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A note on Dr. Adam Peck

David M. Rosch, JCAPS Editor in Chief

This past Fall semester, the Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship, Illinois State University, and the field of higher education lost Dr. Adam Peck in a tragic accident. Dr. Peck served as an Associate Editor at JCAPS since its inception and was instrumental to its birth and success.

While serving for decades as an administrator in student affairs, most recently as Assistant Vice President at Illinois State University, Adam consistently found time over the course of his career to balance his practitioner roles with scholarship-building writing projects. He served as an editor, an author, a reviewer, and a mentor to dozens of aspiring scholar-practitioners in higher education.

To help honor his work and contributions, the first article in this Issue focuses on his scholarship over the course of his career, examining his many contributions to our understanding of student affairs, while analyzing his impact as a writer and mentor. This article, authored by Jan Arminio and Michael Preston, was designed not only as a rigorous phenomenological study of the set of Adam's writings, but as sort of a "last lecture" and goodbye to our colleague, collaborator, and good friend.

And while such tragedies as Dr. Peck's passing are thankfully not common on our campuses, they do occur. Therefore, our second article, from past and current members of the JCAPS Editorial Board and a small team of collaborators led by Dr. Stephanie Russell Krebs, examines the impact of losing team members and colleagues to tragedy, and how divisions of student affairs can respond in effective and caring ways.

The accident that occurred on Monday, September 26, 2022, was heartbreaking, and the impact of Dr. Peck's passing will be felt for years. JCAPS would not be the same journal without Adam's countless contributions and passion for integrating the work and scholarship of higher education. He will be missed.

COMMITTING TO INTENTIONAL PRACTICE: USING THE PRACTITIONER SCHOLARSHIP OF ADAM PECK TO DEMONSTRATE AN INNOVATIVE PATH FOR CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Jan Arminio, George Mason University (retired)
Michael Preston, Florida Consortium of Metropolitan Research

On the morning of September 30th, 2022, Dr. Adam Peck died from injuries sustained in a pedestrian accident. He was 49 years old. His name may not be well recognized in higher education, but he was not one for fanfare or the spotlight. Yet, he did his best to help students succeed. As we expound upon below, to those who knew Dr. Peck, we understood him as a storyteller. He told and enacted stories of caring, curiosity, compassion, scholarship, and intellectualism - a life lived well. This article is his story as well as the story of how the campus activities profession must continue his work.

The Advisory Board of the *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship* sought to honor Adam's legacy by using his published works as data that amplify his essential perspectives for the campus activities profession, student affairs, and higher education. *Who was Adam Peck, and why should campus activities professionals pay attention to his scholarship?* At the time of his death, Dr. Peck served as Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at Illinois State University. During his 25 years in student affairs, he served in a variety of other roles, including assistant vice president and dean of students at Stephen F. Austin State University and director of student life at Saint Louis University. Adam was unique in that he was a student affairs professional who met the criteria of being a practitioner-scholar, an administrator in which research, contributing to it and consuming it, plays a significant role (Jablonski et al., 2006; Sriram & Oster, 2012). Dr. Peck not only wanted to engage in scholarly pursuits, he needed to because he believed writing clarified his thinking about complex issues and guided his practice. The act of writing advanced his professional practice in that what he wrote set a trail, so he would not get lost and forced to double back on his efforts. He refused to work for a president who did not support his scholarly pursuits, and he worked tirelessly to prompt other campus activities professionals to see the benefit of scholarship to innovative practice. A co-author wrote,

He was a visionary who knew how to make the vision come to fruition... Working with Adam taught me the importance of utilizing writing as a technique for building enthusiasm for an idea or product. He had a way of articulating concepts that showed people the value of his ideas and, more importantly, how they could benefit from them... I could feel Adam's enthusiasm for the topic when writing with him. He wasn't just writing the article as a way to add to his resume; he was passionate about the topic. That passion came through in every conversation we had about the article and in every word he wrote. I felt as if writing this article made me a part of a grand movement that he was championing and made me feel honored that he wanted to write with me. (T. Davis, personal communication, December 29, 2022)

Because Dr. Peck sought to move the field forward in innovative and purposeful ways, paying attention to his scholarship demonstrates a path forward in increasing the professionalization of campus activities.

We used Dr. Peck's scholarship as data that reveal the themes of a professional life dedicated to practitioner scholarship. We integrated these themes with the experiences of some of Dr. Peck's co-authors. More specifically,

we conducted a phenomenological content analysis of Dr. Peck's scholarship and the experiences of those who wrote with him.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

According to White and Marsh (2006), content analysis is a research methodology that “makes inferences from texts” from which “conclusions can be drawn about the communicator, the message or text, and the situation surrounding its creation” (p. 27). In this case, we drew conclusions about Adam's passions and perspectives by looking holistically at his body of scholarship. The content analysis process requires that researchers select relevant texts for analysis and connected to the research question, offer context to the selected text, connect the texts to specific research questions, and analyze the text using research memos that identify emerging concepts and their distinctions. For this study, we used 29 articles and book chapters written or co-authored by Dr. Peck to address the phenomenologically inspired question, what is the essence of Dr. Peck's scholarly legacy to which those professionals he left behind should pay attention and respond? These 29 sources are listed in the reference section and span Dr. Peck's scholarly writing career from 2007 to 2022. Our first source for his scholarship was Ebsco, which led us to 13 articles and book chapters. The references in these sources led us to additional sources, and because Dr. Peck's edited *Engagement and Employability* book was on our bookshelves, we also included the chapters that he authored and co-authored.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identified three types of content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative. We selected the summative method that uses text to illuminate context and explore how messages are communicated while interpreting and discovering underlying meanings. The interpretive aspect of this summative type is referred to as latent content analysis and often uses a polar opposite approach to frame the interpretive work. For example, Harris and Patton (2019) used the summative type of content analysis to explore how some texts “un/do” intersectionality work. In other words, they sought to give evidence into how some research does intersectionality work well while others claiming to do this work actually do not; they instead undo it. Another example would be a study on language in palliative care. In what instances and who uses the direct language of death and dying versus in what instances and who uses euphemisms (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In this study, we highlight Dr. Peck's emphasis on intentional practice rather than relying on serendipity.

We also used van Manen's (2016) pedagogical hermeneutic Heideggerian-influenced phenomenology to guide our analysis. Grounded in interpretive epistemology and ontology, hermeneutic phenomenology both points to a phenomenon and points out something unknown or hidden (van Manen, 2016). Unlike other phenomenological processes, we sought to look anew at Dr. Peck's scholarship by acknowledging and wondering rather than suspending our previous knowledge. We sought to “unearth” themes (van Manen, 2016, p. 88) that reveal the structure of the essence of Dr. Peck's scholarship. A theme is “an element that occurs frequently in the text” (p. 78). To be clear, we had two data sources: texts written or co-authored by Dr. Adam Peck and experiences from his co-authors.

Texts

Jan read and studied the 29 sources, using the selective approach to identifying essential themes (van Manen, 2016) and the summative approach to content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), listing 30 pages of topics. These topics included advisor, adding value, assessment, creating something together, involvement, learning, leadership education, passion, questions, resources, scholarship, soft skills, theories, well-being, and working, among others. Next, similar topics were combined to reveal themes. van Manen does not consider themes as generalizations but rather “knots in the web” of the text (p. 90). To identify these knots, the list of topics was read and reread, rearranged, and rearranged again, going back and forth from draft themes to Dr. Peck's texts to align the themes as close to his writing as possible. We intend that presenting Dr. Peck's scholarship in such a way can amplify his already published voice to bring us more understanding about his work and, importantly, offer us more guidance about how campus activities professionals should be doing our work. The themes of this study were *Thoughtful Assessment Leads to Intentional Learning and Scholarship*, *Intentional Practice and Scholarship is Guided by Theory*, and *Intentional Practice Can Bring Joy and Meaningful Connections*.

Co-author Data Collection

In the texts we analyzed, Dr. Peck wrote with 21 co-authors. We were able to find contact information for 13, and seven responded to the questions below.

What compelled you to write with Adam? What compelled Adam to write?

What surprised you about writing with Adam?

What did you gain from writing with Adam?

What did you feel when writing with Adam?

Relate a story that exemplifies your experiences writing with Adam.

We also analyzed this data using the selective approach to identifying essential phenomenological themes (van Manen, 2016) and the summative approach to content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). While co-author data collection occurred simultaneously with the text analysis, co-author data were not analyzed until after the themes of Dr. Peck's texts had been drafted. Doing so served as a source of credibility for the text themes.

Below after describing general findings, we explore the intentional practice versus practice by serendipity that was a thread throughout the fabric of Adam's work. We integrate the co-author responses with the general findings and identified themes. Then we discuss how he wrote and how practitioner scholars can continue his work.

GENERAL FINDINGS: THE EVOLUTION OF DR. PECK'S SCHOLARSHIP

Suggesting specific innovative programs, Dr. Peck's early articles promoted ethical advising that he referred to as coaching, a week of students focusing on their learning using a structured reflection guide, involvement centers that use peers to guide students to involvement opportunities that meet individual goals, assessment as a daily practice, and a conversation framework for mentoring students into the student affairs profession. As I (Michael) wrote about co-authoring with Adam:

He started slow enough, writing for [National Association for Campus Activities] NACA's *Campus Activities Programming* magazine, willing to add to university newsletters, presenting as much as possible. He would then try to level these opportunities up over time, looking for more peer-reviewed opportunities and selective conferences. He would work at writing NASPA proposals and would practice them, send them to me, and I would comment and offer edits. I often thought of him as a stunt man dropped into the ocean with chains all over him, and he had to set himself free. He seemed to be able to figure out the best order to unlock the locks and free certain parts of his work and then move to the logical next stage so he would not drown or fail. (personal communication, October 28, 2022)

Later, Dr. Peck began thinking and writing more broadly about higher education and student affairs. For example, he was convinced that career readiness skills desired by potential employers (i.e., communication skills, workflow planning, teamwork, information processing, decision-making and problem-solving, quantitative analysis, selling and influencing, computing skills) were consistent with involvement outcomes. A co-author wrote, "Adam was becoming a thought leader associated with this emphasis on employability skills" (T. Davis, personal communication, December 29, 2022). Dr. Peck wrote that campus activities, leadership education, and other student affairs functional areas could and should better prepare students to learn these skills, demonstrate them, and articulate how they gained them. This thesis arose from tracking hundreds of students' stories and career paths with whom he worked. He discovered that engaged students make engaged employees. The work informed the scholarship (i.e., practitioner-scholar), not the other way around. About this work, a co-author wrote,

He and I had several really engaging meetings about what I could contribute and what was needed for the [*Engagement and Employability*] book. He had a clear vision of what he wanted to accomplish, and he was right - that there was a great need for this topic. Years later - he was certainly right, as the topic of employability has become one of the most important topics in higher education. He was *way* ahead of his time. (K. Kruger, personal communication, November 11, 2022)

Most, if not all, of Dr. Peck's works were grounded in theory, demonstrating his strong belief in the crucial role theory plays in promoting best practices and advancing scholarship.

More recently, Adam moved from concentrating on his own scholarship to making an avenue available for other campus activities professionals to share their perspectives on improving practice through scholarship by assisting in creating this journal, *The Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship* (JCAPS). He served on its editorial and advisory boards and participated in a writing cohort to provide a pipeline for prospective authors.

Being Intentional

It is common in hermeneutic phenomenological studies to consider the etymology of words used in texts (van Manen, 2016). Dr. Peck's emphasis on "intentional practice" is worth dissecting. Being intentional means having purpose, understanding, and meaning (Hoad, 1986). To assume learning occurs by serendipity is to make happy discoveries by accident and to keep with one's inborn character (<https://etymonline.com>). Though Dr. Peck believed that serendipity and natural learning had a place in campus activities, he urged practitioners to be intentional about their work. Regarding one's nature, one of his co-authors spoke about Adam's natural inclination to write.

I always thought his understanding about the connection between career learning and cocurricular experiences was ahead of his time. He really had done some innovative programs at Stephen F. Austin State University, and it seemed almost natural that his understanding of this and many other topics should be shared with others. I think Adam was a learner and innovator; and always was thinking about what was ahead. (G. Spencer, personal communication, November 28, 2022)

Nonetheless, he quoted Kuh, et al.'s belief that "educationally enriching opportunities are too often products of serendipity" (2010, p. 12). Peck and Preston (2016) warned against assuming student learning would happen "naturally," evoking the *Field of Dreams* fallacy that "if you build it, they will learn" (p. 81). Instead, Dr. Peck called for planned and assessed interventions to ensure leadership development, student learning of employer-desired skills, regular professional development, and scholarship to improve practice. These interventions should be based on interactions between professionals and students. Another co-author wrote, "As we see in other parts of Adam's work, he had a really clear call to action in mind for universities to see their campus activities programs as an opportunity for more intentional career-ready skill development with students" (C. Kane, personal communication, December 7, 2022).

Unintentional work sustains continual marginalization of students less likely to feel they belong at their institution, it leaves students less likely to be willing to articulate the skills they gained and how they gained them, it perpetuates practice in which students are less likely to gain career readiness skills, and hinders professionals from considering student employment as essential opportunities for learning potential. He and Preston wrote, "colleges and universities who want to improve their ability to close the gap between the skills naturally produced in college and the needs of employers [requires] students being involved" (2017a, para. 26) - all students. Moreover, "There is a natural connection" between students being employed and the development of skills employers' desire. Yet, "It is clear this could be further enhanced by greater intentionality" (Peck & Callahan, 2019, p. 16). What strategies did Dr. Peck propose that are exemplars of this intentionality of practice and scholarship?

Thoughtful Assessment Leads to Intentional Learning and Scholarship

Assessment, how it could point the way to student and practitioner learning gains, more effective practice, and modern scholarship was a frequent thread in Dr. Peck's scholarship. His early work encouraged campus activities professionals to engage in assessment and served as a source of assessment basics. He and Horne wrote, "Assessment does not have to be difficult to be rigorous, and it doesn't need to be overly complex to help student activities professionals do their jobs more effectively" (2012, p. 12). He defined important assessment terms such as direct and indirect evidence, formative and summative data, benchmarking, artifacts of learning, outputs versus inputs, and curricular mapping, offering valuable assessment resources that included the American Association of Colleges and Universities' values rubrics (AAC&U), NACA Next and digital library, and the Eisenhower Matrix. He instructed how to use case studies, focus groups, one-minute self-reflections, rubrics, mapping,

tracking, and inventories. He detailed what made appropriate learning outcomes as “specific, concrete, realistic, and measurable” (Peck et al., 2015, p. 5). He felt that intentional and thoughtful assessment could alter the reputation of campus activities professionals as simply being the campus fun and games folks. Instead, he and Horne wrote, “Having evidence has encouraged us to submit our programs for awards and has given us ammunition we need to brag about our programs to colleagues here at our institution” (2012, p. 16). Notably, at its most basic, the work of campus activities professionals is to promote learning. Preston and he wrote, “Practitioners...have the responsibilities of creator and measurer of student learning, which compels them to affect the change they intend to measure. They also have the responsibility of making learning outcomes salient and recognizable to students” (2016, p. 82). Encouraging campus activities professionals to enact assessment as a daily practice, he, Kane, and Davis wrote,

Assessment methods are most effective when they can be easily integrated into the profession’s daily work, when they produce meaningful learning experiences for the student, and when they provide data that helps the student and advisor track the student’s development over time. (2016, p. 35)

Scholarship as Storytelling

Yet, engaging in assessment has implications not only within a practitioner’s department and institution, such work impacts the profession as a whole. Dr. Peck felt strongly and repeated the notion that “assessment is the scholarship of the modern practitioner...we must share with each other” (Peck, 2017, p. 407). Student activities units should be “tracking, gathering, or disseminating data intentionally that connects practice to research” (Rosch et al., 2021, p. 62). The profession is advanced by translating practice to a scholarly article that is shared across the profession, “sharing information in a scholarly article is a way to intentionally advance the campus activities profession” (DeSawal et al., 2021, p. 66). Campus activities must commit to an “intentional focus on improving our ability to interpret and conduct research” (Rosch, 2021, et al., p. 64). This intentional focus must be student-centered and in the context of their environment. Interactions with students “are inherent to the discovery process” (McCullar et al., 2020, p. 6). Moreover, “We must become experts at using the data we collect to tell our story” (Peck, 2017, p. 401) and how our campus activities story benefits students (Peck & Cummings, 2017).

Dr. Peck and his co-authors were not without critique of the assessment movement, particularly if assessments were not student-centered and not based on desired outcomes. Student-centeredness and assessment based on desired outcomes determine the assessment method. The assessment method should not determine student-desired outcomes (Preston & Peck, 2016). Too often, assessment findings are not shared beyond the institution and simply become “an exercise in institutional compliance [rather] than a sincere attempt to improve outcome for students” (McCullar et al., 2020, p. 8). Rather than writing a report that is used once, campus activities professionals “have the opportunity to be intentional in the data we are collecting and how we are using it to inform the field more broadly” (McCullar, 2020, p. 10).

Dr. Peck saw scholarship and other professional development opportunities as a means to tell the campus activities story to those outside the profession, as well as those across the profession. This is a “communal practice” (DeSawal, 2021, p. 63). To story is to take account; to present a recital of events (Hoad, 1986). The role of intentional scholarship is to “tell the story behind the numbers” (DeSawal, 2021, p. 9), to take account of the numbers. Sharing these stories is the best way to challenge assumptions and create a common language. Specifically, Dr. Peck advocated for campus activities professionals to see grounded theory as a means to make more credible their informal theories. He believed qualitative methodologies are more intuitive to student activity and student affairs professionals because of our practiced skill set of listening to students. Taking advantage of this intuitive skill allows for intentionally telling scholarly stories (DeSawal, 2020). Dr. Peck also used storytelling as a lens for students to practice interviewing skills. By telling stories of their leadership experiences, students could include the skills they gained and how they gained them (Peck & Preston, 2017b).

Questions Prompt Storytelling

Gadamer wrote that “the path of all knowledge leads through the question... A question presses itself upon us; we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion” (1960/1992, pp. 365-366). Adam understood

the crucial role of questions in learning. He, with his colleagues, created several poignant programs and articles in which questions were central to learning and storytelling. For example, he wrote about a student involvement center staffed by peers in which new students were guided to involvement opportunities by first being asked, “What do you want to learn?” (Peck et al., 2010, p. 34). The Week of Reflection program initiated at St. Louis University that he took with him to Steven F. Austin University intended to prompt students to be more mindful of their own learning by asking questions such as “What have you learned about yourself and others this year?”, “How have you used what you have learned to make a difference?”, and “How has what you’ve learned changed you?” (Peck, 2009, p. 23). In another initiative using the NACA *Competency Guide for Student Leaders*, he used reflection questions to gauge student learning. He asked students, “What do you think it means to be a positive change agent?” and “In what ways are you using your understanding of the skills of your members to delegate more effectively to your members?” (Peck, 2012, p. 7). These questions prompted students to learn more about their learning while serving as an avenue of scholarly storytelling.

Those who worked with Adam knew that he, indeed, was a storyteller. He wrote, “When I worked in student activities, I got to plan all sorts of exciting events. I’ve met world leaders, US Presidents, musicians, comedians, and movie stars. I have many great stories from years working with outstanding student leaders” (Peck & Dotson, 2015, p. 4). It was a privilege to be part of his storytelling audience.

Intentional Practice and Scholarship is Guided by Theory

Every text we studied was grounded in either a theory created empirically (e.g., organizational development, reflective judgment, grounded theory, critical race theory, involvement, engagement, career readiness) or informally as frameworks (also referred to as personal theory) (e.g., PREPARE framework for scholarship, C3 leadership model, five imperatives for campus activities to lead the modern university, three-phase solution in improving student career readiness). Indeed, “Engaging in a more intentional process of theory-building through your campus activities work, and then sharing your information with the field through a publication... will strengthen our programs” (McCullar et al., 2020, p. 11). Some of these frameworks Dr. Peck created himself or with co-authors, and some he borrowed from other scholars. For example, along with Dotson, he created a framework of four conversations student affairs mentors should have with undergraduates interested in entering the student affairs profession. The first should be about values, the second allows the student to ask questions, the third involves practical considerations, and the last is keeping in touch with the student (Peck & Dotson, 2015). He used King and Kitchener’s 1994 theory of reflective judgment to demonstrate how to teach students about what he called “the digital dilemma,” differentiating opinion from evidence (Peck, 2014). The *how* depended on a student’s pre-reflective, quasi-reflective, or reflective thinking stage.

He often took more than one theory or framework and laid one over the other to explore connections of complex phenomena. For example, he and co-authors took the terms diversity, equity, and inclusion, defined them as a Venn diagram in which their intersection is a sense of belonging and overlaid that with the lens of critical race theory (Peck et al., 2022) to argue that diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are central to the mission of campus activities. The profession must “confront inequitable and unjust systems, and foster a sense of inclusion within our teams and the people that they serve...[if we don’t] we are not preparing students for the diverse world in which they will live and work” (Peck et al., 2022, p. 10). Campus activities professionals must build a connection with all students, “not just those who have been traditionally well served” (p. 8). On connection and in my (Michael) writing with Adam, I wrote,

I was...surprised at how he was able to connect higher education problems with other contexts to assist novice readers in understanding the issue. He always felt that folks needed to be well-read to read his work, but they did not have to know higher ed to get it. I also think he wanted to solve big problems and help others find solutions. He felt many of the ills of our field were not unsolvable, and often the solutions were simple; they just needed to be jotted down and considered. (personal communication, October 13, 2022)

I (Jan) remember reading about the work of the remarkable novelist and editor Toni Morrison, in that her work could not simply be read; it had to be studied. Though some of Adam’s work was humbly written in a conversational

tone, like two colleagues sharing a drink at a conference, other work was meant to be studied and contemplated.

Career Readiness

Dr. Peck is probably most noted for how he and his co-authors promoted the notion of paying attention to, improving students' gains in, and making students aware of, and being able to articulate their career readiness skills. Though he "bemoaned consumerist notions of education that relegate student learning to mere vocational training" (Peck, 2009, p. 21), he also recognized that the NACA *Next* research is "beginning to make institutional stakeholders see involvement as filling an essential role in higher education's mission – to help students get jobs after graduation" (Peck et al., 2016, p. 36). The career readiness literature is based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) annual *Job Outlook Survey* which asks employers to rank the skills they find most desirable in new hires. These are the ability to work in a team structure; make decisions and solve problems; communicate verbally; plan, organize, and prioritize work; obtain and make meaning of information; analyze data; use technical knowledge related to the job; use computer software programs; create and edit written reports; and sell or influence others (Peck et al. 2015). Dr. Peck dedicated many years to offering examples of how student affairs work aligns with promoting those skills in recreation, campus activities, college unions, student organizations, student government, identity development programs, leadership education, service and community engagement, and student employment. It is noteworthy that Dr. Peck coined the phrase, "Engaged students make engaged employees" (Peck & Preston, 2017a, para. 14). Similar to K. Kruger's comment above, a co-author wrote, "I always thought Adam's understanding about the connection between career learning and cocurricular experiences was ahead of his time" (G. Spencer, personal communication, November 28, 2022).

Intentional Practice Can Bring Joy and Meaningful Connections

Adam was "Less about getting credit – more about doing good work. I admired that about him and made it so easy to work with him and so enjoyable" (K. Kruger, personal communication).

When writing about the "many joys" of working as a student affairs professional, it is obvious to those who knew Adam that he was speaking about his own joy (Preston & Peck, 2016, p. 80). Joy is to be in possession of glad- den (Hoad, 1986), and Adam possessed it. Because it is not a typical term to read in student affairs scholarship, it caught my (Jan's) attention, but it is not surprising to find the experience of joy in Dr. Peck's scholarship. A co-author wrote, "He was joy embodied. He just had a sunshine presence and always made me smile. So blessed to have known him and worked with him" (K. Callahan, personal communication, October 10, 2022). When writing with Adam, "[I felt] joy. I knew he was so committed to this project; that he was going to make sure we got this book done. It felt like a major accomplishment when done. (G. Spencer, personal communication, November 28, 2022). When Dr. Peck and co-authors wrote that professionals attracted to the profession "often find their joy in helping to create conditions for students to develop holistically" (DeSawal et al., 2022, p. 7), and in particular, there is joy in finding emerging "patterns" as one gains experience in the profession (Preston & Peck, 2016, p. 80), we know that Dr. Peck was indeed including himself.

I think his theater background added to his persona. Hearing him sing, especially the videos of him singing with his family, give me such joy. That joy that Adam radiated was contagious and came through in every interaction. He may not have been singing on a JCAPS editorial board call, but every word on the pages that he wrote was a melody. (S. Russell Krebs, personal communication, November 30, 2022)

Dr. Peck experienced joy when students approached him about their interest in entering the student affairs profession. It is not surprising that the following quote from a student was included in an article about mentoring undergraduate students who want to enter the profession, also a reference to joy, "I was enjoying my work in student activities more than my major. I wasn't exactly sure how to respond to this realization" (Peck & Dotson, 2015; p. 6). In working to counter burnout in a profession he loved, he and co-authors wrote, "We acknowledge that campus activities professionals often find joy and satisfaction working directly with students who frequently share their appreciation with them" (DeSawal, 2022, p. 10). During COVID and its aftermath, such sharing became particularly difficult. To address burnout would take intentional professional development programming, including cross-training across units, creating healthy social networks in and outside of the institution, prioritiz-

ing compassionate care, giving up responsibilities not related to priorities, sharing the load of compassionately supporting students, and making a space for professionals to ask for support (DeSawal et al., 2022). Not surprisingly, “Adam was so great at adding energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of optimism to a project that may not have had a clear path or was assured of success” (D. Rosch, personal communication). Adam was willing to take risks and did so with a sense of adventure and determination.

Dr. Peck rarely engaged in any program development or scholarly endeavor in isolation. He partnered and consulted with a variety of student and faculty groups at the institutions where he worked, (e.g., academic departments, center for teaching excellence, counseling center, student councils, and programming boards), a variety of professionals associations (e.g., NACA, NACE, NASPA), other institutions, and asked colleagues and students to write with him. This partnering allowed for “transcending the typical role of student affairs” (Peck et al., (2011, p. 10).

Adam did not see himself as the creator of content but as a contributor to a much wider book of knowledge. He always figured what he was thinking about was not novel or new but a way to make sense of complex ideas. That was why he was so quick to add others to his projects. Editing the *Engagement and Employability* book and working on the Co-Curricular Connections, he was always on the lookout for talent that complemented his skill. (M. Preston, personal communication, October 13, 2022)

The importance Adam placed on connecting with others, including former students, is evident in his and Dotson’s statement, “When we send students into our profession with a promise of nurturing them in the future, we give them a resource that many lack” (2015, p. 9).

How Adam Wrote

To honor Adam and amplify his work, we are obliged to discuss what he wrote and how he wrote. He co-authored several articles about scholarship. In his writing, he “practiced what he preached” in that scholarship “demands succinctness but must be readable, interesting, and brief, focus on implications for practice, and strike a balance between describing complex constructs and processes in ways as simple and clear as possible” (Rosch et al., 2021, p.7-8). Such writing takes “forethought patience, and sustained effort” (DeSawal et al., 2021, p. 65). Perspectives from his co-authors offer credibility to his “walking the talk.”

Adam Wrote Everywhere

When we came up with the idea of the higher ed logical fallacies, we did so in Boston. It was cold as all get out. We took the train to Harvard Square because he said, “If inspiration does not hit you there, then where will it hit you?”... So we got to Harvard Square, walked around the campus, had lunch in a bistro, and then drank beers in a pub all afternoon and carefully crafted these fallacies. We developed the idea behind them, the story, the ideas, and then we looked up relevant research and data to support our thesis. We did all of this as it snowed and people shuffled by. We then went to dinner, had a steak, and crafted our writing plan. That was what it was like with Adam. Writing happened everywhere. (M. Preston, personal communication, October 13, 2022)

To write everywhere is to observe the coalescing of the world (Hoad, 1986). Indeed, Adam was an astute observer of the higher education world around him.

Often conversations prompted the opportunity for such coalescing. Dr. Peck often began his scholarly conversations with stories, metaphors, quips, or thoughts from philosophers. Of conversations, Gadamer wrote, “The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion may well be conducted in some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led” (1960/1992, p. 385). The topic led Adam’s conversations.

I first started writing with Adam as a result of our connections through the *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship*. Over the course of “typical” conversations, ideas that generated comments like, “That would be a great article to write” came up somewhat frequently. I think Adam was always thinking about ways that our work in higher education could be made more effective, current, and comprehensive. From that frame of mind, simply wanting to tell people about good ideas is just a natural outgrowth

of that type of thinking. (D. Rosch, personal communication, December 4, 2022)

Conversations turned into ideas that turned into writing projects that would promote improved intentional practice.

How effortless writing came to him. He could take a conversation and turn it into an academic journal article in no time. [Because of Adam] I am less intimidated by academic writing. I am also more passionate about encouraging others to join the scholarship/research bandwagon. (S. Russell Krebs, personal communication, November 30, 2022)

Writing for Adam was ubiquitous, not only writing everywhere but also on a wide range of important issues.

Adam was an Artist Writing about Almost Everything

Dr. Peck wrote on ethics, assessment, dubious online information, prompting learning through reflection, career readiness skills, sense of belonging, theory building in campus activities, student involvement centers, the benefits of engagement, mentoring undergraduates into student affairs, and practitioner scholarship.

Adam was interested in so many topics! I know lots of people who write a lot but are very focused on a particular topic, concept, or goal. Adam was a prototypical generalist. If he felt a topic was significant to improving our collective work, he wanted to write about it. (D. Rosch, personal communication, December 4, 2022)

Yet, it was not the quantity of topics that concerned him. He demanded quality of himself.

He would write something that I thought was amazing, and he would bristle and think it needed, like, five more revisions. He was not a perfectionist. He was an artist. And he never felt his art was ever done. I think what compelled Adam to write is he wanted to explore academic ideas and be taken seriously as a researcher. He often struggled when faculty would dismiss student affairs pros as the B team and wanted to stand toe to toe and compete for ideas and research. He also really enjoyed the process of writing. He would often write late into the night and on weekends. (M. Preston, personal communication, October 13, 2022)

To be an artist is to join and fit intentionally together human experiences that are typically considered disconnected (Hoad, 1986). This was a skill Adam mastered.

Adam's Writing had "Movement"

To have movement is to instigate and pass from one place to the next (<https://etymonline.com>). Dr. Peck was committed to not just starting writing projects, but also finishing them. Because he gained inspiration from partnering with others, finishing projects often required encouraging others. The editor of *JCAPS* shared, "We were definitely moving forward. Writing with Adam was not something that was done simply to check a box or feel good about yourself – there was a sense of movement to it" (D. Rosch, personal communication, December 4, 2022)

Even when difficult, Dr. Peck's writing projects evolved.

His ability to forge on and keep things moving forward. This project, which I believe was his biggest project to date, was a lot more work than he expected. But that never stopped him, and he just kept guiding us all along. It may have been more like herding cats. (G. Spencer, personal communication, November 28, 2022)

Adam was self-motivated to write. It was a passion, hobby, professional obligation, and a means to contemplate complex issues and seek their solution.

Adam Sought Honest Feedback

Bouncing ideas off others was a crucial component of Adam's writing. He identified a topic through professional development opportunities, sketched and shared ideas with others, drafted and refined, and sought feedback from those who would offer honest perspectives.

I am a much better scholar and thinker because of my time with him. I am also much better at self-editing, which has served me well now that I edit papers and dissertations as a part-time faculty member. He also helped me explore my own passions when it came to writing. I have been working on a project where I review old (like 1930s and 40s) *Journal of Higher Education* articles, and I compare them to contemporary higher ed issues to see the changes but almost always the similarities. I also kind of became [Adam's] foil. He would have an idea, and I would go find some journal article from 1938 and let him know he ain't all that original; some dean at Purdue has been banging that drum since before Pearl Harbor. (M. Preston, personal communication, October 13, 2022)

Adam saw soliciting honest reviews from others as imperative to the writing and thinking and rewriting process. To be honest is to be marked by decency (Hoad, 1986). Adam offered that and expected it.

Parting Words: How Do We Continue Adam's Work?

To leave a legacy is to offer a bequest (Hoad, 1986). Adam bequeathed confidence and inspiration about engaging in scholarship to his co-authors.

I enjoyed writing with Adam because I was in awe of him. Research and scholarly writing came so very easy to him, and I think for most practitioners, that isn't the case. I'm always a person who wants to do things with people that are better than me. I run with faster runners; I spend time with smarter people. I felt writing with Adam would make me a better scholarly writer. (S. Russell Krebs, personal communication, November 30, 2022)

Adam paid forward the compulsion to write, but more so the compulsion to be intentional. So it is with intentionality that we must continue his work. First, at the individual professional level, campus activities professionals must be intentional about providing interventions that prompt students to recognize their learning and be able to tell their learning story. Dr. Peck's scholarship offers numerous examples of possible interventions. Also, as individual professionals, campus activities professionals must intentionally find or create theories and frameworks that ground practice; otherwise, it is not intentional practice but rather practice grounded by hope and a prayer. Individual professionals must be intentional about sharing what we have learned regarding our own practices in promoting learning across our own institution, to others at other institutions, and to the profession; either following Dr. Peck's lead by taking on the identity of a practitioner-scholar ourselves, and/or encouraging others to engage in the life of a practitioner-scholar. Fortunately, there are now numerous outlets for this sharing.

At our institutions and as a profession, we must commit to continuing his work in the area of "engaged students become engaged employees" by assuring students feel a sense of belonging at their institutions. The diversity, equity, and inclusion special edition of *JCAPS* scheduled for publication in spring 2023 aligns with this commitment, as does the NACA updated research agenda (Rosch et al., 2021), but efforts must be bolder and broader. We suggest future regional and national conferences invite speakers and members to contemplate how we achieve 100% student engagement and overcome the mindset that having unengaged students is to be expected. Remember, Dr. Peck saw employed students as potentially engaged students. Such a goal will take an intentional mapping of cocurricular learning experiences and of the students who attend them at institutions and even across the profession (Peck, 2017). Perhaps these efforts could be initiated by an Adam Peck institute at which campus activities professionals begin to contemplate what 100% student engagement would look like and how we achieve that.

We end this story of Adam with the poignant words of a colleague, "I always felt so good about our profession knowing Adam was in it" (S. Russell Krebs, personal communication, November 30, 2022). Let us allow ourselves to feel good about our profession by continuing Adam's call to intentional practice.

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COST OF CARING IN STUDENT AFFAIRS: WHEN A PROFESSIONAL LOSS BECOMES PERSONAL

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On Friday, September 30th, I (Stephanie Russell Krebs) opened Facebook after not logging in for a few days and was brought to my knees when I saw a post that a dear colleague and friend, Dr. Adam Peck, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at Illinois State University, had unexpectedly passed away in a tragic accident on campus. Adam and I served together on the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Campus Activities Scholarship and Practice*. The announcement of Adam's passing immediately transported me back eight years to a time when I served as Senior Student Affairs Officer at The University of Tampa— when the campus lost a beloved staff member quickly and unexpectedly. I was charged with leading my team through that tragedy while also supporting our students, all while personally grieving myself. That experience was one of the most challenging and meaningful experiences I have navigated as a Senior Student Affairs Officer because the work and the emotions spanned across my professional and personal life.

Many student affairs professionals have experienced grief spanning across our personal and professional lives. Adam's passing prompted the authors of this article to share stories of similar staff losses to provide insight into navigating similar tragedies. As student affairs professionals, we often serve on the “front lines” when bad things happen. These roles are mentally exhausting to take on, even when you are not in relationship with those impacted. So, when you are in relationship with the loss, the complexity at the intersection of managing our grief while helping others process their own can seem overwhelming.

This article will explore two different cases of staff deaths, from the perspective of the Senior Student Officer, at two unique institutions, and how the student affairs staff managed their own grief processes while leading and supporting their teams. A theoretical framework of secondary traumatic stress, grief, and healing will be woven throughout the article, with special attention focused on the healing process and reflections for practice. All involved in this article respected Dr. Adam Peck as the consummate scholar/practitioner. We believe he would enjoy knowing that his passing was the inspiration for this article aimed at providing tools for other student affairs staff members navigating loss, love, and forward movement.

Theoretical Framework

Like other support service professionals, student affairs professionals have been trained to be helpers. Daily, staff employ a myriad of listening skills, triage interventions, refer students, and report and document student behavior. These activities create an environment with the potential for these professionals to be exposed to microtraumas. Microtraumas can come in the form of responding to a student assault, identifying resources to assist an unhoused student, or grieving a staff death. Here, our goal is to center student affairs professionals' experiences using a framework focused on secondary stress.

The nature of secondary traumatic stress can have a profound emotional impact on student affairs professionals, given how interconnected their work and personal lives may be. Moreover, they perhaps rationalize such stress caused by these interconnections as the “cost of caring.” And the cost is often steep: experiencing rapid heart rate, poor concentration, worry, panic, anger, withdrawal, hyper-vigilance, or changes to interpersonal relationships (Schwitzer, 2004). To conceptualize exposure to something as traumatic as losing a colleague from the professional’s perspective begins with a basic understanding of secondary traumatic stress.

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is a type of emotional distress that results when an individual learns about (whether through hearing or reading) firsthand traumatic experiences experienced by someone else (Saakvitne et al., 1998). Past research suggests STS can negatively impact work performance (Maslach & Florian, 1988) and often emerges as a consequence of continued exposure to the trauma experienced by others. If unchecked, STS can permanently change someone’s perceptions of the world (Cunningham, 2004). Unfortunately, research suggests student affairs professionals, due to their responsibilities in providing care to those they serve, are often at greater risk of being exposed to and adversely affected by secondary traumatic stress (Hodge, 2016).

Throughout this article, we will provide examples to illustrate how secondary traumatic stress can be experienced by student affairs professionals whose work and personal lives sometimes blur. We hope to demonstrate that student affairs professionals cannot simply “turn off” their secondary experiences of trauma once they leave their professional roles. Our goal is to encourage self-awareness in these professionals while acknowledging the potential for exposure, helping individuals identify their emotions and those of others.

Case Study 1

Kathy Cavins-Tull, Vice President for Student Affairs, Texas Christian University

It was a Sunday morning, and many of my TCU colleagues and I were attending the annual NASPA conference that year held in Los Angeles. At a meeting of Senior Student Affairs Officers, I heard from a colleague, “There’s been an accident. Jamie is in the hospital.” Jamie Dulle served as an Assistant Dean at TCU, and because our Deans go to the hospital when students are in need, I asked for the names of the students involved in whatever incident caused the hospital trip. “It’s Jamie, and it doesn’t look good,” the officer responded. Jamie had been hit by a drunk driver while waiting at a stoplight and was in critical condition at a local trauma hospital. The world stood still. In a matter of hours, I returned to Fort Worth. Two days later, Jamie was pronounced dead, and six days after that, our team was planning a celebration of life and meeting with students in her caseload.

In student affairs, we often serve as front-line problem solvers; the professionals who respond to community crises. We know how to prioritize health and safety, when to notify others, and how to deliver emotional support. But what happens when the crisis we are responsible for managing is our own? Like many in this field who take jobs away from where they grew up and therefore live away from family and longtime social support, Jamie relied on a strong network of colleagues who were also friends. Her death was personal to them, myself included. We also knew that our grief was shared with the students Jamie helped at the most vulnerable times in their college lives. We used the resources provided by our Human Resources colleagues for our own grief and offered campus resources to students. We created a team of people who responded to the needs of her family. Our Dean of Students’ team worked individually with Jamie’s student caseload to respond to their specific needs and to ensure that they would get continuity of care. We established a team to plan a celebration of Jamie’s life open to all students, faculty, and staff.

Losing a colleague and friend can become one of the most challenging and defining moments in the life of our organization. I firmly believe few organizations could respond as well as our Student Affairs organization did in the midst of this tragedy. For that, I am thankful.

Case Study 2

Stephanie Russell Krebs, Vice President for Student Affairs and Strategic Initiatives, The University of Tampa

Eight years ago, The University of Tampa lost a force of nature. Krystal Schofield, Associate Dean, lost an extremely short battle with breast cancer after a 15-year career at The University of Tampa. The battle was so short that most university community members did not even know she was ill. Typically, as a student affairs professional, I jump into “emergency crisis management mode” when a student tragedy occurs. In this case, I felt frozen, even while serving as the senior student affairs officer. I recall driving to work the day after she passed, surprising myself by pulling into a grocery store parking lot. I turned off the car, laid my head on the steering wheel, and cried, feeling like I could not catch my breath. I physically could not re-start start my car, neither to drive back home nor to work. Instead, I called a trusted colleague and friend, and I remember saying, “I don’t know if I can go back to work and feel the void.” My colleague gave me a moment before imparting some wisdom. She affirmed my emotions and encouraged me to take it one step at a time. She reminded me that we had a community that was also grieving, and that we could, and would, help each other.

Her words helped me become unstuck from that steering wheel. The days ahead were a blur. We worked with our Human Resources colleagues to share grief resources with our staff. At the same time, our counseling center, which was part of our student affairs community, provided support to our students. The pressure to continue our typical services and office continuity, recognizing that our entire university community was not impacted, was a challenge, as we felt that everyone should be grieving Krystal’s passing.

As time progressed, we moved into a legacy-building aspect of the healing process. We coordinated an immediate and personal off-campus memorial in partnership with Krystal’s family, and then an institution-level on-campus celebration for the campus community after some time had passed. We then honored Krystal’s life by creating a scholarship in her memory and renaming our division-wide core value awards in her name. After the initial crisis management work concluded and the celebrations occurred, the ongoing impact has continued to permeate campus culture several years later.

Themes for Practice

It is not uncommon to feel that campus life must go on unabated, largely mirroring life before the tragedy and trauma. Student affairs professionals are often keenly aware of the pressure to restore order and return to business. However, the grieving process that emerges in some staff may directly conflict with these goals. Some student affairs professionals may need more time, while others would rather not engage in the loss. Similarly, some staff may want to ensure someone’s memory is institutionally enshrined, while others may hope to move on to regain a sense of normalcy. All of these responses are valid, so it is paramount for campus leadership to wrestle with how to manage the loss and any temporary or permanent change to campus operations. Whatever the decisions, they should not come at the risk of the mental health of staff.

Within both case studies, four themes emerge that can be used in practice to understand the context of trauma further: 1) Personal Care Through Trauma; 2) Supporting Students Through Shared Grief; 3) Honoring Legacy; 4) Community as a Support Network. Each theme will be discussed, and recommendations for practice will be embedded.

Tools for Personal Care Through Trauma

In student affairs, we are aware of the impact of compassion fatigue and emotional exhaustion as it relates to working with students on our campuses. However, little is known about how student affairs professionals manage traumatic exposure responses. The stress associated with exposure to trauma affects how one’s world looks and feels different as a result of engaging in day-to-day work (Lipsky & Burk, 2009, as cited in Sansbury, Graves, & Scott, 2015). Student affairs professionals often focus on supporting our students through traumatic experiences and forget that these factors affect ourselves.

Sansbury, Graves & Scott (2015) outline practical guidelines for mental health clinicians to manage traumatic stress responses that can apply to our field. The first step is to *know thyself*, which focuses on understanding how your body (mental and physical) responds to the trauma. *Committing to addressing the stress* is the second step, where professionals need to recognize that the trauma affects how they interact with others, and as a result, how they do their jobs. Recognizing how your interactions have changed because of the trauma offers the opportunity to *make a*

personal plan of action. The final step then becomes *acting on the plan*, which requires establishing a support system within the organization to “gently hold each person accountable to healthy coping and self-care” (p. 118).

Supporting Students Through Shared Grief

The role of many student affairs professionals focuses on helping students achieve success in their environments. When trauma is experienced in a deeply personal way by those responsible for providing support and help themselves, the campus response should be multifaceted; it should address not only students who are impacted but also the campus personnel left grieving. Moreover, it is essential to remember that the loss of a community member does not affect everyone equally. Initial consideration and assessment of the organization’s most vulnerable need to be identified (Sansbury, Graves & Scott, 2015). Additionally, it is important to help the staff identify where possible conflicts of interest in addressing the trauma may exist.

The loss of a colleague on campus also requires that that individual’s work be redistributed, especially in the short term, including how that individual may have informally served as a mentor to students and staff. Once an assessment of those most vulnerable has been identified and where conflicts of interest may exist, the difficult task of advancing the work begins. That work likely includes reaching out to students and staff who worked closely with the colleague who passed to express empathy and offer initial options for support. It is important to not treat this process simply as a logistical task to reassign duties, but rather one with emotional components, with the goal to keep doing the significant work of supporting the success of the students and staff the lost colleague cared so much about.

Honoring the Staff Member’s Legacy as a Healing Process

When a beloved staff member passes, after the initial shock subsides, a tendency exists “to get back to normal life” (Levine, 2011, p.3). Such a tendency may involve creating a plan for office continuity, reassigning the colleague’s workload, and constructing a long- and short-term plan for refilling their role. When these steps rush or even ignore the healing process, staff may avoid and deflect their feelings, which can suppress the need to grieve and emotionally react (Schwitzer, 2002). Instead, striving for a return to normalcy through a gradual approach can provide an opportunity to begin a return to a normal routine while incorporating the loss in emotionally meaningful ways, which frames the trauma as an opportunity for institutional learning (Schwitzer, 2008).

Life coach, therapist, and author Shannon Adler states, “A legacy is etched into the minds of others by the stories they share about you (goodreads.com, 2022).” Making meaning of a tragedy and creating an approach to amplify the legacy left by the deceased exists at the heart of the healing process. Below, we offer the following suggestions for ways student affairs professionals can share stories of their loved one and build their legacy while supporting the healing process.

1. Immediately when a staff member passes, it is important to identify one staff member to serve as the liaison with the family. The family may be planning a memorial, and it is important to know if they would like involvement from their loved one’s colleagues. The liaison can share with the university community information and the family’s wishes. While the loss to colleagues can be profound, it is important to remember that the loss the family feels supersedes work relationships. The wishes of the family must come first.
2. An on-campus celebration honoring the lost staff member can serve as a way for staff and students to be part of the healing process. Gathering a small group of those closest to the loved one to plan an event provides an opportunity for those people most affected by the loss to share their stories, laugh and cry together, and can lessen the actual cost of caring that some experience, most notably the tendency to withdrawal and change the structure of their relationships (Schwitzer, 2004).
3. Naming an award, scholarship, or program to honor the deceased can be a way to keep their legacy alive after the memorials and celebrations have ended. Naming can serve as a cathartic process that engages others in the process of determining what would be most fitting, which often contributes to the healing process.
4. Creating an annual tradition to honor the deceased can serve to build legacy. The tradition should be connected to an area of passion for the deceased. For example, an annual fun run might be appropriate if

the staff member was a runner. If the staff member was an avid reader, an annual book club in their honor would be fitting. The key is engaging staff that are still grieving in the process to select and initially execute the annual tradition. Business strategist Peter Strople said, “Legacy is not leaving something for people. It’s leaving something in people” (High, 2020). In reference to the impact of those mentioned above, a virtual book club is being named after Dr. Adam Peck, given his interests, and The University of Tampa announces the “Krystal Schofield Outstanding Contribution Awards” at a ceremony every January.

Community as a Support Network

For many Student Affairs professionals, responding to the needs of others is not only our responsibility; it serves as our superpower. Our organizations attract individuals who want to work in supportive and inclusive communities, and when a crisis occurs, the care and compassion we extend reflect our core values. When a crisis is shared by the community and our grief is both personal and collective, relying on the support of others is essential for a few reasons:

1. Colleges and universities have built-in support resources. From licensed counselors to chaplains or spiritual life professionals, employee assistance programming to communication professionals, and even instructional technology and police resources (depending on the nature of the death), an abundance of resources are available within the campus community.
2. For many, doing something to contribute to a community’s healing after the death of a colleague helps individuals feel connected and purposeful in their grief.
3. There is no standard process for grief; people will grieve at their own pace and in their own individual way. Still, operations within a university must continue, and serving students must remain a priority. Allowing others to take on some additional responsibilities in the short term can aid in providing space for those who need it.
4. Crisis and grief create trauma individually and collectively, but connecting with others going through similar experiences can be a powerful healer. Be careful not to exclude those who may be part of the larger collective affected by the trauma.

One of the greatest assets in our professional field is the community in which we do our work. Especially in times of shared crisis and grief, strength can be discovered within the community and network of those who know this work.

Implications

Across student affairs, administrators hold a wide range of experience and training in traumatic events. While staff in some areas may be directly trained in handling traumatic situations with students (such as residential life and counseling), others may have received no training nor had practical experiences with it during their careers. Some institutions may grind to a standstill over a unique and tragic student death. In contrast, a student could pass away on a different campus, and most of the general population might know nothing about it. A wide variety of comfort levels exist, based on many factors, from formalized training to institutional history and culture.

Dealing with the loss of a colleague in student affairs can be an extreme disruption to our personal and professional work because we do not often prepare for it as a community. Some reasons may stem from clichés, such as “What happened at that institution couldn’t happen to us” or “We are mindful of helping others but don’t know how to take care of ourselves.” The harsh reality is that the time to prepare for a crisis is not when it is happening, but before it ever happens, with the hope that it will never happen.

Therefore, as a field, we need to prepare a more formalized approach to the well-being of our staff members affected by a collective trauma affecting their professional and personal lives. The twenty-first century has brought very public tragedies to our campus, like 9/11, campus shootings, natural disasters, a rise in hate speech, polarizing politics and political rhetoric, violence against students from minoritized and marginalized identities, and COVID-19 (among countless other issues). Student Affairs administrators are often responsible for helping their students through all of these tragic events. Yet, it often feels as if the expectation is that they need to handle these events as if they themselves are not impacted by these occurrences.

We strongly advocate that administrators examine their crisis planning, self-care policies, and response protocols at all institutional levels. It is essential to look at how our systems operate and whether redundancies for emergencies exist, examining how information is shared and who has access to it. For example, on many campuses, staff can identify that handful of individuals who “know how things run,” where their records exist only in their heads, and in their absence, efficient work grinds to a halt.

Just as importantly, administrators need to create plans and opportunities to provide care and encourage self-care for employees struggling with their own stress and trauma. We need to move past telling someone to simply “take some time off” to actually helping them take that time off productively, not doing so simply to return to the variety of issues, problems, and tasks they left. We need to be responsible for the health of our staff, not just in words, but in action.

Final Thought

Depending on the size of the campus, it is likely rare that a death of a student affairs staff member occurs, and when it does, it can be devastating. We must remember to talk about it, address it, and help ourselves and others heal. As a profession, we don’t often conduct research on the impact of death on an institution. Yet opportunities exist in order to help others in the profession when something tragic occurs. Losing outstanding colleagues such as Adam, Jamie, Krystal, and others like them has been devastating, but in the spirit of who those people were as educators, learning from their passings represents a continuation of their legacies.

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NOT “SLATED” FOR LEADERSHIP: BARRIERS AND UNCLEAR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS IN PANHELLENIC SORORITY MEMBERS

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Abstract

National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sororities promote leadership development and student learning as membership benefits. However, many women may not gain these experiences if they are not selected or placed on the leadership slate to be collectively voted into an executive position because the emphasis is on positional development. There is little research that nuances the different ways in which sorority women experience leadership development within their chapters. This qualitative study explored the leadership experiences of NPC sorority women who obtained leadership experiences to nuance to what extent sororities facilitate these experiences. It was found that not all members have equal access to these leadership opportunities, as there are structural barriers and unclear pathways for leadership development. Members sought non-traditional forms of leadership development without the context of connecting their own member experiences. Implications for practice are included to integrate findings from this study to inform practice for student involvement professionals, which may help improve programming and the experience provided to their student leaders.

Sororities in the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) offer leadership experiences through civic and chapter leadership experiences (Taylor, 2010). Each of the 26 member organizations also offers leadership development through regional and national programming at conferences, personal development programs, and by placing them in positions of responsibility on their chapter executive boards (Long & Snowden, 2011). Student involvement professionals also plan retreats and workshops to develop leadership skills (Martin et al., 2012). Little is known about how sorority women experience these leadership programs and development opportunities. Further, it is also unclear the extent to which all members benefit from these leadership opportunities or just those in the leadership positions that hold responsibility (Long & Snowden, 2011).

Women in NPC sororities are often placed into these roles of influence and responsibility through the slating process and then voted collectively as a singular executive board by their chapter peers (Schoper et al., 2020). The slating process has very little research support in furthering sorority leadership development, and scant research explores NPC sorority leadership development. Further, little is understood about how other members gain leadership development if they do not have a leadership position.

In this study, a leadership position is defined as serving on the chapter executive board. The executive board is the governing committee that holds responsibility and power for chapter operations. The composition can vary in size depending on the organization's traditions and the chapter's size. A tertiary component consists of

non-executive board positions such as chairs or directors with defined responsibilities. These positions are delegated tasks by the executive board.

Students are increasingly seeking leadership skills to grow during their undergraduate experience (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Schoper et al., 2020). The development of leadership skills is a significant component of the experience espoused by sororities (Taylor, 2010). Exploring the scope of sorority leadership experiences and to what extent sororities or campuses facilitate these experiences may help improve programming and the experience provided to their members.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing critiques and summaries of fraternity/sorority leadership development highlight the lack of a gendered context (Barber et al., 2020). It centers fraternity men and lacks recognition of the nuanced ways in which sorority women develop leadership (Schoper et al., 2020). This literature review includes a brief overview of co-curricular learning, women's leadership development, and sorority leadership development with the assumption that women should be understood from the position of role expectations and restrictions (Davis, 2009).

Co-Curricular Learning

Leadership development is a form of co-curricular learning which promotes integration between curricular and co-curricular learning spaces (Schoper et al., 2020). Continued participation creates interconnections between academic and outside-the-classroom learning which facilitates student development and learning and promotes individual student persistence (Tinto, 1993; Peck, 2018; Wolf-Wendel, et al., 2009). This form of learning also offers opportunities for connections to organizational meaning-making for values development and provides social capital with an increased sense of belonging, particularly among low-income students or Students of Color (Garcia & Shirley, 2020; Schoper et al., 2020; Tull et al., 2022).

This is salient concerning women's co-curricular participation access (Tillapaugh, 2019). Bureau et al. (2021) interrogated the systems of power to suggest that social class and other factors, such as race, filter who has access to co-curricular learning, particularly in fraternal organizations. Arnold and Barratt (2015) acknowledged that these organizations transmit social and prestige culture capital on campus through leadership programs or social skill development. Access is important to many women who perceive sororities to be a condition for social mobility (Bureau et al., 2021). Yet, there is a dearth of women's programs and specific programs targeted for their leadership development (Armstrong et al., 2014; Reyes et al., 2019).

Women's Leadership Development

College men and women develop leadership differently, particularly regarding how women negotiate power structures to navigate into higher positions (Marsden & Andrade, 2018). For example, Goodman (2021) noted that fraternity members might vote for their members into leadership, such as for student government association (SGA), over a more deserving female candidate. Gilligan (1993) suggested that women view leadership as responsibility, relationship building, and cooperation. Additionally, women believe leaders should empower others and work towards shared outcomes (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) suggested that women leaders in educational settings tended to use relational leadership in which women value having power with, rather than power over. This concept suggests a concept of horizontal, not hierarchical, power (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Reyes et al. (2019) noted, in a meta-analysis, the effectiveness of comprehensive leadership development programs and found that participation improved students' ability to become better leaders, rather than if they are actual leaders. They suggested that student affairs professionals place too much emphasis on learning outcomes and do not teach students how to transfer their newly learned leadership skills which they term the *transfer problem* (Reyes et al., 2019). This problem of application is particularly salient for college women in which their participation in leadership programs lacks a gendered context.

In coeducational environments, undergraduate women are challenged with balancing perceptions of acceptable leadership behaviors when working with male students (Mujani & Muttaqin, 2012). A primary obstacle is the gender bias women experience when considering leadership. It occurs when men doubt women's ability to lead in a large setting which causes them to reconsider their leadership abilities (Rhode, 2019). Thus, they are not able to engage in authentic leadership styles or relational leadership and instead experience difficulty earning the support of female peers (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Mujani & Muttaqin, 2012). Mentorship between women is especially salient in Women of Color in promoting leadership interests (Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

However, there are limited opportunities for women to intentionally engage in reflective learning about women's leadership styles because of the historical emphasis on "women's lack of access to positions of power (Carli & Eagley, 2001, p. 634). There is a lack of specifically designed women's leadership development, such as comprehensive curricular programs beyond position-specific, task-oriented, educational speaker events (Ericksen, 2009). Sororities offer some promise as sites for women's leadership development (Schoper et al., 2020). Yet, they lack women's contexts, as Taylor (2010) noted that sorority leadership programs lack a context of women's identity and specifically do not intentionally include any women's leadership theory.

Leadership Development in Sororities

NPC member sorority participation broadly suggests positive educational outcomes (Martin et al., 2012). Women may seek leadership opportunities in NPC sororities to increase their capacity as they perceive sororities as pathways for their leadership development (Reynolds, 2020; Sasso, Nasser, et al., 2020). Their members have conceptualized the process of leadership as a growth process and an individual who inspires others to believe that everyone can be a leader (Reynolds, 2020). Sorority members are more engaged on campus, have a higher sense of purpose, benefit by developing leadership skills, and offer opportunities to practice and gain leadership experiences (DiChiara, 2009; Long, 2012).

Undergraduate sorority participation leads to increases in significant involvement and gains in leadership development during the first year of college compared to unaffiliated students (Aren et al., 2014; Chiara, 2009; Martin et al., 2012). However, these gains are equalized by the senior year when no significant differences exist (Hevel et al., 2014). NPC women primarily experience leadership development through holding leadership positions which is related to extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability (DiChiara, 2009; Martin et al., 2012; Harms et al., 2006). There are many other benefits to becoming a leader or officer in a chapter (Gastfield, 2020; Kelley, 2008; Long & Snowden, 2011).

Sorority chapter leaders demonstrate gains in leadership skills, diverse interactions, sense of belonging, interpersonal relationship skills, and self-perceived leadership ability (Long & Snowden, 2011; Martin et al., 2012). By the end of their college experience, sorority members believe in their ability to influence others at a higher rate than unaffiliated students (Hevel et al., 2014). However, there are limitations to these leadership experiences and opportunities. Sorority members do not have the opportunity to practice leadership if they do not hold a position (Long, 2012; Long & Snowden, 2011).

Only sorority chapter leaders experience executive meetings, retreats, and roundtables from campus programming (Long & Snowden, 2011). Similarly, only chapter leaders receive leadership programming from their inter/national headquarters, which has been found to only develop increased values congruence (Taylor, 2010). Other competencies, such as listening skills, finding one's voice, and developing self-confidence, are not fully conceptualized in inter/national headquarters leadership programming (Taylor, 2010). The overemphasis on chapter leaders, rather than all members, is concurrent with other structural limitations within NPC sororities that limit leadership development.

It is suggested that NPC sororities are too homogenous, creating barriers for members to develop social perspective-taking skills to help understand others from various backgrounds and collaborate across differences (Dugan, 2008; Long, 2012; Sasso, Biddix, et al., 2020). NPC sorority women exhibit higher levels of social perspective-taking than fraternity men, but lower than other women in identity-based or culturally-based organizations (Johnson et al., 2015). Sorority women also demonstrate lower levels of collaboration and civility across

differences than unaffiliated women (Hevel et al., 2014).

However, sorority membership offers an opportunity to increase a sense of civic responsibility or multicultural awareness (DiChiara, 2009). Sorority membership serves as a gateway for early leadership development in first-year students, although this gap is closed by the fourth year. Findings by Long and Snowden (2011) highlight the leadership gains between those who held a position of responsibility and those who did not.

Even if members gain leadership experience elsewhere in their chapter, these experiences lead to greater involvement in other student organizations (Sasso, Biddix, et al., 2020). Yet, little research identifies what happens between the first and final undergraduate years. Further exploring how sorority members negotiate their leadership development processes may identify barriers and build on existing research about the extent to which leadership experiences are impactful.

METHODS

Research Design

This was a descriptive phenomenological qualitative study that followed the research design of similar previous studies about sorority women (Mendez et al., 2017; Russett, 2017; Witkowsky, 2010). Descriptive phenomenology centers around participant experiences and voice, which allow the researcher(s) to understand how these perceptions and experiences related to the phenomenon being studied (Giorgi, 2009). Descriptive phenomenology is described as, “the understanding of lived experiences is closely linked to the idea of the intentionality of consciousness, or how meaning is experienced...that our consciousness is always directed towards something, which means that when we experience something, the ‘thing’ is experienced as ‘something’ that has meaning for us” (Sunder et al., 2018, p. 734). Giorgi (2009) suggested that this approach emphasizes the words expressed by the participants, not their own interpretations. Thus, descriptive phenomenology is distinct from other forms of interpretive phenomenological research because of its use of openness, questioning pre-understanding, and adopting a reflective attitude to bracket or question researcher subjectivities against the meaning-making of participant realities (Giorgi, 2009). Findings were conceptualized through the interpretive relativist ontology paradigm, in which epistemology assumes that the researcher cannot separate themselves from what they know and is an instrument to elucidate participant experiences (Patton, 2015). The following research questions guided this study:

- (1) What, if any, barriers to leadership did NPC sorority women holding leadership positions experience or observe as members?
- (2) How, if at all, were campus and inter/national staff and programs helpful?

Positionality

In qualitative methodology, researchers should disclose their assumptions and perspectives about the phenomena experienced by their participants (Patton, 2015). All the authors are active student affairs educators and scholar-practitioners. They have previously served in student life coordinator roles facilitating leadership programming. All the researchers identify as cisgender. Three are white, and one of the researchers is a mixed-heritage Latino.

The researchers approach their work through the lens of gender equity to support women’s liberation in removing the barriers of college patriarchal systems identified by Sasso, Nasser, et al. (2020). The authors also acknowledge their own biases in conducting this study as affiliated members of national sororities and fraternities, which may also provide them with a deeper, nuanced understanding of the participant’s experiences. These positionalities may still limit their perspectives and require them to bracket their assumptions to better promote student learning and development.

Participants

Participant recruitment was facilitated using snowball sampling utilizing procedures outlined by Jones et al. (2014) to construct an intentional, purposive sample (n = 10). Potential participants were initially identified

through general emails to all sorority chapter leaders using the inclusion criterion, which included active undergraduate NPC sorority membership and good academic standing within their chapter. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality (see Table 1). All participants were upperclassmen from five different suburban Midwestern mid-sized institutions. No participants were in the same chapter at their institution, but all were from similar NPC organizations.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Name	Organization	Position(s)
Participant LL	Beta Omicron Epsilon	Alumni Relations Chair, Vice-President of Philanthropy, President
Participant BS	Lambda Mu Delta	Nominating Committee
Participant NS	Beta Omicron Epsilon	Social Media Chair
Participant SC	Beta Omicron Epsilon	Scholarship Chair, Panhellenic Vice-President of Education, Panhellenic President
Participant QT	Beta Omicron Epsilon	Recruitment Data Chair
Participant IU	Epsilon Sigma Zeta	New Member Educator, Sisterhood Chair, Standard Board Member
Participant FS	Epsilon Sigma Zeta	Member at Large (executive board), President
Participant QA	Upsilon Gamma Alpha	Philanthropy Chair
Participant ZU	Eta Kappa Theta	Events Chair

Data Collection

Participants were solicited through email after referral until there was saturation of the data, as outlined by Patton (2015), which occurs when no new data is obtained, and there is data satisfaction. A semi-structured interview guide consisting of 12 main questions with probing prompts that varied slightly between participants depending on rapport was utilized during individual interviews, which lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. The topics explored through the interview guide were informed by previous research on sorority leadership experiences and inter/national programs (Long, 2012; Long & Snowden, 2011; Taylor, 2010). Clarification of meaning was used when the participants introduced vague language or when they used organizational-specific vernacular. Audio-recorded interviews took place on campus to facilitate increased authenticity of responses in which they were presented with a standard informed consent form. The researchers performed transcription of the interviews to prepare for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The interpretive relativist ontology paradigm was used for data analysis in congruence with phenomenology. This paradigm posits that reality cannot be separated from previous knowledge and that researchers' positionalities are present across all phases of the research process (Angen, 2000). Relativist ontology holds that reality is subjectively constructed through socially and experientially developed understandings (Angen, 2000). Interpretive approaches rely on interviewing in which data is negotiated through the dialogue of the interview process (Patton, 2015).

The researchers followed Moustakas' (1999) guidelines for conducting phenomenological research. The first phase is *epoche*, in which the researchers bracketed their previous assumptions. These assumptions were acknowledged through reflexive journaling in which they described their own experiences with the study phenomenon to remain open to new ways of perceiving the study phenomenon.

Themes were generated through several phases of coding. To begin, the researchers developed a list of over 45 initial open codes, which Moustakas (1999) referred to as "horizons of experience" (p. 121). Open coding in-

cluded line-by-line reading in which initial codes were developed through textural descriptions. The researchers used textural descriptions as specific language from the participants to demonstrate how they discussed the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1999). These open codes were grouped into more abstract and complex categories using axial coding to create focused codes (Saldana, 2021). This is what Moustakas (1999) describes as “thematizing the invariant constituents” (p. 121).

Finally, selective coding was applied by, “selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” to condense further the focused codes (Jones et al., 2014, p. 45; Saldana, 2021). This is a form of imaginative variation which Moustakas (1999) describes as “approach[ing] the phenomenon from divergent perspectives” to narrow the ways in which NPC sorority women negotiated their leadership experiences in their chapters (p. 85). Over 20 focused codes were collapsed into four final themes and organized using code mapping validated by an external auditor as part of trustworthiness strategies (Saldana, 2021). The researchers continuously reflected on their subjectivities to remain aware of how they influence data analysis.

The following trustworthiness strategies were employed as suggested by Jones et al. (2014): (1) an external auditor who was a university professor from a higher education graduate program with *a priori* experience and knowledge about sororities/fraternities; (2) a subject matter expert who assisted in reviewing and questioning the main themes to clarify researcher bias; and (3) member checking using the interview transcript data was sent to participants prior to the final coding process.

FINDINGS

Members viewed their leadership development similarly across their sororities. However, each organization has a different process for attaining a leadership position and terms for their executive board with compartmentalized members’ expectations. The experiences described in this research study are not the experience of every undergraduate member but can provide context on how leadership development occurs within NPC sororities. Sorority women perceived leadership development as dichotomous, as either formal programming or gained through positional authority.

Sorority members identified various individual and structural barriers that limited their full participation in developing their leadership skills. They described individual barriers as interpersonal limitations within their sorority that helped them manage or negotiate relationships within their chapter. Structural barriers were identified as systems, traditions, or cultures which impeded their leadership development.

Structural Barriers

Homogeneity. The most significant structural barrier to leadership development identified by sorority women was the homogeneity of their chapters. They suggested that NPC sororities were not seen as organizations with diversity by the public or even their members. As Participant SC said, “Honestly, with our council, you don’t see a lot of different cultural or ethnic perspectives or gender identity perspectives.” Participant LL explained that the lack of diversity which was etiologically rooted in how members are socialized and recruited into their chapters:

And so there’s like very little time you’re allowed to be recruiting, and you have to recruit certain numbers. And, like, we don’t even really get to pick entirely, since like we just sent them a list and then we’re told who, and I don’t think it’s the most equitable. And I think it hurts us diversity-wise. I just don’t think the way we get people signed up for formal recruitment and stuff is the most inclusive. Like, you have to, like, be aware of what’s happening. And like, if you find out later than three days into the school year, you are kind of out of luck because, depending on numbers, the group that you wanted to be in might not be allowed to take you in a week.

Instead, sorority women defaulted to describing geographical identities to identify their limited learning about otherness in their chapters. Participant BS noted even homogeneity with regional geographic identities:

People (in the sorority) are from little, small towns, very small. Hick towns are what I would call them. I've never seen or heard about things like mudding or going on float trips. But like they (the other members) taught me about it. And like I definitely listen to more country music now, which I hated.

They called for more diversity in their chapter to provide them with cultural competency, which they believed was essential to being a leader in contemporary society. NPC women felt the structure of their chapter perpetuated homogeneity. They suggested that their chapter cultures and environments were not preparing them for the more racially diverse environments they might experience when they graduate college. Sorority women suggested that the structure of the sororities limited their friendships to racial homogeneity.

Slating. Participants described the chapter leadership hierarchy as limited and directional. They suggested that there was collective decision-making by executive boards that were implemented by lower positions. They also suggested that access to these leadership spaces was ambiguous beyond getting named on the annual leadership slate.

Participants described how there were nebulous pathways to obtain leadership development if they were not added to the slate for the executive board. Participant BS believed people were seeking leadership on the executive board for more genuine reasons:

I think they had different ideas that they want to bring to the chapter... they want to bring it in, try it out, try and make the chapter better, improve sisterhood and everything... they want the position to be able to put it on their résumé.

To sorority women, there was only one clear pathway to a leadership opportunity in which there was a logical progression through a hierarchy. Participant BS outlined this process:

I think they just, I think a lot of it is they've worked up the hierarchy a little bit of taking on a smaller role and maybe a little bit bigger role then maybe an exec role. I think for some people might just seem like the next logical step.

Regardless of the reasons for seeking leadership, each participant discussed the slating process as their only opportunity to obtain an executive board position. There was a perception of the limited executive positions as a process of nepotism, making them inaccessible. Participant NS indicated this partiality, "a lot of the people that are joining exec, they may have had a big or a close friend that previously was exec." When prompted, sorority women suggested that the slate is voted on collectively for the entire executive board and rarely challenged. If it was challenged, sorority members clarified that each position would be voted on individually.

Each sorority member suggested the only temporal frame of leadership opportunity was if they were added to the executive board slate during their sophomore or junior year. Positions ran from spring to fall, which overlapped at the end and beginning of two academic years. Thus, sorority women had a narrow window of opportunity to obtain a leadership position on their chapter executive board.

Limited Positions. Participants identified a general lack of leadership opportunities granted to a select few. They suggested that to gain leadership development training from their inter/national organizations, you had to hold an executive board position. However, there were few board positions compared to the number of members. Most of the sorority members suggested there were only seven executive positions in chapters that had an average size of 114 women.

This shaped the perception of women who did not see an executive board position as an accessible opportunity to develop leadership skills. Instead, it was perceived as a space of social prestige, as noted by Participant IU, who suggested,

people just do it because it looks good; they get to do some opportunities that other girls don't, like planning bid day and assigning big littles.

Others perceived it as an opportunity to gain a voice, as Participant QT noted, “I’ve seen people get on exec to be on exec to have like a higher power/voice in the chapter and have more of a say in what goes on.” However, sorority members suggested that those that want a voice often want power. LL said, “Some people want it like power or just want like the name to say that they were president or exec.”

According to the participants, inter/national headquarters and on-campus professionals spent more effort developing members’ leadership skills in executive leadership positions. Participant SC expanded on that by saying, “they (on-campus professionals) are usually more so working with the big leaders in the chapters and the big leaders in the councils.” Sorority chapter presidents met with the on-campus professionals at least once a month for the duration of their term. Participants all described opportunities to attend a regional leadership summit each spring semester and a leadership conference over the summer. Other chapter leaders also described how they attended a supplemental leadership retreat hosted by the on-campus staff but shared that they have difficulty getting leadership development in from their student life offices.

Individual Barriers

Identity Advocacy. Sorority women suggested they gained new perspectives about social class, LGBTQ+ experiences, and women in leadership roles. Participant SC suggested that her worldview was broadened about others’ “struggles” when she experienced an activity about privilege that her organization facilitated. Participant SC said previously, “I really haven’t ever met people who came from that rough background,” and she suggested her sorority leadership programming taught her about social class concepts.

Participants discussed how their experiences humanized relationships between members of the LGBTQ+ community within their chapter and their campus community. Most students previously did not have friendships with students that held these identities before joining their sorority. Participants suggested that their sorority leadership experiences normalized LGBTQ+ experiences, but they struggled to learn how to speak against intolerant members, specifically with regard to race.

Participant BS identified as Latina and shared that she experienced times when members appropriated her culture, like calling Cinco de Mayo “Cinco de Drinko” or mixing in some Spanish words in English sentences in what she called “mock Spanish.” When prompted if she ever had conversations with her organization members about cultural appropriation, she said:

I’m the type of person where not a lot bothers me. It doesn’t bother me too much, or like I’ll just laugh. It’s obviously like nothing been to a point where it, like, truly bothers me. Otherwise, I would say something.

Participant BS believed that the members of her organization would be open to having those conversations if she ever felt the need to bring it up. She noted that if she wanted the microaggressions to stop, she would have to step out of her comfort zone and assume the role of educator towards the more privileged population because she lacked the competency to confront others to call out racism or gender bias. Sorority members suggested that they had to do independent learning, and there was a lack of personal development training to better help them understand themselves and the experiences of others. They suggested only a few leaders gained these sorts of cultural competencies or other leadership development programming.

Responsibilities for Conduct. There were perceptions that the executive board was positioned to dispense member conduct in their chapters, limiting their focus on leadership experiences. Participants suggested that being on the executive board may affect relationships with other members, leading to social isolation. Participant SC told a story:

I remember one of our old presidents was like, yeah, no one ever wants to go out with me, like no one wants to go out and hang out with the president because they’re all like, oh my god, I could get in trouble.

Similarly, participant NS highlighted other members’ avoidance of chapter leaders, “This past year, they (the executive board) were ostracized. Like they were kind of, people were like, oh you can’t show them this, or you can’t go out with them type of things...” This sentiment was also felt by Participant QT, who suggested that being

on the executive board is unpopular:

Because you have to get everyone in trouble. People don't like you... I've seen friendships end over people on exec getting someone in trouble, like for something like a rule they broke, and the other person got mad.

Participant LL detailed how general members avoid executive board members and the tensions that exist with chapter leaders:

We had problems with some girls, like, took all the exec members out of group chats with their friends because they were mad because they got in trouble for social media... I have been yelled at multiple times, once on bid day in front of the ballroom in front of the entire crowd, about the design of a t-shirt for powder puff football. I got yelled at for that, which, just, like why. Yelled at in the (Student Union) which was good cause it was in front of a lot of people. Yelled at during chapter. There is a lot of yelling too.

NPC sorority women felt that executive board positions spent too much functioning in standards, compliance, or conduct roles. Instead, they perceived executive board positions as an opportunity for authority or positional power, rather than leadership development. However, they cited that there were no other formal ways to get leadership experiences outside these positions within their sororities. This disorientated NPC members seeking leadership development because there were unclear pathways for them.

Unclear Pathways for Development

Sorority women were also bewildered about leadership positions as they described officer retreats and other formal training for executive board positions, but not for all leadership roles. Those in chair positions or other non-executive board positions were often excluded from national training or supplemental leadership development programming. While the excluded positions varied by organization, NPC women consistently described examples of a lack of officer transition with realistic positional expectations, leading to them seeking alternative experiences for leadership development.

Officer Transition. When sorority women obtained leadership positions, they described an anomic transition process. Participant SC explained this process, "a lot of the time, it depends on how much that person wants to put into transitioning you. Some people are a lot better at it than others." Participant QT described an example of a similar lack of transition experience:

the girl actually like ended up going inactive, like, halfway through her position ... And that's when I got it, so there was really nobody to transition me. So, like, I got thrown into that.

There were also unclear differences in the scope of responsibilities for positions. Some lower-tier positions were referred to as coordinators or chairs. These were assigned positions, rather than elected, in which they were selected by member(s) of the executive board to serve. These were positions described by Participant BS as, "they just don't want that responsibility, or they're comfortable just being part of the chapter, or they prefer coordinator positions because they say it's not too much on their plate." Participant SC suggested it was disorienting if sorority members should assume a lower or higher-level position because of the different responsibilities that may be related to stress:

I know I've heard of some people saying they don't think it (joining the executive board) would be good for their mental health and stuff like that. That they have too much going on in their life.

For members taking on a lower-level leadership position, but not on the executive board, the primary form of training comes from a transition meeting with the person who previously held the position. As Participant LL describes,

kind of just, there is not like a structure from headquarters that we have for that (transition), it's just kind of whatever. I guess the president tells the rest of the positions what to do.

Sorority members were concerned about being overextended. It was unclear to them which positions to assume if they wanted leadership experience because often there were unclear expectations or diffusion of power. Participants suggested that the stress of holding an executive position happens when either of the positions under

them does not fulfill their responsibilities, and executive board members are expected to assume unfulfilled obligations. Or, the members in the executive position do not trust the people under them enough to delegate responsibilities. General members perceived executive board members as ultimately responsible for the chapter operations. This indicates that general members see the executive board as finished products, instead of fellow students developing their leadership skills. NPC women felt that leadership transitions or training did not develop their leadership skills during their time in the chapters.

Seeking Alternative Experiences. Sorority members were frustrated with unclear progressions for leadership development, such as with established pathways beginning with the new member experience or prospective member stage. NPC women noted that eventually, many members gave up seeking leadership development within their chapter to look across campus and suggested a lack of accessibility of leadership development specifically for women. They cited a lack of specific programs or associated spaces for women's leadership development. Participant SC explained that the process of leadership is gained through experiential learning:

I think a lot of it is honestly just self-taught.... Honestly, yeah, pretty much because a lot of that stuff I just learned from being in those roles and being in those positions and having to either go through uncomfortable situations.

Given these leadership development limitations, sorority women shared how they gained leadership experiences through community service beyond holding any position because they felt some of those experiences were not developmental for them in shaping their leadership capacity. All sorority members were required to complete a specific amount of community service each semester, either with the partnered philanthropy or other organizations in the community. While most participants were not heavily involved with philanthropies and community service in high school, they all had profound experiences as members of their sorority. They perceived these experiences as forms of leadership development. Participant SC reflecting on her time, said,

It's really like almost none of your time if you really think about it, like doing it like a couple hours here and there, like you're really not sacrificing much to do a good service.

These experiences happened independently from holding a leadership position but were not structured enough to be considered leadership development experiences. Instead, these experiences created a foundation on which future leadership skills can be built for sorority members. Participant BS talked about the different community service opportunities she learned about:

When I did like the day of service, like for Greek Week, that was a lot of different types of community service as well there were different styles...the principal really loved whenever we came like they want us to come again and like seeing the feedback from the kids and the teachers as well. It does encourage us to continue to want to be part of the philanthropy, want to give back to the community.

Sorority women also discussed how they often felt overlooked by campus professionals and looked towards these offices to substitute or address their leadership development gaps. Participant ZU noted:

I think all the student life staff assume we don't need more leadership training because we are in a sorority which is supposed to create women leaders. It's just like that is not happening, because only the exec boards get any leadership training from the national office and get to go conferences for that stuff. I can't find anything for women on my campus.

All the sorority women noted that there were no intentional, targeted women's leadership programs on their campus. The participants cited many examples for men and were very interested in participating in formal, curricular experiences which would be transcriptable or formally documented. Sorority women wanted their own leadership development programs to learn about their identities and growth to complement their sorority experience, which initially served as a gateway to develop their interest in leadership development.

DISCUSSION

This study explored how NPC sorority members negotiated leadership development and experiences in their sorority chapters. The findings from this study suggest that other chapter peers and the current infrastructure served as barriers to member leadership development. Current efforts from professionals focused exclusively on the executive board, especially the president. It is unclear if members experienced different levels of leadership development depending on their position. These findings contribute to existing research and directly address the research questions, which asked how NPC sorority members negotiate leadership opportunities and the extent to which inter/national programs were supporting their development.

Research question one explored the barriers identified by NPC women holding leadership positions. Sorority women recognized that leadership is not positional, and anyone in an organization can be a leader. Yet, they wanted formal positions for a variety of personal growth aspirations or to obtain power. Structural and individual barriers existed, including homogeneity and the “slating” process that women felt presented them with limited leadership opportunities, especially given the narrow window of opportunity to be selected. Sororities offered limited chances for their members to develop social perspective-taking because of their homogeneity, but peer interaction across racial or gender identity differences influences leadership development (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Johnson et al., 2015). Some NPC chapters may have the components needed for their members to develop social perspective taking, such as with LGBTQ+ or social class, as found in this study. However, simply being in a diverse group does not affect leadership development (Parker & Pascarella, 2013). There must be direct interaction between diverse peers (Goedereis & Sasso, 2020; Parker & Pascarella, 2018).

Research question two examined the extent to which NPC members felt campus, and inter/national staff and programs were helpful. Women indicated that others in the few executive board positions received leadership development opportunities they did not, as student affairs professionals and national staff focused on their development, rather than other women or the chapter. Both executive and non-executive members did not experience long-term programs that are shown to develop individual outcomes, such as those associated with the social change model (Martin et al., 2012; Hevel et al., 2014). Keating et al. (2014) identified having high leadership self-efficacy as a prerequisite to developing leadership skills and found that the practice of leadership skills develops leadership capacity. However, sorority women all felt overlooked by their campus staff and noted their awareness of a lack of intentional comprehensive women’s leadership development programs on their campus. Thus, they were unclear about alternative pathways for leadership development if they did not have a formal leadership position and looked towards service learning opportunities which have a profound impact on participants (Snell et al., 2015).

Sorority women did not offer suggestions for sorority reform but instead negotiated chapters and organizational structures with acknowledged limitations. Moreover, the undertones of the women in this study suggest that they and other sorority women are seeking leadership experiences and curricular-based competencies. It is unclear if all the women in this study experienced a similar development pattern, although sororities are potential gateways for leadership development during the first-year experience (Martin et al., 2012). Therefore, NPC sororities offer sites of belonging and placemaking, which may allow for expanded women’s leadership development if there is complementary co-curricular and curricular leadership development.

Limitations

There are limitations associated with the study and its findings. This study featured a heterogeneous sample drawn only from five public institutions. This may limit the transferability of the sample. The researchers of this study are members of national sororities and fraternities and may have *a priori* knowledge which may have influenced the participants’ responses. Also, some participants may have selectively disclosed because of social desirability demands. Given these considerations, the findings are not necessarily transferable across all sorority leadership development experiences. Future research should address this research study’s limitations to explore women’s leadership development in other culturally-based and identity-based sororities.

Implications for Practice

There are three recommendations for practice connected to the findings of this study to help facilitate gaps in programming to promote sorority women's leadership development. They are recommended with the assumption to redirect efforts to practices that could have a greater economy of scale to expand women's leadership development to include sorority women. Such programs should consider the limitations of social class to make them accessible to commuters or first-generation students (Goedereis & Sasso, 2020; Sasso & Paladini, 2021).

Inclusive Women's Leadership Institute. Sorority members wanted more personal development to become better leaders. They specifically struggled with cultural competency or confronting others. Therefore, inclusive leadership institutes in a weekend or modular format could be implemented to promote cultural competency. Schoper et al. (2020) also highlighted the lack of intentionality and anomic nature of "community-wide" programs to get involved in leadership programs, regardless of position. Schoper identified this as the, "positional, machine method approach to leadership development also focuses on what students need to know and lacks an intentional focus on how students come to know it" (2020, p. 100). These mandatory brief programs have less demonstrated efficacy (Reyes et al., 2019).

An inclusive women's leadership institute should address issues of personal development and humanize the experiences of difference and marginality (Parker & Pascarella, 2018). However, efforts to increase cultural competency can require disproportionate resources and draw these away from the needs of Students of Color and recenter whiteness (Ashlee et al., 2020). The curricula for leadership programs should be culturally sensitive by centering diverse voices by including more feminist perspectives (Sasso, Biddix, et al., 2020; Taylor, 2010).

Women in Leadership Development (WILD) Programs. The participants noted the different structures ranging from year-long or only semester-long leadership cycles and the nuanced ways the slating process filters women leaders. Sasso, Biddix, et al. (2020) suggested that chapter leadership opportunities could be expanded by decentralizing power to move towards more inclusive leadership involving more women. However, given the differences across organizations, student affairs professionals should consider implementing WILD programs, which increase self-efficacy and leadership capacity of undergraduate women who participate in long-term, comprehensive leadership programs (Ericksen, 2009). These programs are undergirded by feminist perspectives, which teach history and other gender-specific curriculum which addresses the gaps noted by the women in this study and Taylor (2010). Existing NPC leadership programming for women did not contextualize women's ways of knowing or other feminist perspectives (Taylor, 2010).

Complementary National Programs. Participants were approached during their new member period to apply for a leadership position within the chapter and were then slated. Therefore, new member education should be a space to teach and practice leadership skills to the new members beyond teaching the history and values of their organization. National organizations should move beyond the first-year leadership gateway identified by Martin et al. (2012) toward a more comprehensive total membership development program incorporating leadership education and development. Incorporate new members into committees and coordinator positions as early as possible. This will provide opportunities to practice these skills while they are new members, promoting an easier transition into positions with more responsibility. NPC organizations should consider implementing formal leadership programs for their members beyond short-term events such as leadership retreats or workshops which have demonstrated efficacy (Rosch & Caza, 2012).

Participants noted that the transition for their position was situational, which depended on one-time retreats or the willingness of the previous leader to train them. These programs should be organized through formalized curricula with measured learning outcomes using a conceptual framework such as the social change model (Parker & Pascarella, 2018). They should also integrate career connections to leadership development which helps integrate co-curricular learning (Peck, 2018; Peck & Callahan, 2019; Walker & Havice, 2016). These programs should be voluntary, supporting greater program efficacy (Reyes et al., 2019). Dugan and Komives (2010) also suggested that long-term leadership programs are best for developing individual leadership outcomes and last at least one academic year.

CONCLUSION

Sorority women had to locate unintentional, informal ways of learning as there were barriers from their peers and limitations to the leadership opportunities within their chapters. This study indicates that NPC sorority women often struggled to identify opportunities beyond their organizations. NPC sororities have the potential to be transformational for their women and their campus communities. Ballinger et al. (2020) stated, “a beauty of the system is its ability to meet the needs of a diverse student body” (144). Student involvement professionals must focus on “how all such groups can exist with a greater sense of purpose – one befitting colleges and universities that truly seek to shape lives that matter” (Sasso, Biddix, et al., 2020, xii). Leadership development programs should also be available to all sorority members to learn the position before they assume their responsibilities, but with the intention not to reinforce the “positional machine,” as Schoper et al. (2020) noted. This consistent training could make the executive board more confident in delegating responsibilities to the positions under them. NPC sororities offer an opportunity for leadership development, but need additional opportunities for contextualization as women.

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COLLEGE-SPONSORED MENTAL HEALTH CLUBS: MAXIMIZING SUCCESS AND REDUCING RISKS

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Abstract

College-sponsored Mental Health Clubs (MHCs) are a 21st-century phenomenon, helping to reduce mental health stigma at colleges across the country. MHCs take many shapes, but most focus on psychoeducation, reducing stigma, advocacy, and peer-to-peer support. These clubs are especially attractive to groups like LGBTQ students and students of color who come to college with additional traumas and identity issues. Trends in training club leaders and members are discussed, and the role of the counseling center as a sponsoring organization is highlighted. Issues of liability are presented, particularly those having to do with: a) the responsibilities of mental health club advisors, b) duty to warn issues, c) dual relationship issues, and d) brave space paradigms and triggering situations. The need and utility of peer-to-peer support groups have been well-documented for decades. Still, the successful transition to mental health clubs under the auspicious of the college requires special vigilance to protect both students and the college.

In December 2021, the Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, recognized the ongoing mental health crisis among youth and young adults and issued the Surgeon General's Advisory on *Protecting Youth Mental Health* (2021). The statistics are both convincing and cause for alarm. Even before the pandemic, mental health issues were the leading cause of poor life outcomes in young people. Twenty percent of youth ages 3-17 have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder. One in three students reports persistent feelings of sadness (Whitney & Patterson, 2019). While persistent feelings of sadness do not qualify for a specific DSM diagnosis, it does speak loudly about the quality of life among today's youth.

Most startling, between 2007 and 2018, there was a 57% increase in the suicide rate among youth ages 10-24 (Curtin, 2020). In 2020, it was estimated that there were more than 6,600 suicide deaths in this age group (Curtin et al., 2021). While the 2021 Surgeon General's report is focused on the 17 and under, the vulnerable youth referenced in the report have now experienced two-plus years of covid restrictions, trauma, loss, and isolation and are current undergraduates in our universities and colleges. College data confirm the downward trajectory. Thirty-nine percent of college students state they are coping with a serious mental health issue while in college, yet, over two-thirds will never seek professional help (Liu, 2019).

Over the past decade, student-led *mental health clubs* (MHCs) have been founded and are making a significant positive impact on college campuses across the country (Nutt, 2018; Bauer-Wolf, 2018; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2018). For example, in 2019, a University of Rhode Island student started the "r u ok" club, which now has over 200 students signed up. In 2021, a Howard University student started the Phoenix mental health club to support students who have experienced trauma. Active Minds, a national nonprofit mental health organization, has a chapter founded in 2016 at Mount Mary University (Walther, Abelson, & Malmon, 2014). As student-led organizations have been steadily increasing, college counseling centers have seen an increase in student utilization

of services. According to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (2021) annual report, there is a high demand for counseling services. Still, the capacity to treat based on the clinical load index for the campus center varies, and treatment is becoming increasingly less effective and sustainable. Most college counseling centers that have a high clinical load index struggle to provide services to all students and often will need to refer students to external sources to receive treatment. Hence, students have mobilized themselves to get help by forming college-sanctioned clubs, which allows them to raise funds, get physical meeting space, have access to faculty sponsors, and offer services and support to students that are difficult to access elsewhere, while colleges attempt to address the mental health crisis on their campuses. It is important to note that these clubs are not designed to be a substitute for services that counseling centers should provide. Instead, these mental health clubs offer peer support, community, and connection among students that cannot be easily duplicated or created within the walls of a counseling center.

Mental Health Clubs (MHCs) is the umbrella term we will use in this article to refer to all college clubs whose primary goal is healing dysphoric effect and stigma via education, advocacy, and the total spectrum of peer-to-peer support activities. Theoretically, MHCs should have many curative components: they provide students with same-age peers that they can rely on, reduce social and physical isolation, provide role models of successful coping in difficult situations, and allows the helping relationship to be more reciprocal with members giving and receiving support and advice. Additionally, peer-to-peer support groups do not carry the stigma, embarrassment, or cost of using formal mental health services. Most students feel less judged and more easily understood by their classmates than by an unfamiliar adult.

MHCs take many different forms, but two of the most widespread are Active Minds (Walther, Abelson, & Malmon, 2014) and NAMI on Campus (Cook, 2007). Active Minds has chapters on over 600 campuses. They provide a variety of services, such as community outreach and education, a speaker's bureau, a suicide prevention traveling display, and peer support. The peer outreach program is based on a three-step procedure VAR (Validate, Appreciate, and Refer) that helps create healthy boundaries between peers and involves one-hour training session that includes videos, Q & A, and group discussions (Walther, Abelson, & Malmon, 2014). The goal is to teach students how to respond to friends that may approach them with their feelings of distress. Active Minds does not officially promote any organized peer-to-peer support groups.

On the other hand, NAMI on Campus uses student-led groups to educate the student body about mental health challenges and reduce stigma (Cook, 2007). NAMI has developed many campus materials, including toolkits, templates, and ideas for club meetings. NAMI on campus specifically states on its website that it is not a support group nor a therapy group but instead focuses on walks, fairs, speakers, student panels, and advocacy for improved mental health services and policies on campus.

Another growing organization is To Write Love On Her Arms (TWLOHA), a national mental health advocacy organization with 65 student-led college chapters (TWLOHA, 2011). Focused on suicide prevention and awareness, they prepare yearly campus events for a Suicide Prevention Day campaign in September each year. They encourage each campus to make the events culturally attuned to their campus. One campus, for example, asked students to respond to the prompt "tomorrow needs me because...". The note cards were then displayed all around campus.

These franchised groups serve a critical function, providing campus communities with well-developed resources and organizational backup. At least one study shows that Active Minds is achieving its goals, reducing the stigma of mental health struggles, and seeking help when needed. In this study, 1000 students at California colleges ranked their engagement with Active Minds on their campus as "low," "medium," or "high." At year's end, those who increased their engagement with Active Minds had significantly better knowledge of mental health issues, were less likely to stigmatize mental health problems, and, most importantly, were significantly more likely to help other students experiencing a mental health crisis (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2018). This is the first large-scale intervention to show that MHCs on campus can reduce stigma and increase empathic support. These goals are in line with what students say are needed on campus. Elbulok-Charcape et al. (2021) recently reported a survey

of over 1200 geographically diverse students. They found students felt the greatest need for a) education (21% of responses), b) awareness of mental health problems and stigma, and c) a positive atmosphere (17% of responses). However, students diagnosed or treated for a mental health disorder were more likely than other students to want to see structural changes, including curriculum innovation and reconceptualization of mental health themes.

Change is currently being met on college campuses in various ways that contribute to failures and improvement in student mental health. Counseling center directors are aware of the demand for services, and in their attempt to meet the demand (AUCCCD, 2019), centers have moved to provide short-term support treatment, referring students to off-campus services, and reducing campus outreach which reduces the quality of care and awareness on campus. Although there are challenges to meeting the needs of all students, counseling centers are increasing their clinician training and services to meet the needs of the LGBTQ campus community and those who identify as Transgender and Gender Expansive (Couture, 2017; Swanbrow et al., 2017). Additionally, Coley and Das (2020) identified over 62% of colleges and universities have LGBTQ student groups. However, there is an urgent need for all institutions with LGBTQ groups. Organizations such as the Campus Pride in Faith coalition work nationally and on individual campuses to protest a lack of equity, affirmation, and safety on religious-affiliated campuses (Campus Pride, 2022). Campus Pride clubs are activists for the LGBTQ community and want to restructure faith-based colleges so that “faith, sexuality, and gender identity are not mutually exclusive” (Campus Pride, 2022). Changes promoted include student recruitment and retention, targeted counseling services, course majors, course offerings, and promoting inclusive readings and/or lectures. A web-based international group, CenterLink’s LGBTQ Community Center Member Directory, provides a worldwide guide to LGBTQ community centers, many of which are housed on college campuses (Centerlink, n.d.). CenterLink helps these clubs communicate with each other, share ideas and strategies for change, and mobilize across campuses.

College Choice has empowered students to make informed college choice decisions by offering an alternative top-school ranking system for LGBTQ students (*Best LGBTQ Schools*, 2021). When ranking the most supportive colleges for LGBTQ youth, each college was ranked using criteria designed to assess inclusion and access for its LGBTQ youth. The following are examples of questions used for ranking: Does the school have gender-neutral restrooms and showers? Does the school have LGBTQ-specific scholarships? Does the school have LGBTQ-specific counseling services? Using these additional criteria, the top 5 colleges were the University of Pennsylvania, Ohio State University, UCLA, Washington University in St. Louis, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (*Best LGBTQ Schools*, 2021). The presence of organizations, such as Campus Pride and College Choice, creates an environment where LGBTQ students can find helpful resources to navigate their college experience. More importantly, when a college campus climate of acceptance and solidarity is present, students are more likely to engage in the campus community and mental health-seeking behaviors (Heiden-Rootes et al., 2020; Kosyluk et al., 2015). Hence, the work of these organizations and student-led MHCs is especially relevant because LGBTQ students tend to have higher levels of substance abuse, depression, and suicide ideation (Cole & Das, 2020; Jacques, 2020; Pryor, 2015).

It should come as no surprise that the avalanche of mental health problems and crises on college campuses (Oswalt et al., 2020; Kruisselbrink, 2013; Kirsch, 2014) has mobilized students to organize for more intimate, disclosing peer support groups in the form of university-sponsored clubs. These clubs provide peer-to-peer support, resources, and activities, and even help reduce stigma by changing the campus climate to support mental health among student populations. Although the mission statements of such clubs preclude “psychotherapy,” they offer a safe environment for healing and dialogue. Student-led MHCs run the gamut from wellness clubs with an activity focus to peer support clubs with a self-disclosure component to all types of hybrids in between. For example, Duke’s student government sponsors a physical space where students can “relax, re-energize and recharge” with holistic offerings such as drum circles, guided meditations, Koru mindfulness, paint night, tai chi, and tea ceremonies. It is directed toward the typical “stressed student.” On the peer support end, Ithaca College’s Active Minds holds “Speak Your Mind” panels where students share their stories or the stories of family and friends. At the University of Davis, NAMI on Campus hosts “In Your Own Voice,” where the community invites students with mental health challenges to share their experiences. Although these mental health clubs offer var

ious activities with safeguards in place for possible triggering events, they should be explored at a deeper level. Still, it should be clear that these safeguards, as well as clear guidelines, do not serve as a replacement for students who may need clinical intervention.

CULTURAL RESPONSIVITY IN PEER-TO-PEER MENTAL HEALTH CLUBS

For HBCUs and students of color at PWIs, peer-to-peer groups are an important component of a holistic education. Walker (2015) surveyed 2000 students; unfortunately, only 227 completed the survey. Using open-ended questions, Walker reported that over a third of students reported traumas, from natural disasters to interpersonal violence (IPV) to death. This is in accord with the large-scale Kaiser Permanente study, which found that Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) were unevenly distributed among racial groups, with 61% of black children and 51% of Hispanic children experiencing at least one ACE, compared to 40% of white children. While there were significant demographic differences, in most areas, black children were most at risk. We know that ACEs affect many life outcomes, including health (obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, broken bones), behaviors (smoking, alcoholism, drug use), and life potential (graduation rates, academic achievement, lost time from work). When students of color come to college with these additional stressors, peer-to-peer support can be invaluable. Several articles in recent years corroborate the positive impact of peer-to-peer support on the academic and social forefront for African Americans at HBCUs and PWIs (Watkins & Mensah, 2019). Peer support has been credited as a primary reason for how African American STEM students can finish their undergraduate and graduate training. Same-race peer support for African Americans at PWIs has been shown to help students cope with the negative impacts of race-related issues, lack of diversity, and exclusion.

At the University of Virginia, a group of African American undergraduate students formed a peer counseling organization to promote mental wellness called Project RISE, Resolving Issues through Support and Education (Nearly, 2007). Oriented towards attracting Black students, peer counselors aim to create a positive atmosphere where students can receive help and information and have someone to talk to about their problems. What is distinctive about this organization is that it is housed between the Office of African American Affairs and the Counseling and Psychological Services department (*Project Rise*, n.d.). Project RISE participants can get counseling from their peers and have access to a licensed professional if their needs exceed what a peer counselor can handle. Furthermore, student counselors must complete a 3-credit Peer Counseling Theory and Skills course. The relevance of having peer support groups that specifically target minority students cannot be overemphasized, given that African Americans report higher rates of trauma exposure and experiences with discrimination and racism (Watkins & Mensah, 2016; Boyraz et al., 2013).

TYPE OF TRAINING AND SUPERVISION PROVIDED IN PEER-TO-PEER GROUPS

Peer-to-peer support should not be a competitor to the college counseling center or other formal mental health services off campus. Rather a best practices model may be to have peer-to-peer support as an auxiliary service of the Counseling Center. College Counseling Centers are best prepared to train student supporters and their club work.

Groups with a staff member from the Counseling Center can safely take on a more self-disclosing, explorative style. Project RISE at UVA has succeeded at peer counseling, partly due to its connection with its counseling center and course offerings. Another good example is Harvard University's Student Mental Health Liaisons (SMHL) which was created as a partnership between students and the university's Counseling and Mental Health Services. The group, which is supervised by clinicians, have an orientation session where member share stories about their own mental health journey and prepare for challenging college situations that may arise during the year. The group also offers workshops to upper-level students on how to support a friend. Linking the mental health group directly with the college counseling center provides invaluable support to the club and the student.

Although the clubs mentioned thus far received support from either national organizations such as SAMSA and/or their campus counseling center. The degree, frequency, and type of supervision are specifically discussed. Although the outcome data on supervision, in general, is an evolving field, research does indicate that from the supervisor's perspective, assuring "safe practices" is the most important component of supervision. At the same time, for the supervisee, "trust" and "having a safe place to bring problems" is the most important component (Pack, 2012). Britt and Gleaves (2011) also found that collaboration and mutual understanding were most important to clinical psychology trainees, but again there was no examination of the impact of the supervision on services. The most needed data contribution would be to show which type of supervision, with which type of supervisee, treating which type of problems, in which type of context leads to the most successful outcomes for the student (or client) seeking help. Currently, we are a long way from being able to describe that taxonomy. There is general agreement that the best supervision is tied to assessing the supervisees' skills, attitudes, and relationship competencies (Gonsalvez & Crowe, 2014).

Acknowledging the need for training among mental health clubs, Mental Health First Aid offers a crisis-response training program geared toward higher-education environments. It can be accessed by all universities (*ABOUT MHFA*, n.d.). The cost of training is reasonable (\$150 per certificate), and the curricula are excellent. The topics covered include depression and mood disorders, anxiety disorders, trauma, psychosis, and substance use disorders. Their first aid action kit is fivefold and involves assessing for risk of suicide or harm, listening non-judgmentally, giving reassurance and information, encouraging appropriate professional help, and encouraging self-help and other support strategies. They then learn how to apply these skills in the most common scenarios to help a peer with panic attacks, suicidal thoughts or behaviors, non-suicidal self-injury, active psychosis, overdose or withdrawal from alcohol or drugs, and reaction to a traumatic event. While large-scale evidence-based outcome studies have yet to be done, several case reports from colleges that have adopted the program report that the demand is very high and that RAs who receive the training feel better prepared. The authors believe Mental Health First Aid provides stellar leadership in this area and will hopefully be adopted and expanded upon by more campuses.

At Uncle Joe's Peer Counseling and Resource Center (n.d.) at Washington University in St. Louis, 60 student counselors—each with more than 100 hours of training—hold one-on-one sessions at the program's office or by phone to help students cope with anxiety, depression, and campus-life issues. Their extensive curricula mirror much of what is found in the Mental Health First Aid training. It is important to note that the Uncle Joes (student counselors) are not mandatory reporters, although they can and will report if they deem the student is in immediate harm or danger to themselves or someone else. Additionally, in an effort not to be a substitute for psychotherapy, Uncle Joes has a "one time per issue" policy. Students may visit their office as often as they would like, provided they talk about different issues each visit. In short ongoing counseling is not the mission of Uncle Joe. Instead, they are available to provide support and resources to fellow students in need.

Like Uncle Joe's Peer Counseling and Resource Center, mental health clubs with the least liability restrict their activities to community education, advocacy, structured support, and referral for needy students. Mental health clubs that go beyond offering a physical space for healing and offer a healing peer community where intimate thoughts and feelings are shared in a safe space are open to possible liability risks.

To maximize the success of MHCs on campus and minimize their exposure to potential litigation, each club needs to develop strategies to navigate common ethical quandaries and reporting standards for when a member may be in immediate danger to themselves or others. In so doing, they will be able to provide better services and, hopefully, reduce the incidence of negative events. It is important to note that very few student suicide cases on a college campus have led to litigation (Lapp, 2010). For example, the Iowa Supreme Court's 2000 decision in *Jain v. Iowa* did not hold the University of Iowa liable for not preventing the suicide of Sanjay Jain. Although the university was aware of the student's risk and previous attempts, the court found the university did not have a duty to protect another individual from self-harm because the university did not have a "special relationship" with the student. It is recognized by the courts that "special relationships" exist under custodial care, i.e., prisons and hospitals (Lapp, 2010; Gray, 2007). However, due to the rise in suicides on college campuses, amendments

such as the “Restatement (Third) of Torts section 40...specifically list a “school with its students” as one of the “special relations” giving rise to “a duty of reasonable care...” (Lake & Tribbensee, 2002, p. 631).

Counseling centers are the most appropriate branch of the college to develop mental health club guidelines. These guidelines can be used to train campus leaders (faculty sponsors and student leaders) and codify the counseling center’s role. This organizational/oversight role can build a bridge between peer-to-peer support groups and responsible university oversight. Several models are possible, and each institution must craft its own guidelines. However, the following four areas should be covered in all guidelines: responsibilities of mental health club advisors, duty to warn issues, dual relationship issues, brave space paradigms, and handling triggering situations.

UNIQUE REQUIREMENTS OF MENTAL HEALTH FACULTY SPONSORS

The notion of students forming clubs to work on personal traumas, distressed affect, and emotional coping has been rising in light of counseling centers being overwhelmed by demand (Kirsch, 2014; Kruisselbrink, 2013). Most college clubs have historically been focused on shared hobbies, skills, political ideologies, social issues, or other extra-curricular passions (Montelongo, 2002). Self-help/advocacy groups, on the other hand, are about intrapsychic pain, breaking down stigma and shame, and exposing trauma as well as painful, intimate relationships in a raw, vulnerable manner. If most groups are about sublimated defenses, MHCs that focus on peer-to-peer support are about naked anxieties associated with the pain and trauma of the human condition. Some of the most vulnerable students on campus will invariably be drawn to these clubs, and the students are more at risk of facing ethical quandaries and mental health emergencies.

Therefore, the first rule of preventative liability for campus mental health clubs should be to recruit a licensed mental health professional. This professional could serve as a faculty advisor or group mentor. Recruitment efforts should focus on forming relationships with staff members from the Counseling Center. Having a licensed mental health professional partnered with the MHC will allow for more efficient and appropriate referrals when needed. Hopefully, doing so will help the club meetings focus on advocacy, education, and structured peer support (e.g., listening and validating). If a non-licensed faculty member sponsors the mental health club, there should be a clear liaison relationship with some point person at the Counseling Center.

In most campus clubs, faculty sponsors do not attend many of the club meetings, if at all. They are available to facilitate activities that the club cannot do on its own (e.g., procuring printing vouchers for posters) or don’t know the proper procedures to execute (e.g., opening an account for their fundraisers). All faculty sponsors should be available when a club has problems of any kind. However, if the club’s purpose is mental health, the problems likely to arise may stretch into unknown, uncomfortable, or crisis-oriented territory. Faculty sponsors need to be aware of such possibilities when they accept such a position.

DUTY TO WARN ISSUES OF FACULTY CLUB ADVISORS

The first potential land mine for MHCs involves duty-to-warn issues. In virtually all states, a club advisor’s legally mandated and professionally responsible actions are the same whether the faculty club advisor is a licensed mental health worker or a faculty advisor without any mental health experience. Both would have a “duty to warn” if they have direct knowledge that a student(s) clearly intends to hurt themselves, another member, or a nonmember. It has generally been agreed that college faculty and administrators have a duty to warn if an identifiable person is potentially being harmed and if the university can protect the student against the foreseeable risk. This is an expansion of the original *Tarasoff vs. the Board of Regents California Supreme Court* case that ruled that a psychiatrist has a duty to warn potential victims of harm if their client has disclosed a specific intent to harm a specific person(s). In addition to warning about imminent or potential danger, under Title IX, responsible employees (e.g., faculty advisors) must report incidences that constitute sexual assault, harassment, stalking, or dating violence (Holland & Cortina, 2017). The university bears this duty to warn because the student(s) relies on the university to provide a safe environment for their growth and well-being, much like a client relies on the therapist. When a college or university has responsibly discharged its duty to warn and protect, they

have upheld its legal and ethical responsibilities (Lake & Tribbensee, 2002; Lapp, 2010).

It is a more difficult call if the club advisor has firsthand knowledge, but the facts are fuzzier or less direct. For example, UCLA was sued because a faculty member had a paranoid schizophrenic student who complained that comments by other students were interfering with his thinking. Later this student stabbed a fellow student in the chest. The student survived but sued the university for “failure to warn” (Dolan, 2018). While the ill student did not indicate a specific person he was going to harm, he was projecting irrational abilities onto his classmates and was incapable of reality-testing about his peers. The issue becomes even more complicated because the ADA protects student’s privacy and discriminatory college actions based on unreasonable fears and prejudices, which might well be apropos in the case mentioned above since the vast majority of those with mental illness, including paranoid schizophrenics, do not commit violent crimes (Goren, 2018).

Goren believes universities should be liable for the violent actions of students with known mental health problems because students depend on their colleges for a safe environment. Colleges can help maximize safety with respect to the activities they sponsor and the facilities they control. The ADA protections that all people should have a right to engage in community activities is a competing policy based on competing values and would lean towards protecting the privacy of the disabled student unless there is a clear and present danger.

So, if a club member hears that another student is ruminating about suicide or plans to harm someone else, how should the support student respond? Beyond the training offered by the colleges within their student affairs departments, faculty advisors and club members should recreate guidelines for handling these situations within a club context. A protocol might include an orientation session for all potential club members where the duty to warn policy of the university is reviewed, and the steps required of peer supporters are understood and doable. There may be signed agreements attesting that club members have been told and understand how to contact the faculty club sponsor if they are worried that a club member has threatened to harm themselves or another person. Students should also attest that they understand the peer support protocols to be followed when a club member is in distress.

For the faculty mentor, hearing that a club member is in distress puts them in a delicate situation. Do they have a moral obligation to reach out to the student to see if they want to meet? Should they notify the Counseling Center of the incident? What other University officials or offices should be notified? How should they advise the student coming to them with this information? What type of follow-up is needed? Colleges should develop case-based discussion sessions for club advisors based on these problematic scenarios and have policies that follow best practices.

DUAL RELATIONSHIP ISSUES WITH FACULTY ADVISORS

Whenever an academic professional enters a relationship other than the one preconditioned by contractual obligation, they enter the domain of dual relationships (Gross, 2005a; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Dual relationships can happen during or after the contractual relationship has ended and are dangerous to both parties. The student/advisor status differential is a power differential where the student is the vulnerable party and at risk for exploitation.

Dual relationships can emerge when a faculty advisor has a club member as a student in a class. If the club advisor has been privy to personal information in their role as club advisor, they may give the student preferential treatment or discriminate against the student. Dual relationships are more likely to elicit ethical and moral dilemmas for the faculty advisors to mental health clubs than other clubs because of the intimate nature of the club. The advisor may feel that their counsel can help the student, particularly if they refuse to go to the Counseling Center. This advisement may go beyond academic counseling, career counseling, or normal advisement functions. Vulnerable students may misinterpret caring cues of the advisor as inappropriate, sexually suggestive, or unwanted. Despite these pitfalls, there are times when dual relationships are helpful or even lifesaving. The club advisor is best protected by a) being warned of such conflicts as a club advisor, b) sharing concerns as soon as a dual relationship is recognized, c) seeking all possible options for the student that would not involve the

advisor, and documenting these efforts, and, d) consult with their department chair if uncomfortable situations arise and triage a solution that protects both parties.

TRIGGERING SITUATIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY CLUB SPONSOR

The main goal of mental health clubs is to reduce stigma and shame and facilitate healing. However, it is essential to acknowledge mental health clubs are not without risks because they are likely to expose their members to traumatic triggers. The type of situations that trigger students are highly individualized but can include micro-aggressions, humiliating comments, harsh tones, topics that touch on IPV, aggression, mass murders, shameful behaviors, and judging. For example, Dolman (2018) presents the case of a medical student who complained that a case-based discussion of the bias against giving opioids in the ER to a young man with many tattoos was “triggering” for him. Within a club context, students may be triggered by various issues at club meetings or events. Whether it be a film viewing or peer disclosures, the nature of trauma can be both predictable and unpredictable. The high intensity of emotional stimuli can trigger a physiological shutdown response where individuals “freeze” and begin to experience any or all the symptoms associated with their own trauma. For example, a student hearing about an incident of sexual abuse may begin to have flashbacks about their own sexual abuse history, feel panic, and put themselves in a flight-or-fight mode where they are focused on their own emotional safety instead of the reality at hand. In these situations where the trigger has a negative impact, there should be procedures to help alleviate the situation.

Mental health clubs can best approach triggering situations by explicitly wrapping club activities around a brave space framework instead of a safe space framework. Brave spaces are not necessarily free of discomfort but use the following five guidelines to facilitate growth instead of panic: a) all opinions are accepted as valid for discussion; b) participants must own their intentions but also own the impact that their statements have on others; c) all participants are free to exit challenging conversations and the room where they are occurring; d) all members express respect for each other’s personhood and e) everyone vows not to inflict harm on another intentionally (Wasserman, 2021). It might be argued that the club context is, ipso facto, a safe space since all members have experienced or are in tune with the burden of mental health challenges. It may be naively assumed that statements made in the peer support context would not be as triggering as those same comments made in other settings. However, atop the usual college angst, potentially traumatic disclosures and triggering situations seem unavoidable in today’s culture. A safe place can instantly become unsafe if the appropriate trigger appears at the appropriate time.

Preventative strategies to reduce negative instances of triggering should focus on brave space frameworks and ensure all faculty sponsors are comfortable helping students enact that framework. It might be useful for club leaders to begin each meeting by reminding participants that if the conversation gets too intense or uncomfortable, they should feel free to leave and/or go to a designated alternative place until they want to return.

In summary, as MHCs continue to grow in large numbers on college campuses across the US, the positive impact of peer-to-peer support provided by students cannot be understated. Research continues to link positive outcomes such as improved academic performance and better physical, mental, and emotional health as benefits from peer-to-peer support groups (Gruber, 2008; Hirsch & Barton, 2011; Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). Specifically, Bissonette and Szymanski (2019) report that peer groups offer identity validation, community, and acceptance for LGBTQ students. MHCs offer ongoing peer-to-peer support centered on providing healing spaces and resources. Nevertheless, it is important for the MHCs to establish and follow university protocols that maintain a level of professionalism and care and protect students and faculty from negative incidents, such as liability and unintentional harm. Regardless of the good intentions of these groups, adverse effects among members can occur without proper oversight and supervision. College counseling centers must take on an active role in the guidance and supervision of these clubs. There is no substitute for psychotherapy, nor is there a substitute for community and connection created among peers who address mental health. Mental health stakeholders are needed on all fronts to promote wellness and wholeness on college campuses.

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MIMICKING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CAPITALISM IN THE CLASSROOM: USING *STARPOWER* TO DEMONSTRATE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, PRIVILEGE, AND OPPRESSION

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Abstract

College students are reflective of a culturally diverse population and hold a wide range of cultural identities. As such, faculty and campus activities professionals alike, are constantly striving to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Socioeconomic status (SES) and social class are cultural variables that need more attention in higher education settings. Given that SES and social class are determinants of social power (APA, 2007), it is crucial to provide undergraduate students with focused learning experiences on these variables and how they influence identity development. Authors utilized Star Power, an educational game, to mimic three tiers of a capitalistic economy in the classroom. Qualitative data analyses suggested themes of dominance and striving for dominance across all groups. Implications for experiential learning in the classroom, multicultural education, diversity learning through campus outreach activities, and research are discussed.

As higher education becomes more accessible to students from all cultural backgrounds, college campuses are more reflective of a culturally diverse student body. To meet the needs of culturally diverse learners in higher education, colleges and universities increasingly require students to fulfill course requirements in diversity education as part of their general requirements for graduation. In psychology education in particular, the American Psychological Association (APA) and its members have called for more infusion of multicultural and diversity content within psychology curriculum at all educational levels (i.e., high school, undergraduate, and graduate; APA, 2007; Simoni et al., 1999; Trimble, Stevenson, & Worell, 2004). The appreciation for diversity learning, however, goes beyond the classroom. Across the nation, campus activities professionals in higher education engage students in cultural learning via diverse programs and outreach activities on college campuses (Boening & Miller, 2005).

DIVERSITY LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the Classroom

Diversity education has demonstrated efficacy in raising students' awareness, knowledge, and skills with respect to multiculturalism in their professional lives. For instance, diversity education initiatives have been shown as important for: shaping preservice teaching students' teaching practices and identities as social justice advocates

for children and families (Miller Dyce & Owusu-Ansah, 2016), helping business and management students to learn to address discrimination and inequality in organizational leadership (Bell, et al., 2009), training medical students to contextualize their patients' concerns and value cultural humility in medical practice (Nazar et al., 2014), helping journalism students to understand and serve their multicultural communities (Biswas & Izard, 2009), and encouraging students in psychology courses toward positive attitudinal changes (reduction in racist and classist beliefs) in response to exposure to diversity-infused psychology curriculum.

Diversity education is relevant to the lives and experiences of all students, and concepts like privilege and oppression are important factors in 21st-century educational, social, and work environments. Privilege and oppression are social and institutional forces that serve to advantage one group (privilege) and disadvantage others (oppression; Johnson, 2018). The effects of privilege and oppression are not simply social in nature; these forces directly impact quality of life and access to critical resources like education, health care, and employment. For instance, men are still paid higher wages than women (Blau & Khan, 2016); People of Color are more likely to have encounters with police and be incarcerated (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 2021), and LGBTQ+ individuals have higher rates of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and homelessness (APA, 2017).

Within diversity curricula across disciplines, race and gender are often the focus of courses or entire disciplines of study. However, socioeconomic status (SES) and social class are important cultural variables that rarely receive focused, critical attention in the undergraduate psychology curriculum. Rubin and colleagues (2014) note that SES and social class are distinct constructs and describe social class as an individual's social background that is stable across generations. In contrast, SES is a person's current economic and social situation and is changeable. They further note that SES and social class are rooted in the interaction between an individual's economic, social, and cultural backgrounds and status. The intersectional nature of SES and social class with other aspects of cultural identity, like race and gender, make them a critical component for discussing how different identities are privileged or marginalized in the US (APA, 2007; Cole, 2009; Pratto & Stewart, 2012).

Diversity in Campus Activities

Student affairs professionals are increasingly encouraged to provide diverse cultural programs and activities to support and engage diverse student populations (Murphy, 2021). There is a gap in the literature on the importance and the value of teaching students how to engage with the diversity that surrounds them on campus, a responsibility that student affairs professionals are frequently tasked to provide (Boeing & Miller, 2005; Murphy, 2021). Campus activities professionals support and guide student academic and personal growth through campus programming via learning outside the classroom, such as residence hall programming, new student orientations, campus events, etc. (Bowman, 2011). In fact, a national study suggests that orientation leaders best facilitate diversity promotion on campus by integrating diversity issues into their programs (Boeing & Miller, 2005). Campus programs led by campus activities professionals must reflect the diverse mosaic of student needs, desires, and perspectives (Peck, Rosch, DeSawal, 2022). Often, campuses support diversity promotion through programs focusing on race, gender, or sexual orientation. In fact, most campuses have specific offices and/or identified campus activities administrators that focus on campus-wide programs and events to promote and celebrate diversity with regard to these cultural demographic variables (e.g., *Multicultural Center*, *LGBTQIA Office*, *Gender Inclusion Office*, etc.). One area in particular that lacks needed attention and focus for campus-wide programming and education is diversity programming with regard to social class and socioeconomic status.

CAPITALISM

Capitalism is defined as a system wherein all the means of production are privately owned and run by the capitalist class for profit, while the working-class work for pay, and continue to be in a position where they do not own the product (Zimbalist & Sherman, 2014). Individuals' social class and socioeconomic status determine their role in a capitalistic economy. Those with higher social class and SES are in a better position within a capitalistic economic system, and therefore have social and financial advantages such as access to better healthcare, education, and jobs (APA, 2007).

Social Class and Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status and social class are critical determinants of social power (an individual's access to resources; APA, 2007), as well as individual issues such as lifespan development and physical and mental health. Growing inequities in US society, such as the rapid growth of wealth in the upper class (top 5%) of US families (APA, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2020), point to a growing divide between the dominant (wealthy) and subordinate (middle-lower income) groups. This inequitable distribution of resources leads to inequitable distribution of power with respect to access to food and shelter, healthcare, education, jobs, and more (APA, 2007). Clearly, such disparities lead to a host of inequitable practical, social, and psychological outcomes for people in poorer groups up to and including earlier death (APA, 2007).

SES and social class are controversial topics in much of American society, as they are antithetical to the American democratic notion of a free and *equal* society. Thus, it can be challenging to hold discussions with students through formal instruction in the classroom and informal learning activities outside of the classroom to illuminate the differential outcomes for people in different socioeconomic groups (APA, 2007; Bramesfeld, 2018). Even if these discussions are held, Westernized, capitalist ideals such as individualism and the myth of meritocracy (that all individuals can transcend class boundaries through sheer force of will and hard work; McNamee & Miller, 2004) persist in the minds of many. Further, a typical explanation for poverty and unequal access to resources for poorer groups is the general moral failing of the subordinate group's members rather than the unbalanced economic, social, and political systems that favor dominant groups over subordinates in American capitalist society. This moralization of poverty is connected to Lerner's (1980) concept of the belief in a just world; namely, that good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. Such a belief allows people to be goal-directed and plan for the future, hoping that hard work and "doing the right thing" will eventually move them toward success and away from frightful outcomes. Thus, while social class and SES are crucial determinants of people's lived experiences, most students struggle to deeply and critically interrogate these inequitable economic and social systems regardless of their own social class.

One way to frame students' difficulty with learning concepts related to cultural diversity with respect to privilege and oppression is the concept of "privilege half-blindness" (Pratto & Stewart, 2012). While this may more broadly apply to those students in privileged or dominant groups (White, male, straight, middle-upper class, and so on), it can also explain why students in oppressed or subordinate groups may identify somewhat with the normativeness of the privileged group and see the behavior of their own subordinated group as problematic. The research conducted by Pratto and Stewart (2012) provides evidence for the social "normalization" of privileged or dominant group ideas and behavior and how promoting one's own group power is a more successful strategy for dominant than subordinate groups.

The idea of "half-blindness to privilege" refers to "the acknowledgment of social inequality with the implicit assumption that dominance is normal. By taking dominance as normal, superior social positions and greater power do not seem to be privileges" (Pratto & Stewart, 2012, p. 29). This lens helps to illuminate how and why students struggle to see class privilege and an assumption of meritocracy in American capitalism as having problematic effects. If we all assume that dominance or privilege (in this case, economic advantage and wealth) is the desired outcome, then we remain focused on achieving dominance rather than considering the ways that entire groups of people and ideas are excluded from full participation in US society, leading longer, healthier lives, or the values that might be lost by this exclusive vision of power (collectivism, sharing, nurturing, well-being, and so forth). Relatedly, Pratto and Stewart (2012) found that group identity is more salient for subordinate groups. That is because subordinate groups are experienced as "different from the norm," the qualities of subordinate groups are focused on as descriptors for the "differences" between groups, resulting not only in furthering stereotypes (e.g., all poor people are lazy), but also in subordinates recognizing inequities as abnormal and seeing the other group's advantage as privilege (Pratto & Stewart, 2012).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In the classroom and through campus outreach activities, experiential learning activities can help facilitate a deeper understanding of the influence of cultural variables such as social class and socioeconomic status on psychological constructs (Warren, 2006). In addition, active learning in the form of student-centered in-class activities and subsequent group discussions promotes higher-level thinking (Hagan & Richmond, 2012). In order to effectively use experiential activities aimed at diversity education, facilitators (both course instructors and/or campus activities professionals) of these activities should be aware of themselves as cultural beings and able to reflect on and discuss their own biases to model the process for students (Bramesfeld, 2018). It is important to approach any diversity exercise with some forethought and caution to ensure that students in marginalized groups are not being “used” to educate others or that students’ lived experiences are not minimized for the sake of helping more privileged students gain more awareness (Bramesfeld, 2018).

Star Power

The educational game *StarPower* (Shirts, 1969) provides an excellent way to simulate a capitalist economy within a small group environment where participants barter in a token economy for a desired reward (e.g., extra credit points for the students in the highest “earning” group). The goal of this simulation game is to exhibit the influence of social stratification and socioeconomic hierarchy on attributions, equity, engagement, and power. The creators of the game suggest that anyone who believes it is essential for students to experience and understand the concept of social power can benefit from engaging their students in the game. As such, business, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, and history instructors have used this game to facilitate the learning of power and privilege for their students. Through random assignment, students are selected to one of three levels of economic strata (e.g., squares, triangles, and circles). They are instructed to “trade” between groups to improve their game position. The squares hold the highest points of the group, followed by the triangles, and then the circles, with the lowest points of the group. The game does not rely on participants’ actual social identities to teach about inequity because the game is rigged; after the first round of token trading, students are largely “stuck” in one of three socioeconomic categories: lower (circles), middle (triangles), or upper (squares), and experience the psychological consequences of entrenchment in these SES identities. This unique experiential activity offers a high-impact approach for students to learn about social stratification first-hand.

STUDY PURPOSE

Connecting psychological concepts like the belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980), privilege, oppression, locus of control (Rotter, 1966), or self-serving bias (Miller & Ross, 1975) to a specific cultural diversity domain like social class and socioeconomic status can be difficult because students’ personal identities are under scrutiny, which can make them feel defensive. That is, students may feel the desire to defend themselves and thus take a worm’s eye view of their own (or their families’) socioeconomic position rather than taking the bird’s eye view of how structural inequalities exist across the socioeconomic system.

We wanted to provide students with an experiential learning opportunity to raise their awareness of how structural inequalities exist across the socioeconomic system and to facilitate conversations around such inequalities in the classroom. Specifically, we wanted to see how students would make sense of the simulated classroom economy in the *StarPower* (1969) experiential exercise and whether or not the “half-blindness of privilege” would still prevail in the game environment, where students’ own socioeconomic circumstances were divorced from the stratified groupings in the game (which were random). We facilitated the *StarPower* (1969) game with three different groups of students and assessed their reactions via a self-report survey.

METHOD

Game Play

Two faculty members who are social psychologists and one graduate student (who was trained by the faculty

members) facilitated the game, *StarPower* (1969). The games lasted an hour and a half each, followed by a half-hour discussion to process students' experiences. The faculty facilitators have facilitated the game approximately ten times during the past several years. The creators of *StarPower* created the game with the intention that anyone could easily facilitate it by following their instructions, which can be accessed here: <https://www.sjsu.edu/people/carol.mukhopadhyay/race/Starpower-Activity-2014.pdf>.

For this study, the facilitators conducted the game three times with three different groups of students. The groups were a convenience sample, as they were students in the courses taught by the faculty administrators. In each simulation, the facilitators took some time, in the beginning, to explain to the students how the game would be played. A set of tokens worth different point values was distributed to each student. Token colors identified the point value for each token. Several "trading rounds" took place wherein students engaged in bartering with other students to improve their own overall point value of tokens. Students were told that the top performers in the game would earn extra credit, so there was an incentive to do well. After the instructions, students were given their first hand of tokens and instructed to trade, if they so desired, with other students to increase the points they had in their hand.

After the first round of trading (and after each subsequent round), the students' point values were tallied, and the class was divided into three groups: triangles (the lowest point-value group), circles (the middle point-value group), and squares (the highest point-value group). Each participant was given a badge with the group's insignia and encouraged to sit with their group. After the first round (where tokens were randomly distributed), and unbeknownst to the players, the game is stacked in favor of those with the most points (the squares). Behind the scenes, game facilitators move the highest point value tokens into an enriched bag from which the squares draw, simulating a stratified capitalist economy where wealth is concentrated and recirculated among the wealthiest individuals.

In addition to the trading rounds, several other activities incorporated into the simulation often encourage interesting group phenomena. In "bonus" rounds, groups are given three tokens and must unanimously agree on how to distribute the tokens among group members. If they are unable to agree, no one claims the points. In "ostracization" rounds, groups can exile one member based on group consensus. And after three rounds of trading, the square group (the wealthiest group) was allowed to modify the trading rules in any way they chose. Often, the square group imposed draconian rules that were self-serving, e.g., "all Circles and Triangles must give their highest point value token to a Square."

At the end of the game, participants completed the measures, and we informed students about the rigged nature of the game and discussed their reactions. All students received the extra credit initially offered to the highest-scoring group.

Participants

Among the participants ($n = 46$), ages ranged from 19-45 ($M = 25.43$, $SD = 7.27$), and 50.0% were in their third year of undergraduate study (juniors). 50.0% of participants identified as African-American or Black, 32.6% as White, 8.7% as Asian or Asian-American, 4.3% as Latinx or Hispanic, 2.2% as Pacific Islander, and 2.2% as Other. Regarding gender, 39.1% of students identified as male, and 60.9% identified as female. When asked to describe their socioeconomic status growing up, a majority of participants (58.7%) said they came from "modest" means, 19.6% said they grew up with "plenty," 15.2% grew up "poor," while 6.5% grew up "wealthy."

Data Collection

StarPower was facilitated three times, and data for this study were collected from three different undergraduate classes at the University of Baltimore (Interpersonal Psychology, Introduction to Psychology, and Marketing). Each class had an average enrollment of 15 students. Before the game began, students in the class were given a brief explanation of the day's activities and were asked to sign an informed consent document (or they could decline to join the game with no penalty).

Based on the nature of our research question, we wanted to briefly understand how students viewed each of the

three groups in the game (which includes their own group affiliation). We constructed a paper survey that included demographic and brief open-ended questions designed to elicit honest responses about how each participant saw the three stratified groups. After the demographic questions, participants were asked, “What did you think of: The Squares? The Circles? The Triangles?” Participants took approximately 10-20 minutes to complete the measures at the end of the game.

Data Analysis Procedures

The CQR-M (Spangler et al., 2012) approach, in which researchers derive themes and categories from brief responses to open-ended questions, was appropriate for analyzing the responses collected for this study. In line with consensual qualitative research-modified (CQR-M) best practices and to support data trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005), team members met prior to coding in order to discuss, at length, their biases and expectations related to the current research. First, the researchers took stock of their own biases in self-reflective statements. All four researchers work at or attend the University of Baltimore, a majority-minority institution. Based on her experience with the student population, one researcher mentioned expecting students to see the unfairness of the game, but at the same time, hold internalized values like meritocracy, the importance of hard work, and the deservedness of resources. She expected few students to value cooperativeness or hold egalitarian values.

One researcher mentioned considerable experience facilitating the StarPower exercise and that she expected students to act in ways that she had observed before. Namely, she expected the squares to create rules that perpetuated their status and triangles to disengage, potentially lie, or disobey the rules.

All four researchers come from academic backgrounds in psychology (counseling and social) and mentioned being predisposed to see “systems” rather than individuals. In one way or another, as a result of their background bias, they all expected to view the square group (the highest point-value group) negatively. Two researchers came from a predominantly quantitative background and were somewhat skeptical of the qualitative research process.

After reflecting and taking stock of potential biases, the researchers paired into two teams of two to develop and form a consensus on initial domains and categories. Then, all four researchers met to establish a consensus on domains and categories. Collaboratively and iteratively, they coded individual participants’ responses into the relevant category, combining or differentiating categories and creating new categories from variant data when appropriate. To be consistent with the CQR-M approach, the research team discussed inconsistencies in coding until reaching consensus, and then placed all events into domains and categories. Finally, the lead researcher audited the coding to ensure clarity and reasoning for assigned categories and domains. The audit resulted in renaming some domains to better encompass a broader theme with 100% consensus from all team members. See Tables 1, 2, and 3 for the final domains and categories.

RESULTS

Results are reported following the American Psychological Association Journal Article Reporting Standards for Qualitative Design (JARS-Qual). Three overarching domains reflect the experiences of the research participants while engaged in the Star Power game: squares, circles, and triangles. The squares domain represents the thoughts and reactions of the participants in all three groups toward the squares (i.e., the highest point value group) and is included in Table 1. The circles’ domain represents the thoughts and reactions of the participants in all three groups toward the circles (see Table 2). Lastly, the triangles domain represents the thoughts and reactions of the participants in all three groups toward the triangles (see Table 3). Results will be broken down by domain, and a discussion of the results will primarily focus on the most frequently endorsed categories within each of the three domains listed above.

Squares

The squares domain revealed twelve categories (see Table 1). When asked about their thoughts about the squares, the most commonly cited statements were associated with the *status* of the squares (N = 13). For example, one

participant stated that the squares behaved as though they “were the elitists,” while another reported that the squares “were the top-rated people, like the top 1%.” One participant noted that the squares “represented the upper class and focused on maintaining their status.”

The second most frequently discussed categories in the squares’ domain were *self-serving/selfish* (N = 10) and *strategic/positive* (N = 10). With regard to the *self-serving/selfish* category, the triangles and circles noted that the squares were “very selfish after making rules about how the trading should go.” Another participant noted that the squares “threw other players under the bus for self-satisfaction.” Another participant noted that the squares “did what they thought would benefit them.”

In the *strategic/positive* category, one participant noted that the squares “were good at strategy and understanding the objective.” Another participant commented that the squares “were really good at playing the game” and “knew how to play the game well.” Another participant noted that the squares “understood how to play.” For a complete list of categories in this domain, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1.
Participant reaction to squares.

Domain	Definition	Categories	Frequency	Examples
Squares	Discussion of thought about the squares (the highest point value group) and their behaviors	Status	13	“we were the elitists”
		Self-serving/Selfish	10	“I felt the squares were very selfish after making rules about how the trading should go”
		Strategic/Positive	10	“good at strategy and understanding the objective”
		Lucky	7	“lucky”
		Points/Scores	5	“had the best scores”
		Strategic/Negative	5	“they chose rules that would put the (other)groups at less of an advantage”
		Unfair	4	“unfair”
		Positive Attributes	4	“smart”
		Powerful	4	“most powerful group”
		Pride in Self	3	“felt good about themselves”
		Uncollaborative	3	“they kept the hand they were dealt with and didn’t even accept trades”
Other/Variant	14	“mean”		

Circles

The circles domain resulted in twelve categories (see Table 2). When asked about their thoughts about the circles, the most commonly cited statements were associated with the category of *tried/wanted to be a square* (N = 11). For example, one participant noted that the circles “tried to move [to] the squares.” Another participant reported that the circles “were constantly trying to get more (higher) chips and stay in their spot/move up.” A participant noted that the circles “tried their hardest to become a square.”

The second most frequently discussed category with respect to the circles was *middle points/scores* (N = 7). When asked to reflect on their experience with the circles, the squares and triangles noted that the circles “were the middle group.” One participant noted that the circles were “out of the poverty zones, but not that rich at all.” Another participant reported that the circles “got average chips to trade with.”

There was a tie between three categories for the next most frequently discussed topic with respect to the circles: *middle class* ($N = 5$), *neutral* ($N = 5$), and *hardworking* ($N = 5$). With regard to the category of *middle class*, one participant noted that the circles “were second place, so basically they were middle class.” Another participant noted that the circles, “were average; middle class.” The *neutral* category reflected responses like, “I do not have an opinion” or “no real feelings either way” with respect to the circles. Lastly, the *hardworking* category included responses from participants such as the circles were “hard working,” they “worked hard,” or “they were trying.” For a complete list of categories in this domain, please refer to Table 2.

Table 2.
Participant reactions to circles.

Domain	Definition	Categories	Frequency	Examples
Circles	Discussion of thoughts about the circles (the middle point value group) and their behaviors	Tried/Wanted to be a square	11	“they tried to move to the squares”; “the circles were looking to climb to succeed”
		Middle Points/Scores	7	“middle group, dealt an ok hand”
		Middle Class	5	“I think the circles were second place so they were basically middle class”
		Neutral	5	“I do not have an opinion”
		Hardworking	5	“the circles was hard working”
		Content/even-keeled	4	“well balanced”
		Collaborative	4	“helped each other out and what was best for everyone”
		Less motivated	4	“did not participate as much”
		Stability	4	“moved up or down depending on decisions made”
		Played well	3	“the circles performed well”
		Self-serving/Strategic	3	“just as selfish; exiled the most successful person to benefit themselves”
Other/Variant	7	“they understood it”		

Triangles

The triangles domain resulted in thirteen categories. When asked about their thoughts about the triangles, the most frequently reported statements related to triangles being low *class/poor* ($N = 9$). For example, one participant noted that the triangles were the “dregs of society.” Another participant shared that the triangles “were the poor ones, in poverty.” A participant noted that the triangles were “the poorest group.”

The second most frequently discussed category with respect to the triangles was that they were *unmotivated* ($N = 7$). For example, a research participant stated that the triangles were “less engaging” and “kept their arms folded.” Another participant reported that the triangles “didn’t seem to care about the game.” Relatedly, a participant noted that the triangles were “lacking motivation.”

The following categories were the next most frequently cited for the *triangles’* domain: *unlucky* ($N = 6$), *trying to move up* ($N = 6$), and *more group-oriented behavior* ($N = 6$). Regarding being unlucky, one participant noted that the triangles “had no luck at all,” while another noted that they “were feeling burdened by chance and misfortune.” In the *trying to move up* category, one participant reported that they “wanted to move up the most,” while another shared that they “were trying to advance as circles or squares.” Lastly, in the *more group-oriented behavior* category, one participant noted that the triangles “did what was in the interest of [the] entire group,”

while another participant noted that the triangles “were more likely to stick together and not exile a member of their group.” For a complete list of categories in this domain, please refer to Table 3.

Table 3.
Participant reactions to triangles.

Domain	Definition	Categories	Frequency	Examples
Triangles	Discussion of thoughts about the triangles (the lowest point value group) and their behaviors	Low class/Poor	9	“dregs of society”
		Unmotivated	7	“the triangles were less engaging, many of them kept their arms folded”
		Unlucky	6	“they had no luck at all”
		Trying to move up	6	“they wanted to move up the most”
		More group-oriented behavior	6	“did what was in interest of entire group”
		Negative evaluations	4	“being in the triangles made me feel like a loser”
		Positive evaluations	4	“we played well; and decided accordingly based on the rules”
		Stuck	4	“they were stuck there for most of the game”
		Unskilled	3	“more confused about the rules of the game”
		Value fairness	3	“the triangles played fair; and even came up with a rule that would benefit everyone”
		Risk-averse	3	“didn’t want to take risks”
		Points	3	“the triangles had really low chips to play with”
		Other/Variant	8	“annoyed by the superiority of the squares”

DISCUSSION

As shown in the analysis of participant responses, student opinions about the different groups reflect several themes. First, the recognition of dominance and striving for domination, as discussed by Pratto and Stewart (2012), is evident in the top two categories for each group. The Squares were most frequently described according to their dominant “status” and were seen as “self-serving” or “selfish.” Next, the Circles were most frequently described as “Want[ing] to be a Square” and as the “Middle” group. Finally, the Triangles were most frequently described as “low class/poor” and “unmotivated.” Recall that the game was rigged such that once participants landed in one group, they rarely moved in one direction or another. These results suggest, then, that the normality of dominance (or striving for it) and the morality myth of poverty (they were “unmotivated” and thus deserved or earned their poverty) were evident in the participants’ minds.

Relatedly, a comparison of the descriptors for the top two groups versus the bottom group yields an interesting, but not surprising, pattern given the discussion of half-blindness of privilege above. In general, the top two groups (Squares and Circles) were described much more frequently with positively valenced attributes, such as “status, strategic, lucky, positive, pride, powerful” and “middle-class, neutral, hardworking, content/even-keeled, collaborative, stability, played well,” respectively. Alternatively, the Triangles were described more frequently with negatively valenced words such as “low-class, unmotivated, unlucky, negative evaluations, stuck, unskilled.” These descriptions suggest that Pratto and Stewart (2012) were correct. Privilege half-blindness allows for the

dominant group to be perceived as “normal” and the ideal for which to strive. The myth of meritocracy undergirds the belief that those in the top group(s) got there by their own efforts alone. Faculty and campus activities professionals should emphasize this point with students when conducting the discussion portion of *StarPower* as an intervention to disrupt the half-blindness and generate new patterns of thinking and perceiving cultural factors such as SES and social class.

As a majority-minority institution, it is not entirely surprising that the sample identified as more than half Persons of Color (67.4%), female (60.9%), and from poor or modest means (73.9%). Knowing this, one might assume that these participants would be perceptive to the point of the game and perhaps resist the subordination of other groups in some way. What is interesting here is how pervasive the social dominance narrative was for these participants when they were divorced from their own identities and instead placed in the artificial game environment. The half-blindness of privilege, the myth of meritocracy, and the moral myth of poverty are all quite evident in the themes emerging from the data. Consistent with theories of social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and half-blindness of privilege, dominant groups tend to accept their group’s dominance as inevitable and passively accept the normality of their privilege.

Facilitating *StarPower* with students, faculty, and campus activities professionals can help raise student awareness around how these factors operate, not just within the game, but within the structure of a capitalistic society overall. Such awareness can help students create connections between the contrived experience of *StarPower* and their everyday experiences in society. Conversely, and supporting the salience of subordinate group identity to subordinate group members (Pratto & Stewart, 2012), we can see that the Triangle group (and to some extent the Circles) had themes emerge with regard to “more group-oriented behavior,” “valu[ing] fairness,” and for the Circles, “collaborative,” suggesting that in-group affiliation was more evident for the less affluent groups. Because all participants were rating perceptions of each group, the lower endorsement of these subordinate in-group affiliative statements makes sense: only the Triangle (and perhaps some Circle) group members would be primed to feel this affiliation as members of the subordinate group. This point will be particularly helpful in developing diversity awareness on campus, both in the classroom and through campus activities, by promoting a greater understanding of additional cultural differences that can potentially emerge via an affiliation with a specific SES or social class.

Strengths and Limitations

There are some limitations to this research. The authors acknowledge a limitation in the present study regarding external validity, i.e., generalizability, based on the qualitative approach. It would be helpful to replicate the findings with a larger sample and, if possible, quantitative measures, especially given that different groups of students may respond differently to the exercise based on group dynamics. That is, students’ experiences and reflections may be based on idiosyncratic events associated with the exercise. In one administration of the exercise, a “square” student ostracized herself from her own group to divorce herself from the draconian rules the group created.

Another limitation is that data from this study are from students attending a public university in an urban setting, and results may not reflect all college students across the nation. For example, how might the results have differed if data were collected from a variety of institutions across the nation, including both private and public universities, as well as urban and suburban institutions? To bridge this knowledge gap, future research should assess any differences that may emerge when *StarPower* is conducted on diverse college campuses across the nation.

Alternatively, there are some strengths to this research approach. The qualitative method allowed us to explore the richness in experience brought about by the exercise and explore nuances in the data that a quantitative approach would obscure. Additionally, results from this study suggest that this game can facilitate conversations around class, SES, and capitalism on campus and provide further support for continuing these conversations in different spaces on campus with campus activities professionals. Relatedly, compared to faculty, campus activities professionals may have non-evaluative relationships with students, which may help create more open and vulnerable cultural conversations and learning that evolves from engaging in activities such as *StarPower*. Limitations aside, there is great value in the rich data that emerge from a qualitative approach. The data in the present study was relatively unaffected by researcher expectations.

Future Directions

The present study explored individuals' qualitative perceptions of others based on the others' apparent socioeconomic status. One next step would be to explore how the qualitative findings in the present study map onto a quantitative assessment. The global approach in the present study did not consider the impact of each individual's appointed status within the game. In other words, how did being labeled a triangle influence perceptions of the other groups? Did being a square make those members feel more entitled than the members of the other groups? Future research should include questions of this nature. More generally speaking, research into perceptions of self and others around SES and class is lacking, and warrants continued exploration in the spirit of a renewed urgency in multicultural research.

Because the *StarPower* game is rigged from the beginning, it effectively educates students from all identity categories about differences in social class statuses. For this same reason, it also does not rely on students with minoritized identities to bear the emotional and educational burden of teaching about inequity (Bramsfled, 2018). Ending up in one of the three social class statuses is completely random. So, students' actual, lived identities are not called upon to teach or communicate any portions of the diversity exercise. In diversity education, it is critical not to burden already minoritized students with the extra weight of educating students from higher social classes about the fundamental inequities and psychological tradeoffs of living in poverty. By extension, students who identify in a lower social class may be given words for their experience and a more nuanced understanding of how power hierarchies are created and maintained. When implementing this type of activity in an academic setting, it is critical for the facilitators (e.g., faculty and/or campus activities professionals) to emphasize these points to deepen the diversity educational experience.

We believe that higher education professionals, such as faculty and campus activities professionals, could find this game helpful in teaching about different social and psychological constructs with respect to privilege and oppression. Additionally, faculty and facilitators from student affairs and/or student life offices could engage college students in this game as part of the university outreach or new student orientation activities to help raise student awareness with respect to concepts such as social class, SES, social power, and oppression. Once students are let in on the secret that the game is rigged, excellent discussions about perceptions of personal hard work and merit versus systemic advantages can occur. In addition, discussions about concepts like belief in a just world and self-serving bias can be more productive because students can refer back to their recent thoughts and feelings in the game. It is particularly helpful when students in more dominant groups find themselves in lower-status groups, as this will illuminate the real structural barriers that lead to feelings of hopelessness or phenomena such as learned helplessness.

Helping students in higher education institutions with perspective-taking is often tricky. Students can easily become defensive on behalf of themselves, their families, or other social groups when discussions of inequality, privilege, and oppression are broached. The game *StarPower* provides an excellent lesson on many psychological concepts and creates an environment in which students can generate empathy for the social positionality of their peers. It also allows them to experience systemic inequity divorced from their own deeply held beliefs and social identities. Higher education institutions have a responsibility to teach diversity and assure some level of social justice on campus (Boening & Miller, 2005; Miller & Owusu-Ansah, 2016). Through games like *StarPower*, campus activities professionals and faculty can help increase cultural awareness and humility around these cultural variables for their students to help create a more inclusive campus environment, as well as prepare students to engage in social justice work. For students who now comprise an increasingly diverse and global workforce, thoughtful lessons on how social forces and culture shape our access to resources and lived experiences are essential.

CONCLUSION

Higher education institutions consist of faculty and campus activities professionals tasked with creating a vibrant learning environment for students of all cultural backgrounds. This important work entails creating both didactic instruction in the classroom and campus-wide programs that focus on increasing awareness of cultural

variables, including but not limited to race, gender, social class, and socioeconomic status. Diversity efforts on campus tend to focus more on race and gender and less on other cultural variables such as social class and socioeconomic status. Experiential learning activities, such as having students engage in games, can help facilitate learning and discussions of these important cultural variables. *StarPower* is a game that both faculty and campus activities professionals can facilitate with students to help engage them in learning about cultural variables such as social class, socioeconomic status, power, and privilege in a capitalist economy.

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THEORY-DRIVEN APPROACH TO DEVELOPING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO MENTOR: CONGRUENCE

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Abstract

The Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM) is the most widely used student leadership development model in higher education. Therefore, the purpose of the current paper is to share a theory-driven approach to developing Congruence, an individual value of the SCM. We discuss the development and implementation of a two-part virtual leader development intervention focused on college students who mentor K-12 youth. Part One was a virtual, two-hour content block in the fall with interactive activities. Part Two was a small-group, virtual meeting in the spring with in-depth discussions. The intervention focused on recognizing congruent leadership and considering a situation from multiple values. The intervention was evaluated based on the learning objectives, and mentors perceived notable growth. The purpose of the current scholarship-to-practice brief is that leadership educators and student affairs practitioners can utilize the curriculum to facilitate and evaluate a Congruence intervention in a curricular or co-curricular setting.

INTRODUCTION

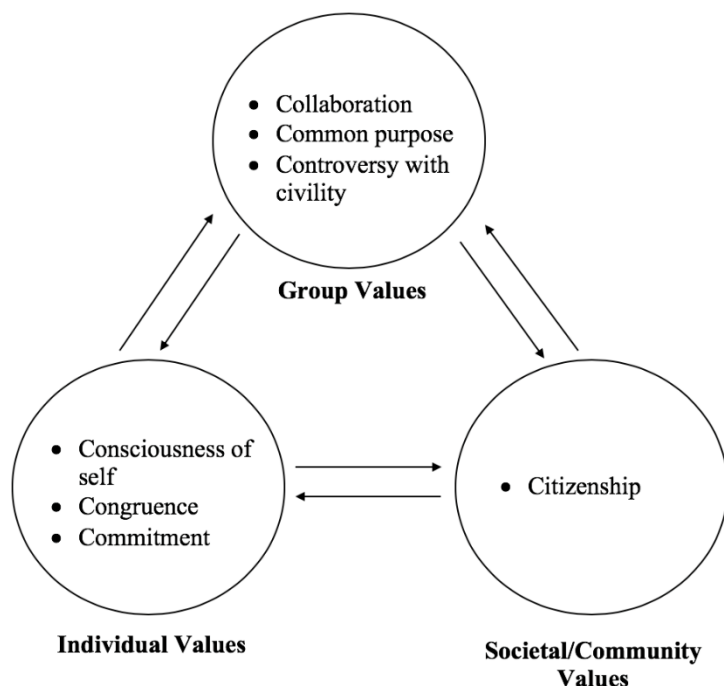
The Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM), a model of leadership development focused on fostering social change (HERI, 1996), is the most widely used student leadership development model among institutions of higher education (Haber & Komives, 2009). The SCM seeks to engage college students in social responsibility and develop socially responsible leaders (HERI, 1996; Dugan, 2006). Notably, social responsibility development has been identified as a student learning outcome of higher education, underscoring the relevance of interventions targeting socially responsible leaders' growth (Adelman et al., 2011).

Building upon a previous article that shared a developmental intervention targeting Consciousness of Self, the first value of the SCM (Sunderman & Hastings, 2022), the current paper focuses on the execution and evaluation of an intervention focused on Congruence, the second value of the SCM (HERI, 1996). We share a detailed description of the intervention, including samples of workbook pages and an evaluation plan based on the learning objectives. Our article aims to aid student affairs practitioners and leadership educators in facilitating the same or similar intervention in their classrooms or organizations. Broadly, there is a continued need for student affairs professionals to conduct and assess programs and share "expertise to the greatest extent possible" (Busby & Aaron, 2021, p. 11). The current article meets this need by sharing a co-curricular program and an accompanying assessment plan and results. Notably, the current intervention was conducted virtually in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated the unprecedented shift to virtual programming at higher education institutions (Busby, 2020; Downey, 2021).

REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIP

The Social Change Model (SCM) is a leadership development model focused on promoting positive social change in communities or institutions of higher education (HERI, 1996). The SCM has seven values in three categories (see Figure 1; HERI, 1996). There are three individual values: (a) Consciousness of Self, (b) Congruence, and (c) Commitment; three group values: (a) Collaboration, (b) Common Purpose, and (c) Controversy with Civility; and one community value, Citizenship (HERI, 1996; Tyree, 1998). Highlighting the relevance of the SCM, the World Economic Forum (2020) identified leadership and social influence, a target of the SCM, as two of the top 10 leadership skills for 2025. For a more in-depth discussion on the Social Change Model, refer to Sunderman and Hastings (2022).

Figure 1. *The Values of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996).*



Values of the Social Change Model of Leadership

Congruence, the focus of the current intervention, is “thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty towards others.” (HERI, 1996, p. 36). Palmer (1992), in “Divided No More,” states that leaders make a difference when they are congruent and match their behavior to their beliefs. Palmer (1992) shares the example of Rosa Parks (and before her Claudette Colvin) to illustrate Congruence. Risking personal harm, Parks lived out the value of “equality” by bravely sitting at the front of the bus. Her act of Congruence gave others the courage to stand up to inequity.

Beyond the SCM, Congruence has been described as an interpersonal and intrapersonal concept. Interpersonal Congruence is the alignment between the perceptions of leaders and followers, such as the alignment of leaders’ and followers’ values (Qu et al., 2019). In contrast, Intrapersonal Congruence, which matches the definition of Congruence articulated in the SCM, highlights the alignment of behaviors and values and has been connected to Authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) and knowing oneself (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). Connecting Intrapersonal Congruence to self-determination theories, Hasan et al. (2015) write, “Intrapersonal Congruence in values is seen as indispensable to the motivation to pursue meaningful activity and to the experience of well-being and personal growth” (p. 93). Given the relevance of the SCM to leadership development and the applicability of Congruence to personal development, it is prudent that leadership educators and student affairs practitioners intentionally incorporate Congruence activities and discussions into curricular and co-curricular experiences. The following section offers one model for utilizing Congruence to inform leadership education.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

The purpose of the current paper is to share a theory-driven approach to developing Congruence, an individual value of the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM; HERI, 1996), through a two-part intervention. The intervention occurred within a 360-student (180 mentors; 180 mentees) leadership mentoring program at a four-year, public, Midwestern university. College students were selected for the leadership mentoring program (LMP) because of their leadership strengths. After selection, college students are paired in one-to-one mentoring relationships with a K – 12th-grade student leader in the community and meet for one hour each week for three years. Notably, mentors take an interpersonal leadership skills course during their first semester in the LMP and meet weekly with other leadership mentors for all three years. To provide formal leadership development to mentors and mentees, the LMP developed a seven-year curriculum centered on the seven values of the SCM, with one value focused on each year. The previous year's curriculum (i.e., Consciousness of Self) was shared in an online module for mentoring pairs who did not participate to review.

The current Congruence intervention had two primary components. First, mentors and mentees participated in a two-hour virtual workshop with interactive activities and discussions during the fall semester. While we initially intended to hold the first component as an in-person retreat, the materials were placed online and distributed broadly among the mentors due to COVID-19. Therefore, the content and activities were done asynchronously within mentoring pairs. The second component of the intervention was a one-hour discussion of research and mass media materials related to Congruence held with virtual small groups during the spring semester. The following section details the objectives, activities, and discussion topics shared with mentors and middle or high-school-aged mentees. Mentors and elementary-aged mentees utilized similar material adapted for a younger audience.

There were five retreat objectives. Each objective identified one behavior or thought process that participants would be able to do following the intervention:

- 1) Identify their values
- 2) Identify values in others
- 3) Describe and recognize congruent leadership
- 4) Reflect on how values influence decisions
- 5) Consider a situation from the perspective of multiple values

The virtual workshop began by asking mentors and mentees to discuss the following questions: “What does the term ‘Congruence’ mean, and why is it important?” After considering the topic, participants watched a 10-minute video that shared the definitions and research associated with Congruence and the SCM and learning outcomes.

Following the opening lecture, there was a refresher on the Consciousness of Self SCM value. The retreat began with a refresher because the first step towards Congruence is knowing one's values and beliefs (HERI, 1996). Consciousness of Self is the first value of the SCM and was the topic of the previous year's developmental intervention for the leadership mentoring organization, which second and third mentors and their mentees attended. New mentors and mentees were invited to review the curriculum in an online module before the Congruence intervention. During the Consciousness of Self refresher, mentors and mentees identified their top three values and reflected on their leadership strengths (see Figure 2). Mentoring pairs discussed the following topic of conversation: “While we all have top values that inform our actions and preferences, we do not always live out our values. When this happens, we are acting incongruently. Talk about how you felt when your behavior was inconsistent with your values.”

Following the Consciousness of Self refresher, mentors and mentees completed a case study of congruent leadership. The case study (Northouse, 2013, pp. 271-273) was about Sally Helgesen, the author of *The Female Advantage: Women's Way of Leadership* (1990). The case study describes Helgesen's journey with self-awareness and her internal feelings of conflict over dichotomous parts of her personality. Mentoring pairs walked through

a series of reflection questions that encouraged mentors and mentees to make meaning of the case study. Questions included the following: “Based on her actions, what does Helgesen value?” and “How did Helgesen live out Congruence between her values and actions?” (see Figure 2).

The final portion of the retreat was a moral dilemma activity. After studying what Congruence looked like in the life of Helgesen (Northouse, 2013), participants considered what Congruence might look like for them in a challenging situation. This activity started by asking mentoring pairs to consider when it was challenging to live out their values and share that time with the mentor or mentee. Then, mentors and mentees read through a situation (see Figure 3), which was a moral dilemma. After reading the situation, mentors and mentees answered the questions at the bottom of the page. Finally, the mentoring pairs discussed how someone with a different value might choose a different path or have different reasoning for a similar course of action. The retreat ended with mentors and mentees reflecting on how Congruence influences one’s leadership and social change capacity.

The spring portion of the intervention was built upon the fall retreat content. Small groups of mentors and mentees read “Congruence” (HERI, pp. 360-39) and answered concrete, conceptual, and application questions, such as (a) “Why, according to the article, is Congruence necessary for leadership?”; (b) “How can Congruence help to build trusting relationships within groups?”; and (c) “How can you help others develop Congruence?” Then, small groups watched a movie clip from *The Devil Wears Prada* (YouTube, 2015). During the movie clip, the main character, Andy, decides that she feels it is necessary for her career and life satisfaction but will hurt her friend and colleague. After watching this video, small groups again walked through concrete, conceptual, and application questions, such as (a) “What values do you think guided Andy’s decision?” and (b) “What does it look like for you to be a courageous follower and stay true to your values?”

Figure 2. *Consciousness of self refresher and case study questions.*

<p>CONSCIOUSNESS OF SELF REFRESHER</p> <p>What are your top 3 values (in no particular order)?</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>What are your top 3 leadership strengths?</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>Reflection</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>CASE STUDY OF CONGRUENT LEADERSHIP</p> <p>What is going on in this case study? What are the key moments?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Based on her actions, what does Helgesen value?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>How did self-awareness influence Helgesen?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>How did Helgesen live out congruence between her values and actions?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>How can you apply what you learned from Helgesen to your leadership?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Figure 3. Moral dilemma activity.

<p>MORAL DILEMMA ACTIVITY</p> <p>You are ordinarily a law-abiding citizen. One day, you take your 10-year-old dog to the vet because he is ill. The vet informs you that your dog is very ill, and, unfortunately, will not survive the week without a \$10,000 medication. Unfortunately, you are unable to afford this expensive medication. While on your way to the bathroom, you notice a box in the hallway containing the medication the vet just prescribed. You notice that no one else is in the hallway. Should you steal the medication to help your sick dog?</p>	<p>What would you do?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What values guided your decision?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What would you do if the animal dying was a dog you did not know? Does that change your decision? Why or why not? How did your values influence your decision?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

DISCUSSION OF OUTCOMES/RESULTS

The year-long virtual Congruence intervention (i.e., fall virtual workshop and spring small groups) was evaluated among mentors six months after the fall workshop and two months after the spring small group meetings. Based on the recommendation of Rosch and Schwartz (2009), we evaluated the intervention two months after it finished to avoid the Honeymoon Effect. The Honeymoon Effect is a common issue with evaluation and assessment that happens when participants exaggerate the effects of an intervention immediately after it is finished (Rosch & Schwartz, 2009).

The evaluation survey matched the five program objectives because “assessments need to be directly aligned to the program’s goals and outcomes to provide valuable information” (International Leadership Association Task Force, 2021). As suggested by Seemiller (2013), we used the following response anchors targeting degree of change: 1 = Did not increase; 2 = Slightly increased; 3 = Moderately increase; 4 = Greatly increased. Mentors assessed their growth on the following statements: (a) My ability to identify my values; (b) My ability to identify values in others; (c) My ability to describe and recognize congruent leadership; (d) My ability to reflect on how values influence decisions; and (e) My ability to consider a situation from the perspective of multiple values.

Ultimately, 69 of 180 mentors (38%) completed the evaluation survey. Regarding years in school, 11% of participants were sophomores, 35% were juniors, and 38% were seniors. Regarding gender, 61% of participants were women, and 40% were men. Regarding race, 93% of participants were white, 4% were Black or African American, and 3% were Asian American. We aggregated the participant responses to create an average score on each objective. An average score ≥ 3.0 indicated development of the objective, as 3.0 indicates “moderately increased” (Seemiller, 2013). See Table 1 for the survey results.

Table 1. *Results of evaluation survey.*

Question	Average	% of Participants \geq 3.0 Rating
My ability to identify my values.	3.03	76.8
My ability to identify values in others.	3.13	84.1
My ability to describe and recognize congruent leadership.	3.43	92.8
My ability to reflect on how values influence decisions.	3.31	88.4
My ability to consider a situation from the perspective of multiple values.	3.24	88.4

On each of the five objectives, the average participant response was greater than 3.0, indicating that the objective had been satisfactorily developed (Seemiller, 2016). The lowest participant average was 3.03 for the first objective, “My ability to identify my values,” with 76.8% of mentors self-evaluating the first objective as “moderately increased” (i.e., 3.0) or “greatly increased” (4.0). Notably, content on this item was minimally included in program delivery, as it was more significantly addressed in the previous year’s invention on Consciousness of Self. The highest participant average was 3.43 for the third objective, “My ability to describe and recognize congruent leadership,” with 92.8% of mentors self-evaluating the third objective as “moderately increased” (i.e., 3.0) or “greatly increased” (4.0). The total average of participant responses across evaluation questions was 3.23, indicating a perception that the intervention has “moderately increased” their ability to fulfill the five learning objectives.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRACTITIONER

The purpose of the current paper was to share a theory-driven approach to developing Congruence, an individual value of the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM; HERI, 1996). Specifically, we discussed the presentation and assessment of the intervention, which have notable implications for student affairs practitioners. First, student affairs practitioners and leadership educators are encouraged to utilize this curriculum and the accompanying assessment strategy in curricular and co-curricular settings. By discussing the intervention and providing pictures of the workbook, we hope to meet a need in the field for further “descriptions of assignments and activities comprising the day-to-day teaching of leadership” (Smith & Roebuck, 2010, p. 136). Future student affairs professionals may utilize the material to meet the unique needs of their meeting dates/times, class schedule, or student population. We also recommend that practitioners implement the current Congruence curriculum with the previous year’s Consciousness of Self curriculum (Sunderman & Hastings, 2022). In line with this recommendation, the leadership mentoring program in the current paper will complete a similar intervention next year on the third value of the SCM, Collaboration, which is a pattern that will continue until the seven values have all been the focus of an intervention.

Second, the evaluation results of the current intervention offer insight into virtual interventions. The COVID-19 pandemic required higher education programming to move almost entirely online, an unprecedented move that requires further examination to understand its impact (Downey, 2021). The current study provides insight into how one leadership mentoring program successfully adapted its in-person curriculum to a virtual setting by implementing the following strategies: (a) a central hub for accessing materials, (b) video recordings with interactive questions for participants to engage with, and (c) a workbook that could be printed off or completed online.

To strengthen the Congruence intervention, we recommend that future practitioners consider adding check-in discussions or short reflections between the two parts of the intervention (i.e., the fall retreat and the spring discussion). Adding additional exercises may increase participants’ ability to integrate the material into their lives. Further, future practitioners may want to spend additional time discussing the identification of individual values and the recognition of values in others, which were the two objectives that received the lowest average evaluation ratings. For example, suppose the Congruence intervention is completed in concordance with the Consciousness of Self intervention (Sunderman & Hastings, 2022). In that case, facilitators may ask participants

to bring the values they identified during the Consciousness of Self intervention and then spend time reflecting on potential changes in values, as well as how individual values shape our recognition of values in others. Finally, we recommend that practitioners engage participants in additional reflection opportunities following the intervention to crystallize participant learning. For example, a leadership program could have an end-of-the-year debrief meeting to discuss questions such as “When did you demonstrate Congruence throughout this past year? When did you not demonstrate Congruence, and what might you do differently in the future?”

We recommend that further qualitative and quantitative research seeks to understand the effects of virtual programming on student learning outcomes, particularly when compared to in-person programming. We also recommend that future scholars and practitioners build upon the current research by conducting and evaluating a similar intervention at other institutions and among other populations. For example, the current intervention may be particularly well-suited for implementation with a young professional organization focused on community development. Likewise, we encourage future scholars to extend the results of the current article by examining the effect of the Congruence intervention using the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (Tyree, 1998), a psychometrically-validated scale that measures the values of the SCM.

In sum, the current paper shared a developmental intervention focused on developing Congruence, the second value of the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM; HERI, 1996), among college students who mentor. The intervention was evaluated based on the learning objectives, and mentors perceived notable growth. We hope that leadership educators and student affairs practitioners will utilize the curriculum to facilitate and evaluate a curricular or co-curricular Congruence intervention.

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THEORY-DRIVEN APPROACH TO DEVELOPING SOCIALY RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO MENTOR: COMMITMENT

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Abstract

The current scholarship-to-practice brief discusses a theoretically grounded intervention on developing Commitment, an individual value of the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM), among college student mentors and adolescent mentees. The authors have previously shared developmental interventions on Consciousness of Self and Congruence (Sunderman & Hastings, 2021, in press), the other two values of the SCM. This brief highlights a two-part leader development intervention: (a) a one-hour content block with interactive activities and (b) a small-group, discussion-focused meeting. Specifically, the intervention focused on identifying areas of passion, examining Commitment in others, and planning a task or activity to demonstrate Commitment. Accompanying the intervention is an assessment strategy based on the learning objectives. By sharing a description of the intervention and an evaluation strategy, leadership educators and student affairs practitioners can implement their own Commitment curriculum in myriad settings.

INTRODUCTION

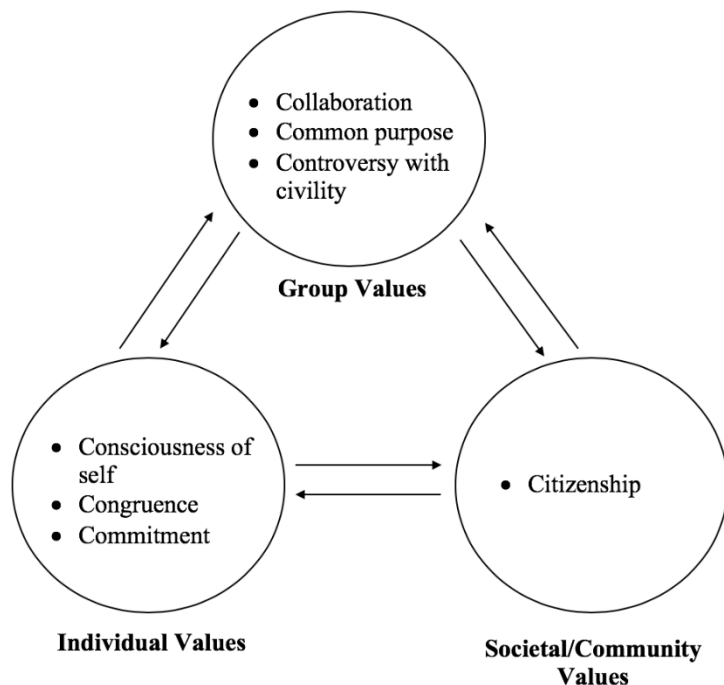
The Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM) promotes social change through individual and group development (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996). Seeking to engage students in social responsibility (HERI, 1996; Dugan, 2006), the SCM is the most widely used student leadership development model in higher education (Haber & Komives, 2009). The SCM seeks to engage students in social responsibility and develop socially responsible leaders (HERI, 1996; Dugan, 2006). Notably, leadership and social responsibility are critical student learning outcomes of higher education (Adelman et al., 2011; AAC&U & NLC, 2007; CAS, 2015; Dreschsler Sharp et al., 2011; NACE, 2016).

Given the relevance of socially responsible leadership to institutions of higher education, the purpose of our manuscript is to discuss the development, execution, and evaluation of an intervention focused on Commitment, a value of the SCM (HERI, 1996). Specifically, we will outline the SCM and Commitment before sharing a detailed description of the intervention, including samples of workbook pages. Finally, we discuss the assessment and evaluation plan based on the learning objectives. Notably, the Commitment intervention is year three of a seven-year series of yearlong interventions that follow the seven values of the SCM (HERI, 1996). Notably, the Commitment intervention is year three of a seven-year series of yearlong interventions that follow the seven values of the SCM (HERI, 1996). The first and second parts of the seven-year series, Consciousness of Self and Congruence, have been previously published in *The Journal for Campus Activities* (Sunderman & Hastings, 2021, in press).

REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIP

The Social Change Model (SCM) focuses on furthering positive social change in a community or community setting (HERI, 1996). The model aims to develop self-awareness and leadership competence in individuals who then serve as agents of change and leadership. Through the agents of change, collective action among individuals builds.

Figure 1. *Values of the Social Change Model of Leadership (HERI, 1996).*

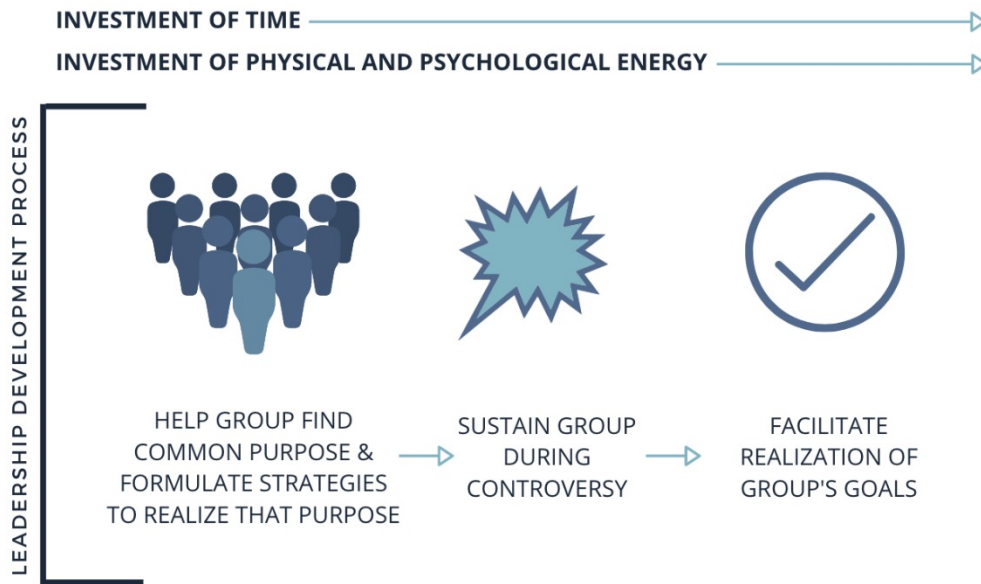


The SCM has seven values: (a) Consciousness of Self, (b) Congruence, (c) Commitment, (d) Collaboration, (e) Common Purpose, (f) Controversy with Civility, and (g) Citizenship (see Figure 1; HERI, 1996). The seven values are organized into three categories: (a) Individual Values, (b) Group Values, and (c) Societal/Community Values (see Figure 1; HERI, 1996). For a more thorough review of the SCM, see Sunderman and Hastings (2021). For a more complete discussion of the SCM, see HERI (1996) and Komives and Wagner (2016).

Commitment is “the purposive investment of time and physical and psychological energy in the leadership development process” (HERI, 1996, p. 40). Kerkhoff and Ostick (2016) discussed Commitment as the “anchor for change” (p. 365) as it is fueled by passion, required to achieve change, and necessary to integrate the other SCM values. Commitment involves two aspects of investment. First, Commitment requires the investment of time. Often great change requires sustained Commitment over a significant time. Second, Commitment requires the investment of physical and psychological energy, driving the group process and facilitating group goals. The leadership development associated with Commitment has three aspects through which leaders bring change: (a) help the group find a common purpose and formulate strategies to realize that purpose, (b) sustain the group during controversy, and (c) facilitate the realization of group’s goals (HERI, 1996). Figure 2 models this SCM process of leadership development connected with Commitment in a group setting. Further, Figure 2 highlights the investment of time, as well as physical and psychological energy, required by the process of Commitment.

The SCM is the most frequently utilized leadership development model at institutions of higher education (Haber & Komives, 2009). Therefore, leadership educators and student affairs practitioners should incorporate activities and discussions on Commitment into curricular and co-curricular experiences. The current manuscript offers one pathway for utilizing the SCM value of Commitment in leadership education and student development.

Figure 2. *Process of commitment in the Social Change Model of Leadership.*



DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

This scholarship-to-practice manuscript discusses the development, execution, and evaluation of a leadership development intervention on Commitment, a value of the SCM (HERI, 1996). The intervention's target population was a 360-student (180 mentors; 180 mentees) leadership mentoring program at a four-year, public, Midwestern university. Peers, faculty, and staff nominate college student leaders for demonstrating leadership behaviors. Through a structured interview process, the mentoring program selects approximately 60 students to be mentors each year. Each mentor spends three years working weekly with a 1st – 12th-grade student in the community whom teachers and school staff have nominated for positively influencing others.

The current intervention had two primary components. First, mentors and mentees participated in a one-hour, in-person content block with interactive activities and discussions during the fall semester. Mentors and mentees who could not attend the in-person session had access to the content via an online module. The second component of the intervention was a one-hour discussion of research and mass media materials related to Commitment with a small group during the spring semester. The following section shares the material's objectives, activities, and discussion topics for the college student mentors and mentees who are middle or high school students. The college student mentors with K-5 mentees utilized material adapted for a younger audience. The materials focused on the K-5 population are not the focus of the current paper.

There were three retreat objectives, which stated that, by the end of the intervention, participants would be able to do the following: (a) identify areas of passion, (b) examine Commitment in others, and (c) plan a task or activity to demonstrate Commitment. While developing leadership competencies through short-term leadership interventions can be challenging, demonstrated SCM competencies have significantly increased immediately and three months after a short-term training (Rosch & Caza, 2012).

The one-hour content block began by asking participants to discuss the following question: "What does the term Commitment mean, and why is it important?" After discussing their initial thoughts on the topic, the facilitator provided a brief lecture on Commitment, highlighting the definition, describing the SCM, and discussing the model of Commitment (see Figure 2). In particular, the lecture highlighted that Commitment requires two aspects of investment that are sustained throughout the leadership development process: (a) time and (b) physical and psychological energy (HERI, 1996). Additionally, the facilitators discussed that Commitment matters

because it is essential to achieving change. In other words, to have a significant impact, we must invest our time and energy into activities that align with our values, strengths, and passions.

After the opening lecture, participants were provided a refresher on Consciousness of Self, the first value of the SCM (HERI, 1996). Pages four (see Figure 3) and five of the workbook were devoted to the refresher because the foundation of Commitment is one's values and strengths, which are critical topics within the SCM values of Consciousness of Self. Within the Consciousness of Self refresher, participants wrote down their top three values and top five strengths. Additionally, they reflected on what their values and strengths mean for their leadership.

Figure 3. *Consciousness of self refresher.*

CONSCIOUSNESS OF SELF REFRESHER

What are your top 3 values
(in no particular order)?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What are your top 3 leadership strengths?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Reflection

Following the Consciousness of Self refresher, participants completed an incomplete sentences activity. Specifically, we asked participants to identify areas where they might be willing to commit (see Figure 4). Specifically, as recommended by HERI (1996), participants completed ten sentences that began with “I really care about...” Facilitators challenged participants to think deeper than their initial reaction (e.g., we suggested using the word “sports” with examples [e.g., “football, lacrosse”] to complete one sentence versus five different kinds of sports to complete five sentences). After completing the five sentences, participants compared their completed sentences to their values and strengths within their mentoring pairs. Participants answered the following questions: “Did your values inform completed sentences? Do you see an overlap between the top values and the sentences you wrote? If so, what led to this? How will your values influence your ability to be committed? If not, what led to this? How can you bring your sentences into alignment and Congruence with your values?” In addition to discussing their responses in their mentoring pairs, participants also shared their thoughts with a small group.

Figure 4. *Incomplete sentences activity.*

INCOMPLETE SENTENCES ACTIVITY

1. I really care about _____
2. I really care about _____
3. I really care about _____
4. I really care about _____
5. I really care about _____
6. I really care about _____
7. I really care about _____
8. I really care about _____
9. I really care about _____
10. I really care about _____

Reflection

The next activity was a case study on Commitment. During this activity, we challenged participants to practice identifying values in others and recognizing Commitment. The activity began with facilitators sharing the backstory of the 1988 Jamaican bobsled team, the focus of the fictionalized Disney movie *Cool Runnings* (Turteltaub, 1993). The 1988 Jamaican bobsled team were the first Jamaican athletes to compete in the Winter Olympics. While none of the bobsledders had previously participated in the sport, they practiced for months before crashing at the Olympics. A fictionalized account of the crash is depicted in *Cool Runnings* (Semisocial215, 2009). Following the backstory, participants watched the video about the crash and discussed how they saw Commitment in this group (see Figure 5). Additionally, we asked participants to reflect on the behaviors and statements that might indicate a lack of Commitment.

Figure 5. *Case study reflection.*

CASE STUDY OF COMMITMENT & LEADERSHIP

What is going on in this case study?

How did the bobsledders demonstrate commitment?

How can you apply what you learned to your own leadership?

The final portion of the retreat was an area of Commitment activity. After seeing Commitment in others, participants reflected on what Commitment might look like in their own leadership and planned an area where they would demonstrate Commitment (see Figure 6). We intentionally asked participants to consider their values and strengths (i.e., the Consciousness of Self refresher), as well as the incomplete sentences activity when identifying an area of Commitment. Participants then shared their thoughts in the mentoring pairs and small groups. The content block ended with mentors and mentees reflecting on two things they learned that they would utilize with their teams, schools, organizations, families, or communities.

Figure 6. Area of commitment reflection.

AREA OF COMMITMENT	
I really care about _____	
What needs to be done? What change is needed? _____ _____	What will you do to demonstrate commitment towards this area and promote positive social change? (Reminder: These should be measurable, controllable, and achievable.)
What led you to this area? Why does it matter to you? _____ _____	1. I will _____ _____
	2. I will _____ _____

The workbook participants received also had additional activities for mentoring pairs to complete. The additional activities included a case study on Dorothy Height, a lifelong civil rights and women’s rights social movement leader who worked within teams to advance innovative solutions to comprehensive challenges (Height, 2009; see Figures 7-9). After reading the case study on Dorothy Height, mentors and mentees were asked to reflect on the following questions: (a) “Based on her actions, what might Height value?”; (b) “How did Height demonstrate Commitment?”; and (c) “How did Commitment influence Height’s leadership?”

Figure 7. Case study of commitment part one.

CASE STUDY OF COMMITMENT	
<p>On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. declared from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, “From every mountainside, let freedom ring” (Height, 2003, p. 145). Within an arm’s length stood Dr. Dorothy Height, the President of the National Council of Negro Women (NCW) and a civils rights and women’s rights social movement leader. Although Height was not allowed to speak at the March on Washington, her voice rang for decades in the fight to pry open the gates of freedom for all. Throughout a lifetime of service, Height positively influence social change on issues such as unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, and voter registration (Height, 2003). Despite obstacles, she led with strategic vision and a talent for inviting others to take up the fight (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004).</p> <p>Born in Richmond, Virginia, Height’s parents moved to Rankin, Pennsylvania as part of the Great Migration to the North by southern African Americans (Height, 2003). Raised in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, Height grew up attending racially integrated schools with peers who were largely foreign-born. Despite significant health issues with asthma throughout childhood, Height excelled academically and was praised for her oratorical skills. The schools that Height attended also provided opportunities for activism, such as an anti-lynching campaign. Height said that she was largely unfamiliar with prejudice in childhood, however, in adolescence, she was not allowed to swim in the YWCA pool on account of</p>	<p>her race. Additionally, when competing in a local oratory competition, Height was not allowed to stay at the hotel where her school had made reservations.</p> <p>Despite this prejudice, Height won a national speaking competition her senior year of high school and received a scholarship from the Elks, which played a significant role in her ability to attend college (Height, 2003) After earning two degrees from New York University, Height began working at the YWCA in Marlem in 1937. There she met Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune, who had just founded the National Council of Negro Women (NCNV). Bethune immediately recruited Height to volunteer with the NCNW and served as a source of inspiration and guidance for Height until her death in 1955.</p> <p>While volunteering and working with the NCNW, Height faced numerous situations that were particularly challenging as a leader. The civil rights and women’s rights movements, of which Height was a part, required people to critically examine their beliefs and values. These complex issues were unable to be answered solely through a leader’s skills or influence. For example, Height realized that the advancement of women’s rights and civil rights would require root issues to be addressed, such as economic development and education.</p>

Figure 8. Case study of commitment part two

CASE STUDY OF COMMITMENT	
<p>To address this challenge, the Mississippi NCNW fought to keep Head Start programs functioning as a means of educating underprivileged children and employing caretakers. To save the programs, the NCNW facilitated the development of a “pig bank” where participating families cared for a pig and brought two piglets back to the bank from each litter to develop economic resources in the community. Before the establishment of the “pig bank, community members had been bribed to vote for politicians who did not support Head Start programs. Once the pig bank was in place, individuals were less swayed by financial incentives from politicians and, therefore, better able to vote for candidates who advocated in their best interest and maintained funding for Head Start. This creative endeavor was later replicated by the king of Swaziland among rural women to promote economic viability.</p> <p>Height joined the national staff of the YWCA in 1944 where she led the integration of all of the organization’s facilities and served as the first director of the WCA’s Center for Racial Justice (Height, 2003). Additionally, Height served as president of the NCNW from 1957-1997. During her time at the NCNW, Height championed efforts such as the Black Family Reunion Celebration, an event that attracted over 12 million people in a celebration of traditions and values of the African American family</p>	<p>(Jackson, n.d.). The NCNW led integration efforts such as “Wednesdays in Mississippi,” (WIMs) a movement in which Height served as the recruiter and coordinator (Height, 2003). WIMs brought women from northern cities to Jackson, Mississippi to meet together and discuss civil rights issues. Height (2003) recalls, “By the end of the [first] summer forty-eight women from six northern cities had met and talked with some three hundred southern women, nearly half of whom were white” (p. 177). Height’s facilitation of this event demonstrates how she worked as a bridge leader, connecting people to the movements she helped lead and building relationships (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004).</p> <p>Outside of the NCNW, Height also fostered connections with other leaders of various social movements and groups. This collaborative spirit led to the founding of the National Women’s Political Caucus in 1971 alongside Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, and others (Jackson, n.d.). Height also had substantial political impact as she was a consultant to multiple US Presidents, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower and President Lyndon B. Johnson. Height was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom and Congressional Gold Medal (Jackson, n.d.).</p> <p><i>Case study written by Hannah Sunderman (2019)</i></p>

Figure 9. Case study of commitment reflection.

CASE STUDY OF CONGRUENT LEADERSHIP	
<p>What is going on in this case study? What are the key moments?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>How did commitment influence Height’s impact as a leader?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Based on her actions, what might Height value?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>How can you apply what you learned from Height to your leadership?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>How did Height demonstrate commitment?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	

Building upon the content covered during to fall portion of the intervention, the spring portion of the intervention was discussion-based. Small groups read *Commitment* (HERI, pp. 40-47) and answered concrete, conceptual, and application questions, such as (a) “Where, according to the article, does Commitment come from?”; (b) “How do leaders who have a high Commitment act, think, and feel? Describe what it might be like to be led by them”; and (c) “What does it look like for you to keep growing in Commitment? How can this contribute to positive social change?” Then, small groups watched and discussed a variety of relevant video clips selected by

small group leaders. For example, one small group watched the video *Power of Commitment* from the TEDx-Kids@SMU event (Jonathan, 2017).

After watching a video clip, small groups again discussed concrete, conceptual, and application questions, such as (a) “This video uses a lot of sports imagery. How do sports/physical activity compare to and connect with the work of leadership and social change” and (b) “What does it look like for you to remain committed to your passions and values even when it is challenging?” Notably, the spring portion of the intervention was primarily held in a hybrid format based on the preferences of each small group. While a handful of small groups preferred to meet entirely in person, most of the small groups had some participants in person and on campus. In contrast, other participants joined virtually via Zoom.

DISCUSSION OF OUTCOMES/RESULTS

As with the Consciousness of Self and Congruence interventions (Sunderman & Hastings, 2021, in press), we evaluated the year-long intervention (i.e., Fall workshop and Spring small groups) with a survey built on the intervention objectives. Utilizing the response anchors suggested by Seemiller to evaluate student leadership learning (2013; 1 = Did not increase, 4 = Greatly increased), participants assessed their development on the following four statements: (a) my understanding of Commitment; (b) my ability to identify areas of passion; (c) my ability to examine Commitment in others; and (d) my ability to demonstrate Commitment. Based on the recommendations of Seemiller (2016), an aggregate total ≥ 3.0 (“moderately increased”) indicated that the objectives had been sufficiently developed. We asked participants to complete the survey following the spring semester (i.e., six months after the first part of the intervention and two months after the second part). By having time between the intervention and the evaluation survey, we avoided the Honeymoon Effect, a typical evaluation pitfall occurring when participants overestimate the impact of an experience immediately after it ends (Rosch & Schwartz, 2009).

Ultimately, 74 mentors participated in the overarching programmatic survey (N = 180, 41%). Due to survey attrition, 56 mentors evaluated the intervention. Regarding year in school, 15 participants were sophomores (27%), 21 were juniors (38%), and 19 were seniors (35%). Regarding gender, 33 participants were women (59%), and 23 were men (41%). Regarding race/ethnicity, 52 participants identified as white (93%), two participants identified as Black or African American (4%), one participant identified as Hispanic or Latinx (2%), and one participant identified as Asian (2%).

The results of the evaluation survey are shown in Table 1. The average participant response was greater than 3.0 on the four intervention objectives, signifying acceptable development of the objective (Seemiller, 2016). The aggregate average of participant responses across the four questions was 3.09 (i.e., “moderately increased” on the scale of 1 = Did not increase to 4 = Greatly increased; Seemiller, 2013), which satisfied our pre-determined threshold.

Table 1. Results of evaluation survey.

Question	Average	% of Participants ≥ 3.0 Rating
My understanding of Commitment	3.05	78.5
My ability to identify areas of passion	3.16	80.4
My ability to examine Commitment in others	3.07	75.0
My ability to demonstrate Commitment	3.09	78.6
<i>Note.</i> Participants evaluated their development from the intervention utilizing the response anchors of 1 = Did not increase to 4 = Greatly increased (Seemiller, 2013). An average of 3.0 indicates a moderate increase in self-perceived participant development.		

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRACTITIONER

The purpose of the current manuscript was to outline the development, execution, and evaluation of a leadership development intervention on Commitment, a value of the SCM (HERI, 1996). The intervention was created and

implemented among adolescents and college students engaged in leadership mentoring. This work offers implications for leadership educators and student affairs practitioners.

Namely, we encourage leadership educators to implement the Commitment curriculum and subsequent assessment strategy within their curricular and co-curricular settings. In providing a detailed description of the intervention, we sought to meet a need in the field for “descriptions of assignments and activities comprising the day-to-day teaching of leadership” (Smith & Roebuck, 2010, p. 136). For example, student affairs practitioners may find the Commitment curriculum advantageous for utilization among individuals within teams that will serve together for an academic year (e.g., advisory boards, student government representatives, or student ambassadors). Additionally, student affairs practitioners working with first-year students may consider implementing the Commitment curriculum to help students consider places on campus and in the community where they may have an impact.

Notably, student leaders on college campuses face significant leadership challenges (Posner, 2012), including motivating their peers. Incorporating the current intervention as training for college students in leadership positions may benefit both students and staff by discussing personal and organizational priorities, as well as the process of facilitating social change. While the target population of the current paper was college students who mentor, student affairs professionals and leadership educators may decide to utilize the material in alternative settings, such as a traditional classroom or, as previously mentioned, training for on-campus leaders. As practitioners implement the current curriculum, we suggest providing continued individual, one-on-one, or group reflection opportunities to sharpen meaning-making processes among participants.

Building upon the current paper, we recommend that scholars and practitioners utilize the Commitment curriculum combined with Consciousness of Self curriculum (i.e., the first Individual value of the SCM; Sunderman & Hastings, 2021) and Congruence curriculum (i.e., the second Individual value of the SCM; Sunderman & Hastings, in press). Teaching the three values together fully addresses the Individual Values of the SCM (HERI, 1998). In line with this suggestion, the leadership mentoring program in the current paper has completed an intervention for the preceding two years; first, on Consciousness of Self, and second, on Congruence. Likewise, the leadership mentoring program will complete a similar intervention next year on the fourth value of the SCM, Collaboration, continuing a pattern that will proceed until the seven values have all been at the center of a year-long intervention. Likewise, we recommend that student affairs practitioners combine the Consciousness of Self, Congruence, and Commitment curriculum. For example, practitioners may integrate the implementation of the three pieces of curriculum by starting a weekly student leader meeting with 15 minutes of content and activities or hosting a group retreat at the start of each semester that covers a different value of the SCM and provides time for group conversation. Additionally, we recommend that student affairs practitioners include students in the planning and implementation of the SCM curriculum to ensure the structure and activities matches student interests and preferences. Including students in the planning and implementation process illustrates the SCM’s non-hierarchical structure (HERI, 1996).

Further, while we chose to use a case study of the 1998 Jamaican bobsled team in the fall retreat because 7th-12th grade mentees participated, we recommend the practitioners who implement the Commitment curriculum among exclusively college students incorporate the Dorothy Height case study directly into the intervention. The Dorothy Height case study offers in-depth and specific examples of one leader who worked within groups and teams to demonstrate Commitment and catalyze social change.

In sum, as the SCM is the most widely used leadership development model on college campuses (Haber & Komives, 2009), it is valuable for leadership educators to have an accessible SCM curriculum for utilization in curricular and co-curricular settings. In the current scholarship-to-practice brief, we sought to describe a leadership development intervention grounded in the Commitment value of the SCM, along with an accompanying evaluation strategy and results. By sharing our curriculum, workbook, and suggestions for implementation, we hope leadership educators and student affairs practitioners can implement their own Commitment intervention in various settings to strengthen students’ capacity for leading social change.

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