Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education **Volume 1, 2016**

Cite as: Perez, R. J. (2016). A conceptual model of professional socialization within student affairs graduate preparation programs. *Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education, 1,* 35-52. Retrieved from http://www.jspte.org/Volume1/JSPTEv1p035-052Perez2057.pdf

A Conceptual Model of Professional Socialization within Student Affairs Graduate Preparation Programs

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Abstract

Prior research exploring professional socialization in student affairs has been grounded in models that do not fully capture the distinct features of the field. Moreover, these studies have primarily focused on the transition into full-time work positions, and they have captured what happens to new professionals rather than how individuals understand their socialization experiences. With these gaps in mind, this conceptual paper presents a new model of professional socialization in student affairs graduate preparation programs that draws upon literature in the helping professions (i.e., nursing, social work), research on doctoral students and pre-tenure faculty, and the theoretical frameworks of sensemaking and self-authorship to highlight the dynamic relationship between individuals and organizations during the socialization process. Specifically, this model attempts to illuminate the cognitive mechanisms that undergird how individuals interpret their professional socialization. In doing so, the model proposes different ways individuals may make sense of their student affairs graduate training experiences based on (a) whether or not they encounter discrepancies and (b) their developmental capacity for self-authorship. The conceptual model presented here has implications for shaping graduate level coursework and fieldwork within student affairs preparation programs.

Keywords: Professional socialization, graduate students, graduate education, student affairs, new professionals

Introduction

Despite scholars' best efforts to understand the dynamics of professional socialization in student affairs, the field continues to have a high attrition rate (Evans, 1988; Frank, 2013; Lorden, 1998). Prior literature within student affairs has loosely drawn from socialization frameworks (e.g., Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992) to describe how new practitioners navigate their institutions as they transition from graduate school into the workplace (e.g., Amey & Reesor, 2015; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004). With this in mind, student affairs socialization research has tended to focus on identifying the institutional practices (e.g., synergistic supervision, professional development workshops) and conditions (e.g., cultural fit) that lead to "successful" professional socialization outcomes such as values acquisition,

Editor: Molly Ott
Submitted: August 12, 2015; Revised: October 16, 2-15, January 3, 2016; Accepted January 4, 2016

commitment to the organization, and job satisfaction (Cilente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloan, 2006; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Tull, 2006). While the extant literature has illuminated what happens to new practitioners as they are socialized, we know less about how individuals interpret their professional socialization experiences. Moreover, scholars have yet to produce a model that specifically describes how professional socialization occurs in student affairs.

Acknowledging these omissions, a model for understanding the cognitive dimensions of professional socialization within the context of student affairs graduate preparation programs is presented in this conceptual paper. The aforementioned model draws upon literature in the helping professions (i.e., nursing, social work), research on doctoral students and pre-tenure faculty, and the concepts of sensemaking (Weick, 1993, 1995) and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; Kegan, 1994) to propose how individuals might make meaning of their socialization experiences. In particular, this model was designed to highlight the ways in which individuals attempt to make sense of discrepancies or surprises they may encounter during their graduate training. By attending to the structured elements of graduate training (i.e., coursework and fieldwork) and the affective dimensions of new practitioners' experiences (i.e., individual meaning making), this model was created with the intention of illustrating the interactions between individuals and their environments that collectively influence the process and outcomes of professional socialization. Taken together, this model may provide a more nuanced understanding of the psychosocial processes that undergird professional socialization since existing socialization frameworks (e.g., Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992) are primarily descriptive and have not presented clear mechanisms that explicate differential interpretations of graduate training experiences in student affairs.

While the cognitive underpinnings in the proposed model may be applicable across professions, they are intentionally illustrated in the context of student affairs practitioners' graduate training since prior research has suggested that resolving discrepancies is critical to retaining newcomers (Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Furthermore, a vast majority of socialization literature in student affairs has focused on individuals' post-graduate experiences (Amey & Reesor, 2015; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Renn & Hodges, 2007) despite the wide recognition that graduate training is a critical forum for professional socialization (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Young & Elfrink, 1991). There is also limited research on the socialization of student affairs practitioners since much of the higher education literature has attended to the experiences of doctoral students within the disciplines (Adler & Adler, 2005; Austin, 2002; Gardner, 2007) and of pre-tenure faculty members (Rosser, 2003; Tierney, 1997). Thus, the need to understand the unique dynamics of professional socialization in student affairs graduate training programs persists. Developing a more nuanced understanding of professional socialization in student affairs may enable those working in graduate preparation programs to improve curriculum, pedagogy, and field training processes, which may in turn better equip new practitioners to serve as educators.

Conceptualizing Professional Socialization in Student Affairs

Within the limited body of work exploring the professional socialization of student affairs practitioners, student affairs graduate preparation programs have been framed as the main vehicle for socialization into the field (e.g., Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Young & Elfrink, 1991). Student affairs master's programs use a dual training model that consists of coursework and concurrent fieldwork (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2012; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009), yet the literature examining graduate preparation programs has almost exclusively focused on the curriculum as a site of professional socialization. Moreover, the literature has highlighted curricular content with a particular focus on identifying the values and skills that

should be taught to new professionals (e.g., Burkard, Cole, Ott, & Stoflet, 2005; Lovell & Kosten, 2000; Young & Elfrink, 1991).

While attention has been given to what should be taught, there has been less research about pedagogy within student affairs graduate preparation programs. The notable exception has been several studies related to the role of equity, diversity, and inclusion in student affairs graduate training programs. Although student affairs has consistently espoused a commitment to diversity (e.g., American College Personnel Association [ACPA] & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1997), scholars have found that graduate training programs do not always have courses in place to cultivate the knowledge and skills needed to work across cultural differences (Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Talbot, 1996). Furthermore, Kelly and Gayles (2010) found that when diversity dialogues were incorporated into courses, students were often resistant to engaging in the conversations; however, it was possible to work through this discomfort when learning environments were created to both challenge and support students (Gayles, Kelly, Grays, Zhang, & Porter, 2015; Linder, Harris, Allen, & Hubain, 2015). Given the struggles within student affairs graduate preparation programs to fully enact their commitments to diversity, some students of color have described feeling surprised by the microaggressions and marginalization they have experienced in graduate school in light of their understanding of the field's values (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Linder et al., 2015).

Although student affairs graduate preparation programs have been identified as critical sites of professional socialization, much of the socialization research in student affairs has occurred in the context of new practitioners' transition from graduate school into new full-time positions. Research focused on the transition to practice has highlighted new practitioners' struggles to understand organizational culture, to shift their role from graduate student to full-time professional, to find mentors, to understand job expectations, and to determine long-term career goals (Cilente et al., 2006; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). These studies have consistently noted the ways in which new professionals have struggled to make sense of discrepancies between their expectations and experiences (Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Renn & Hodges, 2007). With this in mind, Amey (1998) asserted that it was critical for new practitioners to reduce the "gaps between expectations and realities as they try to survive and thrive in their organizations" (p. 19) and in the field more broadly.

To narrow the gaps between new professionals' expectations and experiences, scholars have crafted a range of recommendations that are intended to ease the socialization process. Specifically, they have encouraged those who are early in their careers to learn about the culture of their organizations, to be proactive in seeking out mentoring, and to engage in continued professional development (Amey, 1998; Amey & Reesor, 2015; Barr, 1990; Renn & Hodges, 2007). Conversely, scholars have recommended that those who supervise new professionals use synergistic supervision practices (Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Shupp & Arminio, 2012; Tull, 2006), which provide opportunities for both individuals and organizations to accomplish their goals.

Although the student affairs literature has explored the nature of student affairs graduate preparation, the problems new practitioners experience when they move into the field, and the tactics used to cope with those challenges, the extant literature has two notable gaps. First, scholars have tended to examine professional socialization in student affairs within a singular space (e.g., classes, new department) despite the recognition that socialization into the field occurs in multiple contexts such as coursework and fieldwork during graduate training (CAS, 2012). Second, the existing student affairs literature has not illuminated how people make sense of the gaps they encounter between their expectations and experiences during graduate school and the subsequent transition to practice, which suggests a need to identify the cognitive processes that underlie a critical element of the professional socialization process.

Conceptualizing Professional Socialization in Related Fields

Contributions of the Helping Professions Literature

Studies in helping-oriented fields such as nursing and social work are beneficial to understanding the nature of professional socialization in student affairs since newcomers in each of these fields are often drawn to the altruistic nature of the work (e.g., Cryns, 1977; Hunter, 1992; Mackintosh, 2006). Moreover, helping professions are applied fields that use similar models of training where new practitioners engage in coursework and fieldwork (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Melia, 1984; Parkinson & Thompson, 1998). In fact, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2012) indicated that student affairs master's candidates should complete "a minimum of 300 hours of supervised practice consisting of at least two distinct experiences" (p. 356) as they concurrently take courses exploring topics such as the foundations of the profession, college student development theory, the organization and administration of student affairs, and assessment, evaluation, and research.

With this said, research in nursing and social work suggested the content and structure of professional training contribute to challenges newcomers experience during the transition to full-time practice (e.g., Melia, 1984; Parkinson & Thompson, 1998). Although helping professions have dual training systems consisting of coursework and concurrent fieldwork to convey the beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills required for practice, there are frequently gaps between curricular and practical training experiences (e.g., Melia, 1984; Perez, 2014). Rather than serving as a means of integrating learning, dual systems of training may unintentionally perpetuate the divide between theory and practice. For example, nursing students maintained their idealized images of the profession after being exposed to medical models that promote work efficiency. Yet, many new nurses deferred to clinical workplace norms that were reflective of the medical model even though they were inconsistent with the ethic of care that is central to nursing (Hoel, Giga, & Davidson, 2007).

The pattern of behavior demonstrated by neophyte nurses seems to mirror that of some new student affairs practitioners. Newcomers in helping professions may hold on to their idealistic views since they were drawn to their field of study based on its espoused values (Hoel et al., 2007; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004). The continual reinforcement of professional values, which become increasingly personal during the training process, often leads individuals to develop a professional identity that is rooted in the tenets of their field (Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Renn & Hodges, 2007). Thus, as new practitioners in helping professions encounter value discrepancies during field training, they may interpret situations in ways that protect their self-image. For example, attributing problems during field training to individuals (i.e., supervisor, colleague) or to particular organizations may enable new practitioners to maintain romanticized views of their work, their identity, and their sense of agency (Hoel et al., 2007; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004). Yet, once they are in full-time professional positions, new practitioners may find that they can no longer discount the reemerging gaps between their expectations and their experiences in practice. As the disruption to new practitioners' understandings of practice and their self-images intensify, individuals work to reduce dissonance and may choose to leave their particular workplace and, in some cases, the field itself to preserve their identity and self-esteem (Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Renn & Hodges, 2007).

Furthermore, the helping professions literature revealed the challenges that exist for new practitioners who transition into organizations where multiple paradigms for practice exist. For example, new nurses and social workers struggled to determine their role in the workplace and felt as though their knowledge was undervalued when they worked in teams with doctors who were

viewed as being more prestigious and as having greater expertise (Abramson, 1993; Melia, 1984). Similarly, student affairs practitioners may struggle for validation when working with the professoriate or when they are in organizations that do not focus on student learning and development (Cilente et al., 2006; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004). Ultimately, this perceived lack of agency and sense of being underappreciated can contribute to job dissatisfaction and attrition within helping professions.

Contributions of Doctoral Student and Faculty Literature

Research exploring the socialization experiences of doctoral students and pre-tenure faculty adds to our understanding of workplace socialization at institutions of higher education. For example, studies examining doctoral programs highlighted the use of the apprentice model of training (Austin, 2002; Golde & Dore, 2001), which focuses heavily on learning how to conduct research. While scholarly inquiry is a component of faculty life, the apprentice model does not fully account for responsibilities related to teaching and service. Thus, doctoral students frequently leave graduate programs with incomplete scripts to guide their future work lives and may struggle upon beginning tenure track positions (Bieber & Worley, 2006; Golde & Dore, 2001). Alternatively, they may feel unprepared to work outside of academia (Golde & Dore, 2001; Nerad, 2004).

Although graduate preparation programs in student affairs do not use an apprentice model, new practitioners' field experiences mimic elements of this scheme. Specifically, student affairs graduate students may learn a targeted portion of a professional role (e.g., advising, program planning) in their assistantship or practicum experiences (Perez, 2014). While this focused training allows student affairs graduate students to hone expertise in some areas, they may leave their preparation programs without the range of skills needed to fill full-time administrative positions. Furthermore, they may have incomplete or unrealistic images of student affairs practice (Burkard et al., 2005; Herdlein, 2004).

Whereas the literature on doctoral students informs our understanding of professional socialization during graduate preparation, research on pre-tenure faculty contextualizes the transition from preparatory programs into practice within higher education workplaces. In particular, scholars studying the pursuit of tenure highlighted that higher education is comprised of multiple layers of culture. Studies suggested that pre-tenure faculty members struggled to understand the meaning of practice and pre-tenure standards within the converging contexts of national, professional, disciplinary, institutional, and individual cultures (B. R. Clark, 1983; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Tierney and Rhoads (1993) observed that aligning identity and workplace expectations more closely with one dimension of culture than others had the potential to complicate newcomers' understandings of their roles and what is necessary to achieve tenure.

Although faculty positions are quite different from those of student affairs practitioners, individuals working in student affairs also encounter numerous cultures upon entering new workplaces. The dimensions of culture affecting the experiences of pre-tenure faculty mirror those in student affairs, with the concept of functional areas (e.g., housing, judicial affairs) supplanting the notion of disciplines. For both new faculty members and new student affairs practitioners, the standard for being a "good professional" across these layers of culture may be unclear. As such, pre-tenure faculty and new student affairs practitioners may become frustrated when their expectations for practice are not enacted in the workplace or when their careers do not advance as anticipated (Cilente et al., 2006; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004).

Additionally, scholarship examining doctoral students and pre-tenure faculty found that experiences within the academy differed based on one's social identities. Throughout the tenure process, differences in power and privilege manifested themselves such that women and people of color had less access to resources (e.g., mentoring, information) and opportunities than their col-

leagues who were men and/or white (e.g., S. M. Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Furthermore, studies indicated that racial and gender stereotypes may lead faculty members with dominant identities (i.e., white, man) to see people of color and women as being less committed and less capable academics (Berg & Ferber, 1983; Rossi, 1970). Research has found that student affairs professionals have similar experiences with racism and sexism in the academy (Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998; Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Linder et al., 2015) despite the field's stated commitment to social justice (e.g., ACPA & NASPA, 1997). Thus, navigating multiple layers of culture may increase in difficulty for individuals with minoritized identities who must also work against individual bias and systemic oppression (Flowers & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Linder et al., 2015).

Theoretical Conceptualizations of Graduate Training

Socialization Framework

Theoretical overview

Socialization "refers to the way in which individuals are assisted in becoming members of one or more social groups… Socialization involves a variety of outcomes, including the acquisition of rules, roles, standards, and values" (Grusec & Hastings, 2007, p. 1). Within professions, socialization involves "acquiring the requisite knowledge and skills and also the sense of occupational identity and internalization of occupational norms typical of the fully qualified practitioner" (Moore, 1970, p. 71). The notion of professional socialization has been translated into two families of theories. The first family examines socialization from an organizational perspective and assumes newcomer assimilation, while the second family of theories focuses on newcomers' experiences and process of organizational acculturation (B. E. Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007).

Socialization literature using an organizational perspective primarily examines socialization tactics and outcomes. Research using this orientation is rooted in the seminal work of Van Maanen (1978), who described socialization or "people processing" as the "manner in which the experiences of people learning the ropes of a new organizational position, status, structure, or role are structured for them by others within the organization" (p. 19). The ways in which socialization tactics (e.g., training, interactions with supervisors) are implemented shape the degree to which new practitioners accept the status quo or engage in innovation. In effect, the structure of socialization signals the extent to which newcomers have agency to shape their work and their identities (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Moreover, it has implications for perceptions of organizational fit (Cooper-Thomas, van Vianen, & Anderson, 2004), commitment to the field (Allen & Meyer 1990), and job performance (Heck, 1995).

In contrast, the literature characterizing individuals' experiences during professional socialization uses stage models to trace newcomer movement through anticipatory, encounter, adjustment and stabilization phases of socialization (B. E. Ashforth et al., 2007; Wanous, 1992). Thorton and Nardi (1975) asserted that during the socialization process, "a role is not fully acquired until an individual has anticipated it, learned anticipatory, formal, and informal expectations comprised in it, formulated his own expectations, reacted to and reconciled these various expectations, and accepted the final outcome" (p. 873). As new practitioners move through various stages of socialization, they shift from being initially passive to taking a more active role in shaping their understanding of organizations and of their practice (Thorton & Nardi, 1975). With this in mind, subsequent research has placed greater emphasis on newcomers' agency during their socialization. In particular, scholars have explored how individuals acquire information as they move through stages of organizational entry (S. J. Ashforth & Black, 1996; Morrison, 1993) and how they utilize role models as guides during the transition to practice (Filstad, 2004).

Socialization within student affairs

Within the student affairs literature, organizational perspectives on the socialization of new practitioners have given us a good sense of how newcomers are processed in graduate school and to a lesser degree the workplace. Student affairs scholars have delved into graduate preparation as a forum for anticipatory socialization and have explored the desired outcomes of training, placing strong emphasis on values inculcation (e.g., Young & Elfrink, 1991). Less attention has been given to studying practical skill acquisition despite an emphasis on professional preparation (Herdlein, 2004).

Notably, few student affairs scholars have critiqued the structure of preparation programs and have largely placed the burden of transitions upon newcomers. This perspective has evidenced itself through the numerous suggestions made to new practitioners on how to navigate the transition to full-time practice (Amey, 1998; Amey & Reesor, 2015; Barr, 1990). Scholars have generally framed new practitioner information seeking and adaptation as a personal responsibility. As such, the literature seems to advocate for assimilation into student affairs.

Despite its utility, the socialization frame has limitations. Specifically, heavy focus on the relationship between the structure and outcomes of socialization has obscured the psychosocial mechanisms that undergird the process. Thus, we have an insufficient understanding of how new practitioners make sense of being "processed" during graduate school and as they enter the workplace. In effect, the success or failure of socialization is judged by new practitioners' job persistence rather than the extent to which they understand the values, beliefs, and conventions of the field.

Sensemaking Framework

Theoretical overview

Sensemaking describes the cognition that occurs when people encounter "discrepant events, or surprises, [that] trigger a need for explanation, or post-diction" (Weick, 1995, p. 4). One then engages in a process of "authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery" (Weick, 1995, p. 8) to generate plausible explanations for puzzling or counterintuitive events. Thus, sensemaking is driven by the need to restore equilibrium after one's understanding of the world is disrupted (Weick, 1993).

According to Weick (1995), individuals rely on seven resources as they attempt to make sense of situations. They refer to their *identity,* using their understanding of organizational roles and their desire to maintain a positive self-image to determine appropriate behavior. People also use *retrospect* or past experiences as templates to guide action. Moreover, *social context* or the real or imagined presence of others may lead individuals to generate explanations and act in ways that are socially desirable. Additionally, people look for *salient cues* or evidence that confirms an initial hunch on how to act. They also try to keep action *ongoing* until they acquire enough information to determine next steps or use *enactment* as a means of working their way into comprehension. In other words, people take action and gauge others' responses as a means of creating understanding. Ultimately, sensemaking relies upon *plausibility* or an individual's ability to create a reasonable explanation for what has occurred to alleviate cognitive dissonance.

During the sensemaking process, people utilize each of the aforementioned resources; however, they may not leverage them equally. One weakness of this theory is that neither Weick (1995), nor other scholars (e.g., Maitlis, 2005; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003), provide a clear sense of how individuals prioritize their use of sensemaking assets. However, Weick (1993, 1995) indicates that people look to create continuity among them. As such, they may ignore or minimize the importance of some information in order to reduce dissonance since the priority in

the moment is finding a plausible, rather than accurate of explanation for a puzzling situation or discrepancy.

Sensemaking in student affairs

Despite Louis's (1980) assertion that sensemaking may help scholars understand newcomers' experiences as they transition into organizations, this perspective is absent from research in student affairs. Although sensemaking has not been explicitly used to investigate the transition to practice, one can extrapolate how individuals use sensemaking resources to work through ambiguity as they are socialized. For instance, new practitioners appear to rely heavily, and perhaps erroneously, on retrospect during the transition to practice. Specifically, they look their graduate training as a template for practice, but often find that it is insufficient in helping them negotiate the workplace (Cilente et al., 2006; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004). Consequently, new practitioners may become dependent upon social context (e.g., supervisors, colleagues) to provide assistance as they attempt to repair gaps between their preparatory and current field experiences (Saunders et al., 2000; Strayhorn, 2009). Scholars also indicated that the development and maintenance of an identity as a student affairs practitioner both helped and hindered how people interpreted the transition to practice. While newcomers aspired to live out the ideals of the field, they found it difficult to do so given the constraints of the workplace. In order to preserve their professional identity, some new practitioners consider leaving their workplace or the field itself (Cilente et al., 2006; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004).

Currently, research in student affairs (e.g., Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008) does not fully capitalize on the potential of sensemaking to illuminate how new practitioners work through puzzling situations and discrepancies during their professional socialization process. Consequently, we have limited insight into how they actively attempt to repair disruptions to their idealized notions of practice beyond choosing to leave the field. Sensemaking theory then, may serve as a valuable tool for exploring how new practitioners attempt to work their way through gaps and surprises they encounter in the field, and the implications that the ability or inability to reduce discrepancies may have on their careers.

Self-Authorship Framework

Theoretical overview

Self-authorship is rooted in the constructive developmental tradition of the psychology, which posits that individuals create knowledge through interpreting their experiences, and their ability to interpret experiences increases in complexity over time (Piaget, 1952). Moreover, self-authorship draws from Kegan's (1994) theory of self-evolution, which attends to three interrelated dimensions of development, namely the cognitive (i.e., epistemological or views of knowledge), the intrapersonal (i.e., views of self), and the interpersonal (i.e., views of relationships with others). According to Kegan (1994), development occurs as one's way of generating meaning and organizing understanding shifts from being concrete and externally derived to more complex and internally grounded or self-authored.

Baxter Magolda (2001) extended Kegan's work by examining the development of self-authorship through her longitudinal study spanning over 20 years. Her findings revealed that the journey towards self-authorship occurs in three major phases, namely, (a) external definition, (b) the crossroads, and (c) internal definition. Subsequent research by the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education captured fine distinctions in the development of self-authorship resulting in a 10-position model where meaning making positions are grouped as Solely External, Entering the Crossroads, Leaving the Crossroads, or Solely Internal (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012).

Individuals who use Solely External meaning making positions follow external formulas and look to authority figures for guidance on how to define their beliefs, their identity, and their relationships (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). Those in the crossroads feel tension as they begin to move away from blindly following external formulas and start listening to their own voice as a source of knowledge. While individuals in the crossroads recognize that they have a voice, they are hesitant to listen to it if it is in conflict with others' opinions. As a result, those who are Entering the Crossroads are more likely to listen to others' voices over their own, while those who are Leaving the Crossroads begin to listen to their voice more regularly since they increasingly see their views as valid (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). Finally, individuals who use Solely Internal meaning making positions have fully developed an internal voice that they use to coordinate their responses to external influences and information in light of their own opinions, beliefs, and values (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012).

Self-authorship in student affairs

In the student affairs literature, self-authorship research has primarily focused on the experiences of undergraduate students (e.g., Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Hernandez, 2007) despite our understanding that self-authorship develops across the lifespan (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994). With the exception of Baxter Magolda's (2001) longitudinal study, self-authorship has been underutilized as a means to explore adult development, including the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal growth of student affairs practitioners. Given that much of the socialization research within student affairs (e.g., Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Tull, 2006) has highlighted the influence of authority figures such as faculty and supervisors on new practitioners, it is imperative to consider how one's capacity for self-authorship influences one's interpretation of and response to these external voices during graduate school and in the workplace.

Conceptualizing Professional Socialization during Student Affairs Graduate Training

Building upon previous research within student affairs, the helping professions, and the academy, the conceptual model presented here (see Figure 1) indicates that student affairs graduate preparation occurs in multiple intersecting cultural contexts rather than in a singular field. Thus, the culture of student affairs that shapes, and at times constrains, individuals is not monolithic. Rather, student affairs culture reflects the convergence of national, professional, functional area (e.g., housing, student activities), institutional, and individual level (e.g., social identity, family) social conventions. Although this model is two-dimensional, master's students' coursework and field experiences occur at the intersection of the cultures described. Thus, it may be more appropriate to envision culture as planes that intersect at the point where an individual is situated.

Given that professional socialization during student affairs graduate training occurs across multiple cultures, new practitioners may experience tensions between various cultural norms and expectations. As such, they may be more aware or responsive to one dimension of culture than others at any given point during their graduate study. For example, newcomers may most closely adhere to norms of their academic program or functional area if they identify strongly with it. Alternatively, graduate students may attend to the dimension of culture that most constrains their actions in order to alleviate any distress. Although subsequent components of this conceptual model focus on cognition, it is critical to remember that new student affairs practitioners are concurrently situated within multiple cultural contexts.

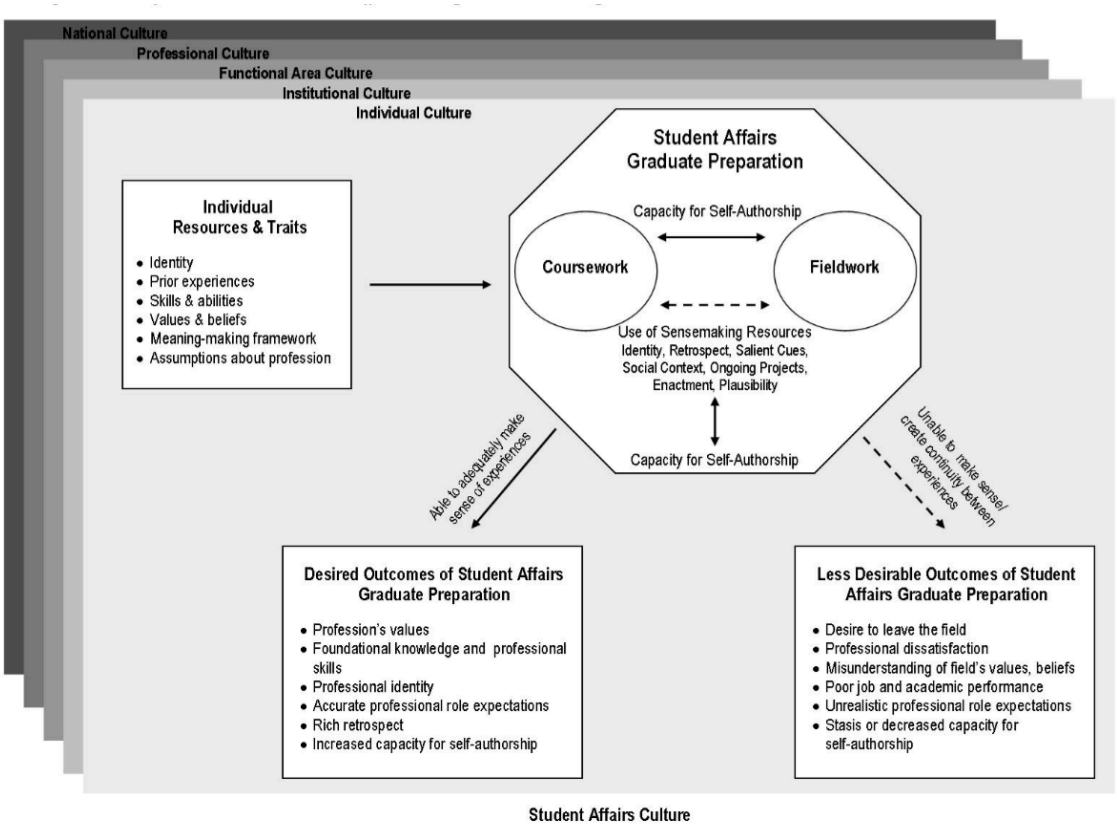

Figure 1. Conceptual model of professional socialization into student affairs within graduate preparation programs

Acknowledging the contexts of professional socialization in student affairs, this conceptual model highlights that graduate students to do not enter their programs as empty vessels waiting to be filled. Rather, individuals enter student affairs preparation programs with prior images of the field based on contact with practitioners as undergraduates and experiences as paraprofessionals, student leaders, or full-time staff members (Hunter, 1992; Taub & McEwen, 2006). Previous understandings of student affairs practice shape newcomers' expectations of both the content and the quality of their graduate training experiences. Additionally, individuals bring a unique constellation of values and beliefs, social identities, life histories, skills, and meaning making structures that influence how they see the world and interpret their graduate preparation experience. In Figure 1, the experiences and resources students bring with them to graduate training are referenced as *individual resources and traits*.

With the aforementioned resources and traits in hand, individuals enter student affairs *graduate preparation programs*, which are comprised of *coursework* and *fieldwork* (i.e., assistantships, practicum) as shown in Figure 1. Ideally, classroom and field-based experiences reinforce each other and create continuity as newcomers attempt to understand the nature of "good practice" in student affairs. As indicated by the solid double arrow, when coursework and fieldwork are in alignment, the need for sensemaking is not triggered and newcomers use their *capacity for self-authorship* to make meaning of their experiences. Coursework and fieldwork have the potential to promote development and to increase individuals' capacity for self-authorship if there is adequate challenge and support to move away from external formulas and towards increasingly internally grounded meaning making (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004).

Although continuity during graduate training is ideal, prior research in the helping professions has suggested that there is often misalignment between the values taught in the classroom and those used to guide workplace practices (Melia, 1984; Parkinson & Thompson, 1998); this is represented in Figure 1 by a dotted double arrow. When students encounter these discrepancies, they experience dissonance and work to alleviate these feelings by engaging in sensemaking. As individuals attempt to make sense of disruptions or puzzling situations, the *sensemaking resources* they draw upon may be mediated by their *capacity for self-authorship*. In other words, those who are more externally defined may privilege or draw upon different sensemaking resources than those who have a stronger internal foundation of values and beliefs from which to draw when conflicting information emerges.

Those whose meaning making is reflective of a Solely External or Entering the Crossroads position (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), have less developed internal voices and may be more apt to use social context and salient cues during sensemaking since these resources rely heavily on external or environmental factors as means of restoring cognitive order. This priming occurs since Weick (1995) suggests that individuals who heavily draw upon social context and salient cues are attuned to how others perceive them such that they tend to align their sensemaking with organizational norms and values. While people have the ability to draw upon other sensemaking resources during the socialization process, the reactive nature of this form of cognition suggests that externally leaning individuals will tend to use the resources that are most salient to them given their meaning making orientation or capacity for self-authorship.

Conversely, new practitioners whose meaning making is best described as Leaving the Crossroads or Solely Internal (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) may be more likely to use identity and retrospect when the need for sensemaking emerges. As described by Weick (1995), identity and retrospect are heavily grounded in an individual's experiences, values, and beliefs. For those who have a more developed an internal voice, the desire to preserve identity and to acknowledge the relevance of their personal experiences may lead them to turn to these sensemaking resources before looking to those that are externally based. Although new practitioners who lean towards listening to their internal voice may consider social context and salient cues as they attempt to make sense of puzzling situations, they would use their internal voice to coordinate their response to external demands and to judge information provided by others rather than blindly deferring to external pressures.

It is unclear how Weick's (1995) action oriented resources (i.e., ongoing projects and enactment) are leveraged differently, if at all, based on one's meaning making approach. Yet, the underlying factors that shape newcomers' actions as they engage in sensemaking are likely to reflect their capacity for self-authorship. Those whose use Solely External or Entering the Crossroads meaning making positions are more likely to enact external formulas and to use ongoing projects to elicit clear external cues that will clarify how to make sense of puzzling situations. In contrast, those whose meaning making is reflective of Leaving Crossroads or Solely Internal positions are more likely to enact their personal values and to use ongoing projects to create continuity between their actions and their beliefs as they work to listen to their internal voice.

Similarly, plausibility (Weick, 1995) may be used as a sensemaking resource regardless of a new practitioner's capacity for self-authorship. However, who defines what is plausible is likely to differ based on one's meaning making structure. Those who are externally focused are apt to make sense of situations in a way that is reflective their desire to please others and to meet authority figures' (e.g., faculty members, supervisors) expectations. Rather than creating plausible explanations to appease others, those who are internally leaning are likely to focus on crafting explanations that are personally defensible. This is to say that individuals who tend to listen to their internal voice define plausibility in light of their personal values, beliefs, and criteria for knowing, rather than relying on criteria that are externally imposed.

Regardless of whether or not new practitioners engage in sensemaking, this conceptual model assumes that individuals matriculate through student affairs graduate programs. However, this model suggests there are nuanced differences in the continuity they create between their coursework and fieldwork. Those who are able to adequately make sense of their experiences such that there is minimal discontinuity between coursework and fieldwork are likely to leave their graduate training having achieved the *desired outcomes of student affairs preparation programs* (see Figure 1). Specifically, they are more likely to begin full-time practice with an understanding of values that guide student affairs, foundational professional knowledge and skills (e.g., student development theory, interpersonal skills), a strong sense of professional identity, realistic professional role expectations, and a rich array of experiences from which to draw upon in the future. While not an explicit outcome of student affairs graduate preparation, it would be desirable for new practitioners to move towards self-authorship during graduate training if they are to effectively foster college students' learning and development.

Alternatively, new practitioners who struggle to make sense of their graduate training are vulnerable to achieving the *less desirable outcomes of student affairs graduate preparation*. Those who graduate with little continuity between coursework and fieldwork may be more likely to leave the field over time or may feel dissatisfied with the profession. Moreover, these individuals may not have a strong understanding of the field's values and beliefs, which may translate into poor performance in the workplace or classroom and unrealistic expectations of their professional roles. The lack of continuity between coursework and fieldwork may also create an environment that does not promote the development of self-authorship such that an individual's capacity for meaning making may stagnate or even decrease during their graduate training. The stifling of new practitioners' internal voices may leave them feeling less competent, less able to share their perspectives, and more apt to seek guidance from authority figures than they were previously. Thus, negatively influencing a newcomer's capacity for self-authorship may have deleterious effects on their perceptions of their abilities and their sense of fit within student affairs.

Discussion

By drawing upon research in related fields (e.g., helping professions, academia) and integrating organizational and developmental theories, the conceptual model presented here adds theoretical complexity to our understanding of professional socialization in the context of student affairs graduate preparation programs. Specifically, this model attempts to illuminate the cognitive mechanisms that have remained obscured when using socialization frameworks that primarily attend to the structure of the socialization process (e.g., Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992) . Furthermore, this new model highlights individual and organizational factors that influence how new student affairs practitioners make sense of their professional socialization during graduate school. Taken together, this proposed model can inform research and practices designed to improve the graduate training of student affairs practitioners.

Implications for Research

The increased theoretical complexity of this conceptual framework has several implications for future research. First, there is a need to further explore the concept of culture within student affairs since scholars have tended to discuss it as a singular entity synonymous with institutional identity (Amey, 1998; Hirt, 2009), yet this new conceptual model suggests that professional socialization occurs at the convergence of multiple dimension of culture. With this in mind, studies exploring how new student affairs practitioners attend to the various layers of culture they encounter may reveal how they interpret and respond to social norms that may or may not be congruent with each other. Moreover, such research may aid in identifying specific elements of pro-

fessional, institutional, and functional area cultures that enhance and inhibit new practitioners' understandings of practice.

Second, the proposed conceptual model prompts the need for more in-depth investigation of student affairs graduate preparation programs. Since prior research has heavily focused on the content of the curriculum (e.g., Lovell & Kosten, 2000; Young & Elfrink, 1991), less attention has been given to the dual training structure of student affairs graduate programs and its implications for new practitioners' socialization to the field. As such, research examining the degree of consistency between classroom and field experiences during graduate school is critical since continuity is often assumed. Moreover, this model suggests that scholars should examine new professionals' student affairs graduate training experiences longitudinally and in real time. Research of this nature may reveal if and how individuals' developmental capacities for self-authorship and sensemaking strategies change over the course of graduate training. Longitudinal inquiry may also provide insight into the influence of professional socialization experiences during graduate school on new practitioners' career trajectories.

Third, professional socialization has been framed as an individual experience, yet student affairs graduate programs and many workplaces structure organizational entry as a collective process. Examining cohorts of new practitioners may highlight individual differences that influence socialization (e.g., developmental) within the same organizational context. Research involving cohorts of practitioners may also elucidate collective sensemaking since meaning can be made individually and in groups (Weick, 1993, 1995); this scholarship would be valuable given the interpersonal and collaborative nature of student affairs practice. In particular, research focused on collective sensemaking may illustrate the reciprocal nature of professional socialization and how cultural norms and values are acquired, reinforced, and changed.

Implications for Practice

By challenging the assumption of continuity in student affairs training programs, this model suggests several areas where graduate preparation can be improved. If consistency between and across students' curricular and field training experiences is desired, faculty members and fieldwork supervisors must work together on a regular basis to strengthen the linkages between various elements of students' training experiences. For example, student affairs preparation program faculty and fieldwork supervisors can collaborate to develop shared learning outcomes for the master's students they work with and a cohesive system for evaluating the extent to which students achieve these outcomes. Moreover, when discrepancies emerge there is shared responsibility to identify how to reduce gaps and to help students make sense of their experiences through class discussions and in conversations with supervisors. In doing so, student affairs educators can use discrepancies as opportunities to help new practitioners learn about the nature of the field.

By highlighting the influence that developmental capacity for self-authorship has on an individual's interpretation of professional socialization, this new conceptual model suggests a need to attend to how master's students make meaning of the world. Specifically, faculty and supervisors can leverage their understanding of student development to provide developmentally appropriate challenge and support as new practitioners try to make sense of their experiences. They can also commit to using practices (e.g., promoting reflection, challenging assumptions, providing support) that foster increased capacity for self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004) across coursework and fieldwork experiences.

Collectively, efforts to promote the development of self-authorship and to help new practitioners negotiate discrepancies during graduate school may better equip them to create closer alignment between their expectations and experiences post-graduate training. Given that gaps between new practitioners' expectations and experiences contribute to attrition in student affairs (Amey, 1998;

Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004), reducing discrepancies and increasing newcomers' abilities to make sense of them has the potential to increase retention in the field long term. Retaining knowledgeable and skilled practitioners may subsequently enhance the abilities of institutions to provide rich educational opportunities for college students. Ultimately, this may contribute to an increased capacity for higher education to foster holistic student learning and development.

Conclusion

While professional socialization into student affairs has long been of interest, previous studies have not utilized frameworks that capture the distinct structure of graduate training (i.e., coursework and fieldwork) in the field. By drawing upon literature in related fields, the conceptual model presented here highlights that new practitioners negotiate multiple dimensions of culture as they are socialized into student affairs via graduate training. Furthermore, this new model suggests that continuity and gaps may be present across individuals' experiences within the dual training model used in student affairs graduate training. Additionally, the integration of sensemaking and self-authorship theories within this model contributes to our understanding of how individuals make meaning of their socialization experiences. In sum, attending to the structure of graduate training and to individual cognition provides greater insight into (a) the factors that create variation in socialization outcomes within student affairs and (b) how we might improve graduate training in service of preparing and retaining competent and committed practitioners.

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