administration building, and I did that by request. If I were not in the students center, which is where my office is now, then I would never see students.

These acts of advocacy better situated professionals to advocate effectively.

Executive Advocacy. Several of the participants pointed out how different their role became once they held a VP title. At the time of this study, three of the four participants held executive positions within their universities as Vice Presidents of Student Affairs. At this level of the organization, the participants described a greater emphasis placed on advocating for resources. These resources included advocating for more equitable pay for their colleagues, but they also included carefully managing their own budget. Blair talked about how currently her role is about advocating for resources for the staff. Angela shared a recent example in which her executive leadership team had engaged in more radical advocacy, shifting their personal pay to better support equity with their peers on campus.

> During our last salary exercise, a bunch of us said that we needed to look at our lowest paid staff and get everybody up to at least 46,000 which is sad that we had a lot of people who are under 46,000. So many of us didn't take our raises and used that money to add to all the other staff members to get them all up to that wage.

Blair describes her advocacy at the executive level, stating:

> I just had a meeting with our VP for Finance about ensuring that I'm in some of these conversations that they're having around my budget which is student fees. People love student fee budgets. They're like, "Oh, let me pull that and let me use this." So, advocacy has been about ensuring that however that budget is used, it's going to make sense. It's not just going to be a money grab for something that doesn't connect to what students should be funding.

Blair described her role as being a gate keeper at points of this budget so that others didn't take advantage of her or the work her staff does to impact student experiences.

Darren described how becoming a VP changed others perception of him, and how it impacted his effectiveness as an advocate. "Whenever you have a VP title, people just look at you and treat you differently. They think that you know what you're talking about for some reason." As professionals gain rank and rise in title, they have greater amounts of social and professional capital at their institution.

Social Justice and Advocacy. Participants described their advocacy primarily through a social justice lens. The participants highlighted how they have been able to support students with marginalized identities through individual interactions as well as structural changes. Angela described several examples of her advocacy around social justice including creating more robust religious accommodation and disability accommodation policies on campus. Darren, a white man who has worked across the southeastern U.S., reflected on his graduate education in which he was first introduced to his role as an advocate, through the lens of socially just practice. Darren spoke about how his graduate instructors introduced him to the ideas of privilege, and they encouraged him to use his position to be an advocate. As he progressed in his career, Darren

continued to keep this mindset of advocacy in leadership and executive positions especially when he saw a lack of diversity at the table.

Blair described how social justice informs her practice as an executive student affairs professional. While working at a minority serving institution, Blair did not see the supports in place for minoritized students. Seeing an incongruency between the values and the supports of the institution, Blair identified that she needed to know more, but so did the staff that she worked with. She went on and described the actions she took. Together, with her staff, Blair was able to work toward creating successful initiatives. How were they able to do that? Through strategic planning and coordinating of efforts by Blair and her colleagues. The strategies used by Blair, and echoed by all participants, are explored further in the section below.

Advocacy Strategies

In order to effectively advocate, there were several things that participants articulated were important and common strategies utilized in their advocacy efforts. The first was importance of earning credibility so they were better situated to begin advocating for students, issues, and changes at their institution. Some spoke about professional development opportunities to gain insight and information, volunteering and engaging in various parts of campus, and learning as much as they could. Through these actions, participants built relationships with their colleagues and identified those who held common values or goals. These relationships were often on campus, but they also included professionals across the field and student groups.

Establish Credibility. Before any of the participants were able to effectively advocate, they each described needing to establish themselves as trustworthy and earn credibility at the institution. Blair described it in this way.

> People know if you're a good person, and you are pretty consistent and that you're good at your work. People will want to continue to work with you. Right? And vice versa, you want to work with people that come to the table with the same type of energy for the work that you do.

Carol said:

> [Advocacy] really is about winning others over. And in order to do that, you have to have some enthusiasm for the work that you do. You have to have some love for the people that surround you in the work that you do, and you have to believe in your mission, right? Then being able to articulate those things. But then, if I'm spending all my time talking about me or talking about our mission. I have to be able to do that with that listening ear of the person on the other side. Whether it is a person, group, parent, or other constituent before me, I have to be able to understand them and then figure out a way for us to be able to move forward.

Both of these quotes highlight the importance of not just having enthusiasm for your work but following through and collaborating with others towards your goals. Establishing credibility was often through volunteering to take on additional responsibilities and was discussed in RQ 1.

Build Strategic Relationships. The participants spoke a great deal about knowing who you work with and where you are within the entire organization. Knowing your place in the organization, as explained by the participants, helps in understanding who are your allies across campus who share the same values and vision you do. When asked about how she found her co-conspirators, Blair said: “There's a connection or something that we have in common or a topic that we're both really passionate about. A lot of it's just being a good person.”

In order to build meaningful relationships, as described by Angela, professionals must know who they are and what they care about, “You have got to know what’s important to you. What drives you but what feeds your soul. To even know how to advocate, you got to know yourself first.” Angela went on to say, “Then you got to keep your ears up to what drives other people. What feeds their souls? What do they need?” Angela described connecting with those others over their common values and motivations in order to move policies and changes forward.

> I watch how people behave. I get to know them and their values… just watching other people. If they lead in a way that shares the similar values and approaches, have a talk with them about, 'hey, I've got this idea’ or ‘what are you working on and how can we combine these things?

While Angela described building relationships to work proactively towards common goals, Darren often built relationships without always establishing a common goal or project together. Darren described building interpersonal and friendly relationships with his colleagues in order to call on their support when he needed it.

> When people say, ‘Oh, I hate politics, I don't like people's politics. I never play politics.’ You are doing yourself a major disservice because that is really all politics are—it's relationships. Then you utilize those relationships for good and not for evil. I have some really, really great relationships, if you want to call them political relationships, that's fine across the campus, but I call on these relationships to be helpful for me when I need to get something done for our student population.

With students. In this study the participants identified students as one of their key allies on campus and that establishing a relationship with them was one of the most important things they could do. Part is using them to help instigate change, another part is understanding the

student experience so change can be created. Carol pointed out the most effective way to serve as an advocate and change things for students is to have their buy in. “[Change] always works better when it comes from students who have taken their time to really be invested and when they want to be a part of this solution.” Angela gave several examples of how she tries to stay in tune with the needs and wants of the student population in her every day actions.

> I joke around that I walk around campus all the time, and I will go into the student center, and I'm just listening. I work out of the rec center, and I'm listening. Because that's what makes me a better Dean of Students-- when I know what's going on. What are the pain points for students and how can we clear those?

Angela discussed the partnership with students and how she views her role in advocating for them.

> In my 20-some years of advising grad students, I've had three trans[gender] graduate students and what a privilege to walk that journey with them and just to be open to whether they need from me and try to provide it and get out of the way when I need to get out of the way.

***On Campus*.** Blair described the attitude she takes when partnering with others on campus. She recommended looking past the reason why you are working with other professionals, and reaching the commonalities in vision, values, and goals in your work. Darren explained on of the reason for building relationships is it helps him to better understand the organization and the people who work within it.

Darren said: “I’ll say this. If you are just halfway observant on a college campus, you can understand where those people are. If you can see where they are going, you can approach those

folks and figure out ways to work with them." He went on to give the example of a professional on his campus that he considers to be an ally in his work, the Dean of the School of Nursing.

> She is phenomenal. She is amazing. She is a rockstar. She cares about students. She is so passionate about what she does, and I saw that from the first probably two times that I met her. I thought to myself, we are aligned in our passions. Hers just so happens to be about nursing education, mind just so happens to be about student affairs. But, again, it's about being observant.

Participants described finding their allies with those whose work is tangential to your own, but whose mission and values align with yours. Darren gave the example of a previous Academic Provost that he sometimes struggled to work with.

> In speaking about the provost, I'll be honest with you. We don't always get along. We don't always see eye to eye. He can be incredibly annoying at times for me. But again, at the end of the day, we both have the same heart for students.

Angela described working with the faculty council and other actors on campus, and the ways in which she advocated to realign institutional programs with institutional values. Another example provided by Angela was around the hosting of a semester abroad program that had historically been a tourist trip of poverty. Angela described working alongside the faculty senate and other key partners to reform the program to involve cultural and language education.

With Leadership. Carol and Darren both identified the importance of having support from the senior leadership, namely the institution president. Darren also described having a supportive president as being a large factor in his job satisfaction and ability to make changes in his department.

> The president told me my first day, he said, ‘Darren, I don't know what it is that your people do, but I know it's important and I know that we don't do it well so I need you to fix it. With an endorsement like that from the president, I had carte blanche to do whatever. It was fun to be able to work like that.

Carol discussed the importance of having support in advocating for change. She gave the example of building their first co-ed by door residence hall on their private, Catholic campus. The timing was right as the school had its first layperson as president, rather than a conservative clergy member. The president’s wife was concerned though, as their child was coming to campus and wanted to live in the new building. To help appease the president’s wife, as well as alumni donors, they included two single gendered floors in the new building. However, the president’s daughter did not opt to live on the single gender floor but instead wanted to live on a co-ed floor.

Understanding Context. A big part of being an advocate involves learning how to be an advocate, and this includes identifying what the needs are of the people you are advocating for. The participants spoke about how this may mean learning about policies and procedures, understanding student experience and culture, or doing research in to how things can be improved or developed. Darren said that his advocacy has been successful because he has understood how he fits into the larger set of goals and values of the institution.

> Quite frankly, if I could brag just for a second on advocating for my units and getting them the resources that they need in large part because I understand what the values of the institution are and how we fit into those values. I am able to talk about how we fit into those values and where we're going.

Message Coordination. Coordinating messaging was a common theme across all participants. Blair described this process of message coordination as being about looking past the

details of what brought a team together and establishing a common foundation to build a message from. Darren described coordinating his message as essential to his role as a higher-level administrator.

> Sometimes you have to learn to turn your student affairs off. In our field and in our own departments, we have a certain language that we use, a vernacular. We all get it. We all understand. As you start working at higher institutional levels, I can't go to our VP for business and tell her about learning objectives, programmatic influences and interventions and all of those kinds of things. What I have to do is I have to go in and talk about it in the language that she understands, where talk about budget and money and outcomes

Angela also described having to coordinate her message to her staff below her. “[Bad Supervisor] would say something that was cruel, and then I would have to go back and say, ‘You know, the tone was not so great, but this is really what they meant.’ It was exhausting.”

Two participants spoke about how their gender and race impacted their messaging strategy. Blair, a Black woman, described a similar exhaustion by having to coordinate her messaging saying, “I don’t have the ability to walk into a room like you see in some other places. It is something other individuals would do. Scream, say whatever, and leave. I have to walk gingerly around the issue.”

Carol described a similar experience she had while meeting with architects designing a new residence hall.

> I had to take a step back because I wanted to yell at him or I wanted to cry, but neither of those were going to be a good response, right? So then I have to kind of factor in my own gender but how do I help him understand you're an architect and you build beautiful

> buildings but I've worked in residence life for a long time and this design is going to create more problems. I would have to think about, “How do I say this so I don't come across as that overly emotional female? How do I say that so that they can understand and hear my message?

Carol described the strategy involved in crafting her message so that she would be heard by the architects. Incorporating her gender and the circumstances surrounding the issue, Carol had to change her approach to advocate effectively.

COVID-19 Impact

Because these interviews took place during the 2021-2022 academic year COVID-19 still played a large part in the functioning of these professionals. As stated by Angela, “During the pandemic, that was my whole job. Serving on several different committees advocating for students.” Each of them spoke about the impact and in some cases the opportunities that came out of this.

Blair described how the virtual workplace that COVID provided gave her much greater access to, and reasons to work with, professionals and offices across campus that she typically would not have.

> I was only at this campus for a year and a half before we went into remote so I was still trying to understand the campus. Actually, remote helped me because of the types of responsibilities that I was given as part of our senior manager’s team. I was starting to work with different people across campus that I would never have worked with before.

Blair went on, saying, “Right now, I am not in love with the work, but I love interacting with individuals who are passionate and wanting to do the work.”

Angela’s perspective on her work was impacted by Covid:

> [During COVID] The joy of why I do this work was gone. I wasn't seeing students. I wasn't engaging with my coworkers and laughing, hanging out, and telling funny stories. I didn't feel like I was making a difference because I was sitting in meetings representing the division of student affairs with faculty representing themselves as researchers. So I wasn't with my people. I was always with people who didn't have the same student centered focus.

Angela went on to describe her decision making as it relates to her own career:

> People ask me if I am going to retire anytime soon. I don't know if it's happening at your school, but people are just retiring and we had buyouts for people who were close to retirement. People are asking me if I am ready to retire, and I'm not ready yet. I still have things to give. Now last year, it was close. Oh yeah, but I don't know any other job that would have been better. That's what I keep coming back to.

Carol identified that perhaps it's too early to determine what the opportunities are from COVID-19, sharing, "Sometimes I feel like COVID has helped us change and sometimes I feel like COVID forced us into too much change that everybody's trying to hold on to that one."

Chapter summary

Through each of the participants interviews, they were asked to describe their professional path as well as times that they acted as advocates. Through their interviews, there were several commonalities found including shared values between participants. These values included the importance of building relationships and viewing their work through an opportunistic mindset. The participants reflected on their own development as professionals, particularly in their role as advocates. In their interviews, participants described building credibility with their colleagues, taking on new opportunities to learn, and finding like-minded professionals who can support them in their career. The importance of mentorship was also

detailed by each participant. Finally, this study was done during the spring of 2022 so the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed as well by participants, including how it has impacted them professionally and personally.

Chapter V

Discussion & Implications

The aim of this study was to examine the experiences of student affairs professionals in their work as advocates. In this study, four participants were asked to describe how they view their purpose as student affairs professionals. This chapter will further discuss how the participants describe their work as student affairs professionals and advocates and how that has evolved over their career. The chapter will also provide implications and insights for new and mid-level professionals as they progress through their career. Finally, future research topics will be discussed.

Discussion

As the participants described their professional path and development of their purpose, there were several commonalities in their experiences as student affairs professionals. The first was the importance that each participant placed on relationships with others, including their colleagues and supervisors. These relationships helped to connect participants to new opportunities and greater professional networks, while also providing context and support in their roles as entry level employees. As participants rose in organizational rank, and they developed professional competency and confidence, they each described how they have become mentors to younger professionals. Alongside opportunities and mentorship, these relationships also helped the participants discover their professional purpose of service and learning.

Descriptions of their purpose as Student Affairs Professionals

The primary question that this study aimed to answer was how the participants viewed their role as advocates within their experiences as a student affairs professional. All participants of this study spoke about their work as an opportunity to serve others as well as how they value learning and developing themselves professionally. This section will discuss how the experiences and

values of the participants relate to their organizations. Bolman and Deal's (2017) theory positions individuals within their larger organizations to outline the individual, political, structural, and symbolic forces impacting university operations. The symbolic frame, which includes rituals, celebrations, and traditions unique to the organization, was not discussed by the participants of this study. The influence of individuals, their values, and their relationships are outlined in the Human Resource Frame. The structural frame of organizations focus on formalized policies and hierarchies. The political frame views the university through a lens of power and resource allocation.

Developing relationships. There were several commonalities in the participants professional purpose and experiences. The first and most central was the importance of relationships in their work. Each of the participants described intentionally building relationships with colleagues who had similar values to their own. These relationships included direct and indirect supervisors as well as supervisees, but they also included leaders in other departments on their campus, colleagues at other institutions, and peers within their office.

Bolman and Deal (2017) identify that feeling valued is key in the resource frame, especially by leadership. The participants in this study spoke about having supervisors who had invested in them and helped them make connections with others on their campuses. That active involvement by supervisors, as described by Bolman and Deal, means they are putting the individuals needs at the center of the work relationships and bring out the best in in them toward gaining the best effectiveness in the organization. They also described building relationships with professionals to establish a network and find mentorship. Interestingly though, only the three women spoke directly about mentors, while Darren spoke of mentoring relationships but did not call them mentors.

Early in their career, participants described building relationships with students to better understand their needs and their issues. They spoke about how they saw supervisors who did this and others they looked up to and saw a value in getting their perspectives when making decisions. As participants began supervising professional staff, they also saw the importance of centering the needs and issues of their staffs as well as for themselves.

Bolman and Deal's (2017) theory on leading in academic organizations detailed the human resource frame of the institution as centering not only the needs of individuals, but also how their roles interact with their interpersonal skills, professional interests, and personal values in the workplace. An emphasis on personal satisfaction and relationships within the institution is given by leaders operating from this frame. The importance that each participant placed on understanding the barriers and issues of their constituents, building relationships within their organization, and centering the personal well being of their students and staffs are all examples of the participants leading from the human resource frame.

Political frame and politics as advocacy. Bolman and Deal (2017) describes the political side of management by stating,

> Scarce resources trigger contests about who gets what. Interdependence means that people cannot ignore one another; they need each other's assistance, support, and resources[…] In a world of chronic scarcity, diversity, and conflict, the nimble manager walks a tightrope: developing a direction, building a base of support, and cobbling together working relations with both allies and opponents" (p. 203-204).

Each of the participants of this study spoke about the importance of relationships, power, and politics in their advocacy efforts and provided examples of how they have developed in this area over time.

Structural advocacy. The structural frame of Bolman and Deal's (2017) theory was also detailed in each of the participants interviews. The participants discussed their institutions from the structural lens when they described their position, the role and goals of their position, as well as how they fit within an organizational hierarchy. Participants also detailed how they interact with the structures of the organization, even learning to see institutional gaps and working to implement policies to cover them. The participants in this study had to learn the institutional environment which included the ways in which the structures functioned and their roles in it before they were able to effectively determine when and how they could implement new policies, practices, and programs.

Student Affairs Professionals as Advocates

In the history of American higher education, student affairs is a relatively new field. Born from the field of counseling, the oldest graduate programs are less than 50 years old (Long, 2021). The first student affairs professionals acted as advocates on behalf of students, and advocacy continues to be a large part of many modern student affairs professional roles. This study asked the participants to reflect on their roles as advocates and several themes were common. The first was that their advocacy was informed and guided by their values. The second commonality included the strategies they used to advocate. Interestingly, the four common strategies used by the participants align with the strategies outlined in Meyerson and Scully's (1995) theory of the tempered radical. These strategies, as well as the participants values, are discussed more fully below.

Values and advocacy. Throughout their interviews, each of the participants described professionals who they have found share their values, how they met them, and the benefits that they received because of the partnership. All participants described finding alliances by watching and listening to others. These connections occurred within offices, across campuses, as well as

across the profession. Participants made efforts to get to know them and their goals. Some of these alliances were formed by the help of mentors and supervisors who connected younger professionals with likeminded professionals within the field. This was the case for Blair, whose mentors connected her to positions and supervisors who would help her towards her goals.

Strategies for advocacy. Meyerson (2001) outlines four paths used by tempered radicals in advocating for a change in their organizations. These pathways include disruptive self-expression, verbal jujitsu, variable-term opportunism, and strategic alliance building. Building strategic alliances, or building relationships, and verbal jujitsu, or message coordination, were prevalent in all four interviews with participants. The only path that was not found in this research was disruptive self-expression.This was because each participant expressed themselves, or worked in alignment with their values, in ways that allowed them to influence change while managing major disruption. Each of the participants also described intentionally seeking out environments in which their behavior would not be considered disruptive, and they instead highlighted the importance of building coalitions rather than individual acts of rebellion.

Another difference in the strategies used in this study, as compared to Meyerson and Scully's (1995), is that the theory of the tempered radical focuses on language as a tool to be weaponized, participants of this study focused more on the various considerations that they made in coordinating their message. This included who they were speaking to, the venue and timing, and the data and rational they would provide. Effective message coordination depended upon professionals knowing the concerns and goals of their audience to find the right approach to advocate. This also is better understood when thinking about Bolman and Deal (2017)'s political frame, that is knowing what others in the organization value and how to benefit all involved. Each of the participants also described how their personal identities influenced their messaging.

Darren spoke about how he holds awareness as a white, LGBTQIA+ man in leadership. Carol, Angela, and Blair all discussed shifting their language to not be seen as emotional. Coordinating their message to be heard effectively was a skill that each participant described learning through their career.

Understanding context. Institutions of higher education are highly formalized and change to the culture can feel like it is slow work. Effective advocacy requires professionals to spot opportunities for change, which cannot be done without understanding the culture, timing, and goals of the institution and people you work with. Each circumstance will vary, and professionals must shift their approaches to best fit the context.

There are formal options that executives can take, including advocating for their staffs on issues such as pay. Advocating on issues such as disability policies, religious accommodations, and family leave policies are examples of executive advocacy. Mid-level managers may be more likely to advocate for their entry level staff members, such as encouraging hall directors to take a day off. Entry-level professionals' advocacy will focus primarily on student rights, but they may also engage in self advocacy. Self-advocacy was a common experience held by participants, regardless of their organizational position. Angela advocated for new titles and responsibilities throughout her career, as did Carol. Darren advocated for why his office needed to be closer to students, rather than in the administration building. Blair coined the term self-advocacy used in this study, as she discussed the various times that she needed to look out for herself in her wellness and development. These examples are understood through looking at context but also Bolman and Deal's (2017) human resources framework.

Meyerson and Thompkin's (2007) further research on the tempered radical theory outlines two ways that tempered radicals enact incremental change and it relates to the contextual

understanding. The first is through semi-strategic reforms. The other is through genuine acts of their character that shine through their day to day. These two avenues to approach their advocacy were discussed by all four of the participants.

Formal advocacy. Semi-strategic reforms are more formalized such as policy or institutional reformation. They often go through official university channels, include a wide variety of interest groups, and they are focused on longer and broader change. Angela's faith and belief council is an example of a semi-strategic reform, as well as Carol's gender inclusive housing initiative. Both of these professionals did their research on the issue, they brought in other people who could be helpful, and they also consulted with the people who the change would impact.

They draw on alliances and the political frames they work within and utilize their institution knowledge and positionality to influence policies and actions. They also have aligned with the people in these environments to build up to the change that is needed. For example Angela created the religious group on campus based on her interactions, awareness, and ability to think strategically. The participants provided through examples that this did not happen overnight. It took years of hard work and laying the foundation from which they could build relationships, establish values, and develop programs and services that were needed. Utilizing these skills in formal ways benefits the community and campus in multiple ways.

Informal advocacy. The other avenue where tempered radicals move change forward is through their daily interactions with others. Meyerson and Scully (1995) described this avenue as less strategic and more "local, spontaneous, authentic action… It happens when tempered radicals directly express their beliefs, feelings, and identities" (p. 596). These participants acknowledged the importance of establishing relationships but did not focus on having purpose

behind these. However, when the time was right they could act based on what they learned through these connections.

Angela described how she intentionally prioritized relationships with her co-workers in her daily decision making. The everyday actions taken by Angela included covering the office while it was snowing, giving flexibility to her staff who are in life transitions. Carol's decision to call her colleague in parking services meant that a student got to keep their job and pay for school was another example. These informal efforts are able to happen because they have established themselves across campus and know not just who to call, but also what is important to others and what is valued by key actors. These informal decisions and in the moment actions mean that they help in ways that are needed but not always intentionally planned.

Implications and Advice for Advocate- Practitioners

For student affairs professionals, satisfaction within the profession is ultimately dependent upon on one's ability to find the right institution, as well as a circle of professionals for support. Part of this is related to finding places to work that are in alignment with one's values. Professionals who want to introduce change to an organization must build relationships with a sense of humility and willingness to help others in their efforts. Effective professionals will continue to refine their skills as professionals, but they also utilize the skills and knowledge they have already earned. This study further demonstrates the importance of this point as all participants had found professional networks and opportunities that supported their growth and connected them to others. And they each had a growth mind-set, that is they knew they didn't know everything. Each of the participants also identified deeply with their organizations, seeing their work as an opportunity to exhibit their values. Most importantly, each of the participants was able to bring about important change at their institutions, and work to serve as advocates for their students, staff, and selves.

Each participant discussed how they incorporated their values into their work, even discussing their professional work as acting in accordance with their values. As entry level employees, they saw professionals exemplifying these practices and learned from them. As they continued in their career, each of the participants had to find the right institutional fit for them. This included both the size, location, and department that they would be working in. The right institutional fit also depends on the people that work there, including supervisors, executives, and coworkers. It also depends on the perspective and mentality of the individual. This is described in this study as the opportunism mindset, or the willingness of the professional to see their work as an opportunity. Although they did not speak much about it they all indicated being engaged in professional organizations and benefitting from this throughout their career.

Tempered Radicals thrive with two conditions—support from above and flexibility in their work (Meyerson, 2001). Darren, Carol, and Angela all described having the highest rate of professional satisfaction when they had supportive supervisors who allowed them independence and provided opportunities to develop and space to learn. Blair described how her supervisors directly provided her support which helped her to persist and thrive professionally. Finding the right institutional fit was aided greatly by the networks of the participants. Mentors and former supervisors helped to connect participants to environments and opportunities that would challenge and support them as professionals. The role of mentorship was important to each of the participants, although the male participant discussed it far less than the female participants. As participants rose in professional rank, they discussed how they have adjusted to becoming the mentors and conduits themselves.

Executive and Senior Level Administrators

In supervisory dynamics, executive administrators provided support and flexibility to midlevel professionals. The participants of this study discussed the impact that senior level administrators had early in their career especially in their perspective, values, and approach to their work. Participants spoke about the rewarding experience of serving as mentors to younger professionals now that each serve in executive roles. In serving as mentors, the participants described having a renewed commitment to the profession of student affairs, seeing their role as developing the next generation.

Mid-level professionals

One major issue faced by mid-level professionals are that they are "neither faculty (who define the institution) nor the senior staff (who lead the institution)" (Huelskamp, 2018; p. 12). The positionality and opportunities posed to mid-level professionals also present their own unique challenges which have been outlined in the literature (Huelskamp, 2018). While mid level professionals have more to lose, having often more time vested in their role, than entry level professionals, they have also garnered professional clout. The importance of having institutional credibility and establishing relationships with others was central to this study. Found both in the literature and in this study, mid-level professionals often have had the professional experience to identify when organizations can benefit from change. Rather than entry level professionals, who may have worked at one prior institution, a director with four different schools behind them has a broader range of experiences to pull from. This, paired with their developed social and professional competencies, better positions midlevel managers to advocate more effectively.

Entry-level professionals

There is no common standard for the term entry level, other than professionals who have had less than five professional years working within higher education. Hirschy et al.'s (2015) study on entry level professionals discussed three major predictors to professional satisfaction including the influence of early colleagues, their involvement in professional organizations, and the experiences and opportunities available to them.

One thread heard throughout participant interviews, as well as actual direct advice given by several participants, is the importance of entry level professionals to resist the temptation to burst towards change too quickly without first learning their organization. Getting to know the actors and relationships, the procedures and policies, and the history and culture of the organization are all important for effective advocacy. Entry level professionals must also self-reflect on their role within the organization, learning to first do the job that they were hired to do before jumping into their advocacy or visions of change. By first understanding the context of an organization, professionals are more likely to understand and capitalize on opportunities for advocacy.

This learning can be done through several ways, including getting to know those around you. Volunteering for committees or taking on new opportunities is another way to learn about the organization. The most effective, according to the theory of the Tempered Radical, is to find a mentor within the organization (Meyerson, 2001). This mentor is often a supervisor or colleague who has the organizational understanding and experience to guide entry level professionals towards people and opportunities that can help support their development. Hirschy et al.'s (2015) study outlined some characteristics that benefit entry level professionals including the importance of organizational identification. Organizational identification "represents the perceptions of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; p.

21). Employees who lack connection to their workplace are more likely to experience burnout and other feelings of workplace dissatisfaction (Avanzi et al, 2018).

Avanzi et al. (2015) also outlined that entry level professionals need to find role models for both coaching and constructive criticism, a positive peer group influence, and key moments of guided reflection. As shown in this study, mentors also provided guidance, connected professionals to new opportunities, and served as role models to the participants.

Future Research

Although this research was done as best it could be, it does not account for all the information that could be gathered on this topic. Thus, provided in this section are recommendations for additional and future research to more fully understand how student affairs professionals come to serve in advocacy roles through their positions. It was clear that these individuals infuse this role into everything they do.

To begin with, this study needs to be replicated with a larger population of professionals. Further research can explore the experiences of professionals by race, religion, and other social factors such as ability, status, and age. In expanding the participant pool, greater insights can be gathered including differences in their experiences by institution size, location, and type. Educational background, including greater variety in degree level and specialty, could also be explored in greater depth. Greater representation in terms of career pathways could be explored as well, exploring advocacy in other functional areas outside of residential life and housing. This study could be done with individuals who are in middle level positions rather than in senior level positions, including those with a bit less experience.

This research could also benefit by narrowing in further on specific populations. Such as seeking out only female or male identifying participants. Including only those of one race or another. It could be narrowed in by institution type, seeking to speak only with those that have

worked at a particular type of institution for their whole career. Focusing in could provide insights into an area that can be further enhanced and learned from. It would also be interesting to look at college presidents or chancellors who moved through their career path on a student affairs track to attain their positions.

Finally, this research was done with those who have had many years in the field which provided perspectives gained over the course of their career. Interviewing those with much less experience in the profession could gather further information on how entry level professionals navigate their roles as they are just learning to manage the various aspects of their job could provide interesting insights. This population is seen to often become frustrated by their positionality, through which they learn how to maneuver through the institution to get what is needed, a perspective shared via hindsight by these participants.

Conclusion

Student Affairs, as a profession, has been centered on service on behalf of others. The first governing documents outline the importance of getting to know students to better understand their interests, struggles, and goals. Entry level professionals work directly with students as they navigate the institution. While working in the job they are hired for, professionals also have the opportunity to build relationships across the organization. These relationships can become future allies in their advocacy efforts, helping to push ideas or efforts forward. As professionals rise in ranks, advocacy efforts shift from students to staff members in terms of policies, workplace culture, and gatekeeping opportunities. No matter the level, mentorship from more experienced professionals is needed to guide entry level staff to the right opportunities for their learning and growth.

Professionals and students alike benefit from the interpersonal connections made across departments, campuses, and regions. Advocacy, on behalf of themselves, their departments, or their beliefs, paved the way for others, students and staff alike, to move through their institutions with greater ease. From policy changes to departmental culture, none of the advocacy efforts in this study happened through the actions of participants alone. Instead, the participants partnered with and formed relationships with like-minded professionals, not only to move their own efforts forward but to find their commonalities. They built and sustained networks to better situate themselves to advocate when the opportunity arose, highlighting the importance of opportunism and preparedness. Professionals were prepared to advocate because they showed up to their work with purpose, guiding their actions by their values. These values of building community, empowering others, and working in service to others gave professionals the clout and the experience needed to make a stand when it mattered.

References

Aiello, T. (2012). Violence is a classroom: The 1972 Grambling and Southern riots and the trajectory of Black student protest. *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, *53*(3), 261-291.

Adams-Dunford, J., Cuevas, F. and Neufeldt, E. (2019), Navigating your career as a mid-level manager. student services, 2019: 29-40. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20305

Allen, K. & Cherrey, C. (2003). Student affairs as change agents. *NASPA Journal*, *40*(2); 29-42. https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1219

Altbach, P. G., & Cohen, R. (1990). American student activism: The post-sixties transformation. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *61*(1), 32-49.

American Council on Education. (1937). *The student personnel point of view*. (American Council on Education Studies, series 1, no. 3). Washington, DC: Author.

American Council on Education, Committee on Student Personnel Work. (1949). *The student personnel point of view*. (Rev. ed.: American Council on Education Studies, series 6, no. 13). Washington, DC: Author.

Ardoin, S., Broadhurst, C., Locke, L., & Johnson, J. (2019). Peacemakers and rabble rousers: Women leaders as activists in higher education. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, *12*(1), 35-53.

Apple, M. W. (2009) "On being a scholar/activist in education." *In Leaders in Curriculum Studies*.

Apple, M. W. (2010). Theory, research, and the critical scholar/activist [Review of Theory and Educational Research: Toward Critical Social Explanation, by J. Anyon, M. Dumas, D. Linville, K. Nolan, M. Perez, E. Tuck, & J. Weiss]. Educational Researcher, 39(2), 152–155. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27764567

Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *The Academy of Management Review, 14*(1), 20-31. https://doi.org/10.2307/258189

Astin, A. W. (1975). The myth of equal access in public higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 52(1),* 67–80.

Bensimon, E. M. & Neumann, A. (1994). *Redesigning collegiate leadership: Teams and framework in higher education*. Johns Hopkins Press.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2017). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Bowler, S., Sheon, A. R., D'angelo, L. J., & Vermund, S. H. (1992). HIV and AIDS among adolescents in the United States: Increasing risk in the 1990s. *Journal of Adolescence, 15*(4), 345-371.

Brown & Davis (2004) The Historically Black college as social contract, social capital, and social equalizer. *Peabody Journal of Education, 76* (1), 31-49.

Burke, L. (2020, May 7). College protests go digital, distant. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/05/07/college-protests-go-digital-distant.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs., Veteran employment assistance act of 2010: Report (to accompany S. 3234) (2010). Washington, D.C.; U.S. G.P.O.

Chambers, T., & Phelps, C. E. (1994). Student activism: Impacting personal, institutional, and community change. *New Directions for Student Services*, *1994*(66), 45-57.

Chambers, T., & Phelps, C. E. (1993). Student activism as a form of leadership and student development. *NASPA Journal, 31*(1), 19-29.

Choudry, A. (2020). Reflections on academia, activism, and the politics of knowledge and learning. *The International Journal of Human Rights, 24*(1), 28-45.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Sage publications*.

Eckel, P. D., & King, J. E. (2004). An overview of higher education in the United States: Diversity, access and the role of the marketplace. *American Council on Education.*

Everley M. L., & Smith, J. (1996). Making the transition from soft to hard funding: The politics of institutionalizing instructional development programs. *To improve the academy*, *15*(1), 209–230.

Fawcett, S. (1991). Some values guiding community research and action. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 24*, (4) 624-636

Fey, C. J., & Carpenter, D. S. (1996). Mid-level student affairs administrators: Management skills and professional development needs. *NASPA journal*, 33(3), 218-231.

Flink, P. (2017). Invisible disabilities, stigma, and student veterans: Contextualizing the transition to higher education. *Journal of Veterans Studies, 2*(2), 110-120.

Flood, M., Martin, B., & Dreher, T. (2013). Combining academia and activism: Common obstacles and useful tools. *Australian Universities' Review, 55*(1), 17-26.

Ford, K., & Vignare, K. (2015). The evolving military learner population: A review of the literature. *Online Learning, 19*(1), 7-30.

Gaston-Gayles, J. L., Wolf-Wendel, L. E., Tuttle, K. N., Twombly, S. B., & Ward, K. (2005). From disciplinarian to change agent: How the civil rights era changed the roles of student affairs professionals. *NASPA Journal, 42*(3), 263-282.

Goldin, C., & Katz, L. F. (2011). Putting the “co” in education: timing, reasons, and consequences of college coeducation from 1835 to the present. *Journal of Human Capital, 5*(4), 377-417.

Gusfield, J. R. (1971). Student protest and university response. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, *395*(1), 26-38.

Harrison, L. M. (2010). Consequences and strategies student affairs professionals engage in their advocacy roles. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 47*(2), 197–214. https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6003

Harrison, L. M. (2014). How student affairs professionals learn to advocate: A phenomenological study. *Journal of College and Character, 15*(3), 165-178.

Hartig, H., & Doherty, C. (2021). Two decades later, the enduring legacy of 9/11. Retrieved 18 November 2021, from https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/09/02/two-decades-later-the-enduring-legacy-of-9-11/

Herr, E. L. (1967). The impact of recent student protests and student movements: Implications for counselors and counselor educators. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 6*(3), https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.1967.tb01897.x

Hirschy, A. S., Wilson, M. E., Liddell, D. L., Boyle, K. M., & Pasquesi, K. (2015). Socialization to student affairs: Early career experiences associated with professional identity development. *Journal of College Student Development, 56*(8), 777-793.

Jessup-Anger, J., Lopez, E; Koss, M. (2018). History of sexual violence in higher education. *New Directions for Student Services 9*(19).

Karen, D. (1991). The politics of class, race, and gender: Access to higher education in the United States, 1960-1986. *American Journal of Education*, *99*(2), 208-237.

Keppel, F. (1987). The higher education acts contrasted, 1965-1986: has federal policy come of age? *Harvard Educational Review*, *57*(1), 49-68.

Kezar, A. (2010). Faculty and staff partnering with student activists: Unexplored terrains of

interaction and development. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*(5), 451-480. http://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2010.0001

Kezar, A., & Lester, J. (2011) Framing the study: Tempered radicals framework. Stanford University Press. Enhancing Campus Capacity for Leadership.

Kuk, L., & Hughes, B. (2003). Bridging the competency gap for new professionals. *Journal of Student Affairs*, 12, 60-68.

Lee, R. D. (1999). The rehabilitation act and federal employment: The courts' application of the law. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, *19*(4), 45–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X9901900405

Lueddeke, G. (1999) Toward a constructivist framework for guiding change and innovation in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 70*:3, 235-260

Madaus (2011). History of disability services in higher education. *New Directions for Higher Education.*

Mather, P. C., Bryan, S. P., & Faulkner, W. O. (2009). Orienting Mid-Level Student Affairs Professionals. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *27*(2), 242-256.

Meyer, A. D. (1982). Adapting to environmental jolts. *Administrative science quarterly*, 515-537.

Meyerson, D. E. (2001). Radical change, the quiet way. *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Change*, 39.

Meyerson, D. E. (2004). The tempered radicals. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, *2*(2), 14–23. https://doi.org/10.48558/VNB2-HR97

Meyerson, D. E., & Scully, M. A. (1995). Crossroads tempered radicalism and the politics of ambivalence and change. *Organization Science*, *6*(5), 585-600.

Meyerson, D., & Tompkins, M. (2007). Tempered radicals as institutional change agents: The

case of advancing gender equity at the University of Michigan. Harv. JL & Gender, 30, 303.

Mills, D. B. (2000). Defining middle management in student affairs. *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration*, 135.

Miscenko, D., & Day, D. V. (2016). Identity and identification at work. *Organizational Psychology Review*, *6*(3), 215-247.

Nye, J. (2005). Soft power and higher education. In Forum for the future of higher education (Archives),11-14.

Reif, G. (2007). Higher education's missing link: Examining the gap between academic and student affairs and implications for the student experience. *The Vermont Connection*, *28*(1), 90-98.

Remenick, L. (2019). Services and support for nontraditional students in higher education: A historical literature review. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, *25*(1), 113-130.

Renn, K. A. (2010). LGBT and queer research in higher education: The state and status of the field. *Educational researcher*, *39*(2), 132-141.

Rosenstone, S. J. (2004). Challenges facing higher education in America: Lessons and opportunities. In *Taking public universities seriously* . 55-86. University of Toronto Press.

Rudolph, F. (1990). *The American college and university*: A history. University of Georgia Press.

Scott, P. (2000). Globalisation and higher education: Challenges for the 21st century. *Journal of studies in International Education*, *4*(1), 3-10.

Scott, J. W., & El-Assal, M. (1969). Multiversity, university size, university quality and student

protest: an empirical study. *American Sociological Review*, 702-709. https://doi.org/10.2307/2092306

Silver, P., Bourke, A., & Strehorn, K. C. (1998). Universal instructional design in higher education: An approach for inclusion. *Equity & Excellence, 31*(2), 47-51.

Smith, A. (2007). Social-justice activism in the academic industrial complex. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 23*(2), 140-145.

Smith, E. E. (1957). The effects of clear and unclear role expectations on group productivity and defensiveness. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *55*(2), 213–217. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0043607

Trow, M. (1989). American higher education—past, present and future. *Studies in Higher Education, 14*(1), 5-22.

Tull, A., & Freeman, J. P. (2011). Reframing student affairs leadership: An analysis of organizational frames of reference and locus of control. *Research in the Schools*, *18*(1).

Venegas, K., Cadena, M., Galan, C., Park, E., Astudillo, S., Avilez, A. A., ... & Tierney, W. G. (2017). Understanding DACA and the implications for higher education. Pullias Center for Higher Education.

Wheatle, K. I., & Commodore, F. (2019). Reaching back to move forward: The historic and contemporary role of student activism in the development and implementation of higher education policy. *The Review of Higher Education*, *42*(5), 5-35.

Wolf-Wendel, L., Twombly, S., Morphew, C., & Sopcich, J. (2004). From the barrio to the bucolic: The student transfer experience from HSIs to Smith College. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *28*(3), 213-231.

Appendix A
Email Invitation

Hello,

My name is Devin De Both, and I am a second year graduate student at Eastern Illinois University. I am currently in the College Student Affairs program, and for my master's thesis, I am researching the experience of mid-level professionals in their advocacy efforts. As an upcoming professional, I am looking to better understand the challenges that professionals face within higher education, especially student affairs. In speaking with mid-level professionals, I am also hoping to collect strategies used by experienced personnel. I am reaching out to you because your name was provided to me by my thesis committee members, including Dr. Dianne Timm, Dr. Anne Flaherty, and Dr. Ryan Hendrickson.

Participants of this study will be asked questions regarding their professional experiences regarding advocacy efforts. Participants will need to have had at least eight years' experience as a student affairs professional. Preferably, participants hold positions including, or comparable to Director, Dean, Executive Director, Associate Dean, etc. Interviews will be about an hour long, and they will be held over zoom video conferencing.

If you have any questions or are interested in participating in this study, please reach out to me at dadeboth@eiu.edu. Furthermore, if you are unable to participate, please forward this message to any available professionals in your network. Thank you for your help in completing this research.

Best wishes,
Devin De Both

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your career path. How did you get to your current position?
    a. What areas of Student Affairs did you work in?
    b. At what point did you cross over to mid-level manager?
    c. What degrees, if any, do you have related to your position?
        i. How did you decide to get/not get that degree?
        ii. When did you get your degree(s)?
        iii. How did you complete these degrees? (Full-time, Part-Time, online)
2. Tell me about your current professional role.
    a. What are your main responsibilities?
    b. Who do you directly and indirectly report to?
    c. How many direct reports do you have? What are their responsibilities?
    d. What interactions do you have with students?
    e. How do you make an impact through your role?
3. Can you tell me what a typical day/week can look like for you?
4. Can you tell me a time when you supported a student or group of students who were engaging in some form of protest?
    a. How did you initially get involved with their efforts?
    b. What was your role throughout the process?
    c. What was your experience like?
    d. What was the outcome?
5. How do you define advocacy?
    a. Where do you draw this from?
    b. What does advocacy mean to you?
    c. Do you consider yourself an advocate on your campus? Please explain.
    d. Has this changed over the course of your education or career? Explain.
6. Tell me about a time you served as an advocate.
    a. Why did you decide to get involved?
    b. Who were you advocating for?
    c. What actions did you take in the process of advocating?

    d. What was the outcome?
    e. What did you learn through this experience?
    f. Would you have done it again?
7. What does advocacy look like in your professional day-to-day?
    a. Are there parts of your role that require you to be an advocate?
        i. Who or what are you advocating for?
    b. Are there parts of your role that inhibit your ability to advocate?
    c. How does your audience impact your advocacy efforts, strategies? Does it?
8. Tell me about a time that you had to negotiate an issue you were advocating for.
9. Have you ever advocated for something that did not go as planned? Tell me about this process.
    a. How did this impact you professionally?
    b. How did this impact you personally?
    c. What would you do differently?
    d. What did you learn through this experience?
10. Tell me about a time you chose not to advocate for something.
    a. What helped you make that decision?
    b. How did this impact you?
    c. What would you do differently?
    d. How did others respond?
11. Who do you consider to be your allies and co-conspirators on your campus?
    a. Tell me about the process in finding them.
    b. How did you come to know them and identify them in this way?
    c. Are they always allies and co-conspirators?
    d. In what ways do you utilize these individuals/do they utilize you?
    e. Are there people off campus you rely on as well?
12. Tell me about a time that you have helped another person advocate. Whether another professional, student, supervisor, etc.
    a. What was your relationship like?
    b. What did you learn in that process?

13. What advice would you give to new professionals to student affairs about advocacy in their work?
14. As you prepared for this interview did you anticipate I would ask you something specific or had you planned to share information that I haven't asked you to share yet?
    a. Is there anything else you would like to share at this time?

Appendix C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Lessons in Action and Advocacy: Mid-level Manager's Perspective

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Devin De Both under the direction of Dr. Dianne Timm from the Department of Counseling and Higher Education at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to schedule an hour of time to be interviewed via Zoom video conferencing. The interview will follow the interview protocol detailed in Appendix B. All interviews will be recorded with participant permission, which will be asked at the top of the interview.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts that will arise from participating in this study outside the average emotional or mental strain in recalling past events.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
Potential benefits of participation include sharing experiences with other mid-level professionals, as well as better informing incoming professionals on the challenges and realities of student affairs work. The results of this study will better inform the practice of professionals by giving strategies to professionals as they engage in advocacy in their careers.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All identifiable information of participants will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of assigning numbers to each participant through transcription and coding process. The principal researcher will be the only person with access to collected data. The subject's information collected as part of the research, even with identifiers removed, will not be used or distributed for future research.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:
Devin De Both, Principal Investigator, dadeboth@eiu.edu
Dr. Dianne Timm, Faculty Advisor, dtimm@eiu.edu

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.