

# Boyeristic Tendencies: A Look into the Life History of the Student Affairs Scholar-Practitioner

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*The purpose of this study was to provide more insight into the skills and support systems needed to encourage scholarship among student affairs practitioners. We used topical life history to examine the scholarly lives of eight student affairs practitioners. To guide our examination, we used the questions posed by Jablonski et al. (2006) as our research questions: ‘What skills and knowledge [did] practitioners need to develop a scholarship agenda?’ and ‘What support, coaching, and job modifications create[d] environments for practitioners to be successful?’” (p. 197). Participant life histories revealed a variety of direct and indirect influences, such as institutional context, mentorship, personal characteristics, and significant others on the participants’ work as student affairs practitioners. The findings highlighted the following as major influences on the professionals’ decisions to engage and sustain scholarship: community, intrinsic motivation, and cultural change. What these findings also suggest is practitioners are willing and desirous to make an impact on the broader field through scholarly engagement; they just need support and compelling reasons to do so.*

**Keywords:** cultural change, scholarship, teaching and learning, theory-to-practice, life history

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Leaders in the field of student affairs have voiced concern about the state of scholarship in student affairs practice (Carpenter, 2001; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fried, 2002; Jablonski et al., 2006; Malaney, 2002; Schroeder & Pike, 2001; Sriram & Oster, 2012). Concern was so great over this topic, two special issue journal volumes were devoted to the topic and a symposium was held to discuss the state of scholarship in student affairs. Both volumes were replete with conceptual papers as to what factors may be impeding or encouraging scholarship among practitioners. However, to date, little inquiry-based data are available to speak to the legitimacy of those factors or offer to describe the levels of scholarship engagement among student affairs practitioners. In the field of student affairs, a number of scholar-practitioner conceptualizations have been offered (Carpenter, 2001; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fried, 2002; Jablonski et al., 2006; Malaney, 2002; Schroeder & Pike, 2001). However, this study used Boyer's (1990) conceptualization of scholarship to examine the accounts of select student affairs practitioners who were engaged in scholarship at the time of the study.

### Literature Review

Though initially written for faculty, Carpenter (2001) suggested Boyer's (1990) conceptualization of scholarship offers a multifaceted

model for defining the activities of student affairs practitioners who engage in both scholarship and practice. Boyer's conceptualization of scholarship included four areas: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Boyer referred to the research process as the *scholarship of discovery*. *The scholarships of integration and application*, he suggested, involves weaving together research and theory across disciplines and using that knowledge to solve real world problems. Lastly, he described *the scholarship of teaching* as the act of transforming and extending knowledge to others. The range and comprehensiveness of Boyer's conceptualization lends itself well to the multidimensional possibilities and aspects of student affairs work.

**The Scholarship of Discovery.** In an argument for engagement in research, Boyer (1990) insisted uncovering new knowledge was a necessary response to our ever-changing, complex world. Discovery of knowledge in student affairs through research has typically been a pursuit attributed to the faculty in preparation programs (Young, 2001) and engagement in research continues to be low among practitioners (Sriram & Oster, 2012). Many scholars have offered reasons for the lack of research engagement by practitioners—from gaps in research knowledge to lack of time (Bishop,

2010; Evans et al., 2010; Jablonski et al., 2006; Kezar, 2000; Malaney, 2002; Schroeder & Pike, 2001; Sriram & Oster, 2012)—and suggestions have been made about how to address the issues preventing research engagement among practitioners. Kezar (2000) suggested practitioners get involved in the process of deciding what issues or programs should be researched. She went on to argue practitioners are more likely to use research they have helped create and, thus, more likely to be aware of what research is available to them. Similarly, Allen (2002) suggested research that involves practitioners in the process has a higher probability of addressing the concerns of practitioners. Practitioner involvement in faculty research “demystifies the research process and makes the results more accessible; it has the potential of awakening practitioners to the possibility that research can legitimately meet their concerns, thus closing any perceived gap” (Kezar, 2000, pp. 445-446). Sriram and Oster (2012) also suggested practitioners will not be able to increase their involvement in research through individual agency alone, rather institutional culture needs to shift in support of practitioner engagement of research. A culture of support would include opportunities and incentives for student affairs and academic affairs partnerships. Sriram and Oster suggested a culture of research engagement includes both

conducting research and consuming and applying research to practice.

### **The Scholarships of Integration and Application.**

The scholarships of integration and application (Boyer, 1990) form the basis of what is termed *theory-to-practice* in the field of student affairs. Theory-to-practice is the process by which formal, informal, and implicit theories are used by an individual practitioner or group of practitioners to inform professional practice or development of programs or policies (Bensimon, 2007; Love, 2012; Parker, 1977; Reason & Kimball, 2012). In the field of student affairs, integration of theory into practice has been highlighted as an important aspect of training future practitioners (CAS, 2019) and an important competency area for student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). However, translating theory into tangible practice is not always an easy task for the practitioner. Realizing this, several scholars have offered models and suggestions for translating theory into practice (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Evans, 1987; McEwen, 2003; Reason & Kimball, 2012; Rodgers & Widick, 1980; Stage, 1994). Many of these models have come under criticism for not being useful to practitioners (Evans et al., 2010), and some scholars have suggested a lack of practitioner input keeps these models from being viable (Brown & Barr, 1990; Kezar, 2000).

Reason and Kimball's (2012) model, however, presents a socio-cultural and holistic approach to theory in practice. Their model includes elements such as reflective practice and considerations specific to institutional context for practitioners to use as they go about the work of integrating formal, informal, and implicit theory into their work.

**The Scholarship of Teaching.** There is a growing body of literature on the scholarship of teaching among practitioners (Boss et al., 2019; Komives, 2012; Lewis et al., 2017; Magolda & Quaye, 2011; Malaney, 2002; Moore, 2007). This literature covers teaching in both curricular and co-curricular spaces. Much of the co-curricular writings about teaching are connected to an increased focus of student learning in the field of student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Magolda & Quaye, 2011). There are also a number of practitioners working in part-time and adjunct capacities (Moore, 2007). Komives (2012) suggested, those who engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning are doing the work of enhancing their overall student affairs practice. Boyer (1990) argued for teaching as a communal process by which the teacher builds bridges from her understanding to the students' learning using whatever tools help her do so successfully. The scholarship of teaching is seen as a carefully honed craft that produces critical thinkers

who also go on to engage scholarship. Thus, having a better understanding of the scholarship of teaching in student affairs practice is an important aspect of maximizing impact on student learning.

### ***Scholarly Practice for Social Change***

Scholar-practitioners have the potential to be powerful change agents and social justice advocates (Boss et al., 2018; Bouck, 2011; Cherrey & Allen, 2011; Wasserman & Kram, 2009). In a study conducted with professionals in the field of management, Wasserman and Kram (2009) found scholar-practitioners reported using their consumption and production of knowledge to improve practices and effectiveness in their organizations. Similarly, Bouck (2011) suggested scholar-practitioners use their combination of knowledge and skills to critically examine oppressive structures present in the educational system. He went on to argue the powerful role scholar-practitioners can play in challenging these structures:

Unfortunately, harmful educational practices concealed under the sheep's clothing of mission statements that tout social justice and democratic ideals continue to promote the status quo. Therefore, scholar-practitioners' practices hinge on creating viable educational organ-

izations through exposing such inequities and ensuring the fair treatment, which does not necessarily mean equal treatment, of all students.” (p. 204)

In using their continued knowledge and engagement, scholar-practitioners expand their possibilities for impacting systematic change (Cherrey & Allen, 2011). Unfortunately, when it comes to engaging critical approaches to examine issues of social justice, hegemony, and many other things that affect marginalized student populations, student affairs research and theory is not keeping pace with change (Boss et al., 2018; Tanaka, 2002), which leaves practitioners’ wanting in situations where empirical support remains a necessary means for justifying the work in which they are engaged (Cherrey & Allen, 2011). Scholarly engagement, however, can be a powerful source of role modeling and of creating conditions in which other practitioners are empowered to affect change (Wasserman & Kram, 2009).

### ***Challenges for the Student Affairs Scholar-Practitioner***

Engaging scholarship is not easy for student affairs practitioners, as they face a number of challenges in regards to professional preparation and practice. Schroeder and Pike (2001) suggested challenges and constraints

to scholarship could be the result of prevailing mental models, fear, inadequate preparation, lack of clear purpose, motivation, institutional context, individual differences, tyranny of custom, institutional culture, and the tyranny of the immediate. *Tyranny of the immediate*, which often results in a lack of time to engage in scholarly endeavors, may present the biggest challenge to practitioners (Evans et al., 2010). Additionally, several scholars have suggested graduate programs are not preparing practitioners with the skills they need to be successful (Boss et al., 2018; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Waple, 2006). Even when students have been exposed to training in some areas, such as research, as a part of their preparation program, they may continue to lack confidence in their skills and avoid engagement in research (Sriram & Oster, 2012) or they may be demotivated to engage in research, assuming it is the work of faculty (Tyler, 2009). This line of thinking is problematic, because articles written by faculty may not always present information in a way that is useful to practitioners. In a review of academic articles written in the field of management, Bartunek (2007) discovered only 64% offered implications for practice and out of that 64% only 15% were implications geared specifically toward practitioners. She went on to argue the method for identifying research and presenting it is flawed. Whereas academics look for gaps in the literature and find

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

Much is written about the difficulties of engaging scholarship in practice, but little data has been offered to aid in a deeper understanding of factors that promote or impede it (Sriram & Oster, 2012). Scholars not only in the field of student affairs but also in other fields that train practitioners have stressed the importance of the scholar-practitioner. The potential for scholar-practitioners to contribute to the wider body of knowledge of the field and affect change in ways that benefit students in the academy as a whole, makes this topic a worthwhile one to study. Past writings have suggested that very little practitioner scholarship occurs in the field of student affairs. Through this

study, we examined the lives of several practitioners who are considered to be scholars by their peers.

The purpose of this study was to provide more insight into the skills and support systems needed to encourage scholarship among student affairs practitioners. Specifically, we endeavored to provide more insight into the questions posed by Jablonski et al. (2006): “What skills and knowledge [did] practitioners need to develop a scholarship agenda?” and “What support, coaching, and job modifications create[d] environments for practitioners to be successful” (p. 197). To accomplish this goal, we gathered the topical life histories of a group of student affairs scholar-practitioners.

### **Methodology and Methods**

Given the breadth of participants’ experiences, narrative methodology, particularly *topical life history* was employed. Topical life history (TLH) is a distinct narrative research approach that focuses on life stories. It has been highlighted as a way to address issues of subjectivity and explore contextual factors in depth as they relate to the topic of inquiry (Ward, 2003). TLH focuses on subjectivity by capturing participants’ explanations of their behavior around the topic of study. It also forefronts context by situating participants’ accounts within all of the contextual factors present throughout the life experience in the

topic of focus, such as graduate preparation programs as well as the offices, departments, and divisions in which participants have worked. Thus, the cultural aspects of those contexts are explored in the data collection process. TLH research offers rich enough data to allow for robust analysis of the topic of study for individual participants and the participant collective (Ward, 2003). Qualitative research scholars have suggested life history is the best way to examine decisions people make as they relate to their work, because it involves looking at the intersections and impacts of identity development and institutional contexts (Dhunpath, 2000; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

### **Participants**

This study examined the accounts of eight student affairs scholar-practitioners whose data were represented using assigned pseudonyms. As previous literature has suggested, student affairs scholar-practitioners are rare in the larger population of professionals (Carpenter, 2001; Fried, 2002; Jablonski et al., 2006). So, to identify practitioners engaging in scholarship, participants were recruited through a combination of criterion-based and network sampling (Prasad, 2005). I (Ginny) reached out to a network of people working in student affairs and solicited participant nominations. Nomination criteria included: (1) currently working full-time

in student affairs and (2) actively using any one or more of Boyer's scholarships in practice. Twelve nominees were invited to participate in the study, and eight consented to participate. Reported demographic characteristics of participants were as follows: (a) three participants identified as women and five identified as men, and (b) one participant identified as ethnically Hispanic and White raced, five as White, and two as Black. All participants had received doctorates from various institutions around the continental United States in higher education administration, student affairs, or a closely related field. At the time of study, participants had a collective average of 15 years of full-time experience in the field of student affairs with the newest professional at 5 years and the most senior at 28.

### **Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect life stories (Lichtman, 2006; Patton, 2002). For most participants, two 60–90-minute interviews were conducted. The exception was one participant for whom a single 90-minute interview was conducted. Due to researcher or participant availability and travel, some interviews were computer mediated via Skype and others were conducted in person.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analyses were conducted through an iterative process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As data was generated through interviews, they were visited and revisited for meaning, based upon previous data. Due to the emergent nature of this study, this iterative process of data analysis provided insight and direction for subsequent interviews. Given the limited literature available on this topic, this method allowed me (Ginny) to strengthen the interview protocol in a way I would have not been able to during the design of the study.

Once all data had been collected, I (Ginny) employed a coding technique, to isolate data relevant to the focus of this study. The coding technique used was one detailed by Charmaz (2000) and included pulling out individual concepts related to the topic of study and, through a process of refinement, grouping those concepts into themes. Both of us (Authors 1 and 2) used the results of the coding technique to re-story thematically.

**Measures of robustness.** To increase the probability of rich and comprehensive results, *triangulation of sources* and *analyst triangulation* were used. Triangulation of sources was used with the data; participant interviews were examined among individual participants' transcription data and between data provided by all participants (Patton,

2009). Finally, analyst triangulation was conducted in which Merrily served as a secondary analyst of the data, noted themes among data, and consulted with Ginny in the final presentation of the findings, discussion, and implications of the data.

### **Findings**

Participant life histories revealed a variety of influences, such as institutional context, mentorship, personal characteristics, and significant others on their work as student affairs practitioners. Through the analytical process, it was evident how these influences directly and indirectly shaped participants' career opportunities and choices. A thematic analysis was performed on all transcribed data to capture the particularities of each participant's experiences and draw connections among all participants' journeys. As such, data were broken down and reassembled to re-story the data using overarching themes. The following themes were identified in the process: (a) salience of community (b) intrinsic motivation, and (c) cultural change.

#### ***Salience of Community***

For participants in this study, various communities served as encouragers or inhibitors of engagement in scholarship. For some, community was present throughout their early career, even as practitioners worked on



their graduate degrees. Fitzgerald and Aiden illustrated this point, saying:

I can't remember a time I met with either of my supervisors where they didn't ask about how my classes were going, what am I learning, asking the kinds of questions like, "how are you seeing any of that applied to what you're doing here?" So, that way I think I had really good supervisors who were helping translate the academic work into the practical environment as well. (Fitzgerald)

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

Adien, Fitzgerald, and other participants' reported influences toward scholarship as a result of those early exposures to practitioners who were engaged in or showed interest in using it in practice.

Community was also expressed as a salient part of participants' post-master's experiences as well. Kyle's story represents how community can encourage some forms of scholarship and not others. Kyle spoke about making deeper connections to theory in practice through the culture of "best practices" in his first full-time position in student affairs:

I was very engaged in a lot of conversations, not so much about theory but about best practices. We revamped the diversity portion of RA training completely. I mean, now I see this as theory-based, but I didn't think of it at the time as theory. I'm thinking about it as finding really good ideas and best practices and finding what other places do and how we come up with an innovative plan to completely redo this.

Even though he had not originally connected the efforts in his department to theory-to-practice work, when he found himself engaging the same efforts with his own staff, Kyle was able to recognize how formal theories were being used to inform best practices. Kyle spoke similarly about teaching opportunities he was able to engage in as a part of his work. However, when it came to the scholarship of research he said, "I don't know that there was a lot of support for [research],

it was all on my own time. It wasn't discouraged, but it was something that I was doing above and beyond. That wasn't the job expectation, wasn't part of the culture." His story was not unique in that regard. Throughout participant interviews were stories of how work cultures around using theory and engaging in teaching encouraged practitioners' own engagements in scholarship. Yet, emphases on scholarship were not perceived to be equal in the eyes of participants. Particularly when it came to the scholarship of research, many participants reported ambivalence toward the scholarship of discovery in their work cultures.

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

I think [research engagement] was pretty high, overall, both research and teaching. I think the interest was high for most students. There's a group of us that graduated within a year or two of each other that still try

and come up with ideas. We are trying to collaborate on research ideas, when there's things out there. ...I think [theory-to-practice] was probably even higher.

As a subsection of community, mentorship arose as a critical component of taking on the role of scholar-practitioner. Winston talked about the lasting effect of a mentor he had during his doctoral studies who influenced how he went about his work. He explained, "Those discussions before and after class were very intense, and the most productive time I had in my doctoral program. I felt that's where I learned the absolute most, because I had his undivided attention." Mentor relationships also came in the form of peers at other institutions, as was the case with Bobbie: "At one point in my career, I had peer mentors because there weren't individuals who were familiar with the work. ...So, I would talk to my peers who were in similar roles to get that feedback," she shared.

Mentorship was an aspect of navigating being a scholar-practitioner that most participants felt was critical to their engagement in scholarship. Sonja had this to say about the impact of mentorship:

Instantly what comes to mind is the MasterCard commercials. If I were to diagram it out it would be: commuting back and forth to campus, X amount of dollars; getting the degree, X

amount of dollars; mentorship from those people, priceless. Honestly, it is priceless. I can call them about anything, anytime, and I can be excited about something or crying about something and they are always able to guide me.

Mentors seemed to bridge the gap for practitioners when there was little value for scholarship in their institutional environments. Additionally, intrinsic motivation offered another explanation for participants' persistence toward scholarship despite being in unsupportive environments.

### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

Participants reported intrinsic motivation as an important aspect of their scholarly practice. Even when they found themselves in institutional environments where scholarly practice was not a cultural norm, they persisted in scholarly activities. For many participants, the benefit of engaging in scholarship outweighed the discomfort of going against the cultural norm. Kyle's experience demonstrates this in regard to the scholarship of discovery,

...I want to contribute to the field, my research is something that I really care about and really think matters, I really do. It's not just, you know, the research topic that I could get grant

funding for, it really personally matters to me. I love to learn.

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

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

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

Even when support of scholarship was present at participants' institutions, engaging in it was oftentimes an added component of their work. Both Bobbie and Aiden's excerpts illustrate their willingness to put in extra time to pursue scholarship in their work:

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

weekends are spent working on that, but I like doing that. (Bobbie)

The teaching also forces me to stay up-to-date on social justice issues and on assessment issues, two things I really feel passionate about but could probably fall off my plate if I didn't teach them once in a year. ...I use my breaks to try to do some of that teaching stuff. (Aiden)

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

### ***Cultural Change***

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

workshops are aligned with the NASPA/ACPA professional competencies. Making those connections for staff is very important." Bobbie saw an obligation to share her knowledge with her colleagues and to build programs that showed them how to integrate theory-into-practice.

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

I think part of [culture shift at my institution] was first and foremost, helping the campus, not just people in student affairs, but helping the campus understand there is a content, a science, an art to student affairs. It is being researched, there's literature, there are professional organizations, there are people who are studying—in a rigorous, systematic way—the development of students and under what conditions those are advanced.

In his role as a director, he decided it was important to make hiring changes to reflect the values he described in the preceding quotation. He made it mandatory for entry-level practitioners in his area to have a master's degree in student affairs. Throughout

his time at that institution and others, Fitzgerald stayed active in promoting scholarship in student affairs, through engaging research, collaborating on research projects with colleagues and graduate students, staying engaged in student affairs literature and applying his learning to practice, and teaching courses and seminars on the various campuses he has served. Fitzgerald continues to engage in scholarship in various ways on his campus and in the profession on a national level. The same can be said for most of the participants of this study. From Artesia, Winston, Aiden, and Manning's desires to train the next generation of student affairs scholars to Bobbie, Sonia, and Kyle's contribution to the larger profession and all their activities in between. Participants expressed an obligation to make an impact on the state of scholarship in student affairs.

### **Discussion**

The themes identified in the study provided support to prior literature. The literature suggested student affairs practitioners need to be more involved in the field's scholarship (Brown & Barr, 1990; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Kezar, 2000; Sriram & Oster, 2012). This study revealed practitioners enact scholarship in practice in relation to their professional community, intrinsic motivation, and drive for cultural change. Strange and Banning (2001) argued when a person finds

herself in a situation in which the environment is incongruent with her values, she either: leaves the environment, changes the environment, or assimilates to the environment. When confronted with communities that discouraged scholarship, participants tended to stay in those environments but looked for options to affect change in their environments. Also, participants continued to engage in scholarship behaviors they found meaningful. Oftentimes, they were able to sustain their engagement in scholarship as a result of the presence of mentors in their lives. Additionally, practitioners reported having practical experiences during their master's degree program in which engagement in scholarship had been modeled for them. Both of these findings suggest interpersonal socialization toward mentorship may be a powerful motivator toward sustained engagement in scholarship.

Outside of the influence of others, participants reported feelings of satisfaction as a result of engaging in scholarship. Participants were willing to sacrifice their free time, especially if it meant they were making a meaningful contribution to scholarship, as one participant stated, "You stay up late and work on the weekends. A few phone conversations here and there during the workday but, typically, 10:00 at night or on Sundays or whenever you can make it happen." For many of them, making the sacrifice was well

worth it, not just for the intrinsic benefits, but also for the potential impact their efforts made.

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

Additionally, this research highlights that practitioners willing and enthusiastically engage in scholarship when they perceive it to be value-added. It implies the complexities of navigating scholarship engagement in practice can be positively mitigated by the desire to affect change. It also supports assumptions that practitioners need to be involved in processes of research (Kezar, 2000) and development of theory-to-practice models (Bensimon, 2007; Brown & Barr, 1990). Reason and Kimball's (2012) theory-to-practice model may provide a way to facilitate these discussions as they highlight not

only formal and informal theory, but also the impact of institutional context in translating theory to practice.

### **Implications for Practice**

Although these findings are not meant to be generalizable, they do provide some important areas of consideration. Overwhelmingly, participants in this study reported the powerful impact of role modeling by other practitioners. For graduate preparation programs, this could mean paying more attention to relationships that are built with assistantship, internship, and practica providers. According to these findings, students stand to benefit from a robust program where the graduate preparation program and practical experience providers are partnering in support of the curriculum. This may include assignments in which there is a direct benefit to the students' assistantship sites. Program faculty can arrange meetings with supervisors about projects that need to be completed in their areas and tailor assignments to meet those needs and the course goals. Better yet, they can empower students in shaping class curriculum by having students work with their supervisors in crafting a proposal for such an assignment for class. Program faculty create more conditions for environmental press toward scholarship in practice by inviting students to share what they

are learning in class and how is it showing up in their work.

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

This study's findings also have important implications for practitioners interested in scholarship. The findings suggest practitioners need to negotiate time for scholarship in their practice. Intrinsic motivation was a large part of the practitioners in this study's abilities to sustain engagement in scholarship. Practitioners have to be prepared to work in cultures in which scholarship

among practitioners is not the norm and decide how they will be able to support their own efforts in scholarship. These findings also suggest the importance of establishing and maintaining mentoring relationships with others in the profession, particularly when practitioners are at institutions where their scholarship efforts are not supported.

### **Conclusion**

In examining the narratives of those who are currently engaging scholarship in practice, we gained greater insight into how to promote scholarly practice more widely among other practitioners. The life histories presented in this study chronicled the journeys of practitioners as they navigated various work contexts and establishing their identities as scholar-practitioners. Through their stories we offer the field a clearer picture of the importance of environment, intrinsic motivators, and the need and potential impact of practitioners working as change agents. What these findings also suggest is practitioners are willing and desirous to make an impact on the broader field through scholarly engagement, but they need the proper support to sustain that motivation.

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