The Cultures of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Collaboration:

An Examination of Typology in Higher Education Subcultures

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This article reviews existing literature on the similarities and differences in personality and learning typologies of student affairs and academic affairs professionals and faculty. It discusses how knowledge of personality and learning typologies can be used to establish successful collaboration between institutional subcultures. Implications for building intercultural collaboration are presented.

For nearly two decades, scholars and organizations in higher education have called for collaborations between student affairs and academic affairs that produce seamless learning environments (Kuh, 1996; Schroeder, 1999) and transformative learning experiences (Keeling, 2004). These collaborations have been shown to connect students' curricular and co-curricular activities while acclimating them to their institution, increasing their engagement and learning,

and improving their academic and career decision making (Elkins-Nesheim et al., 2007). These collaborations have yielded moderate success in creating the seamless student learning environments they have been called to develop (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], ACPA, & NASPA, 1998; Cook, Eaker, Ghering & Sells, 2007; Kezar, Hirsch, & Burack, 2001; Schroeder, 1999). However, despite the positive benefits collaborations can provide students, obstacles still remain.

Cultural differences between academic affairs and student affairs have been shown to lead to conflicts which hinder progress in collaborations (Arcelus, 2008; Cook et al., 2007; Guentzel, 2009; Kezar, 2001). How the distinct cultures of student affairs and academic affairs converge in a collaborative effort is a key factor in determining the success of these initiatives (Kezar et al., 2001). A study by Kezar (2001) focusing on strategies for collaborations found that most barriers to collaborating were rooted in cultural differences between student affairs and academic affairs. Guentzel's (2009) study on faculty experiences in collaborations confirmed this finding, as it was revealed that miscommunications and conflicts over control of managing collaborative programs were the result of two distinct cultures clashing. Overall, Arcelus (2008) contends these differences, arising from the separate cultures of student and academic affairs, hindered progress in collaborations between these groups and thus negatively impacted the educational experiences of students.

While there has been research and inquiry into the impact of cultural differences between student affairs and academic affairs on these change initiatives, little has been focused on how the differences in the human aggregate of these subcultures contribute to the cultural divide. Scott (2008) proposed that the collective characteristics of the individuals in a setting contribute to the culture of the setting or sub-group. The Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) and Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory (LSI), which capture personality and learning style typologies respectively, illustrate these differences and provide insights in the sub-cultures. This manuscript reviews previous research and literature comparing these typological differences across these populations.

Typology

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The MBTI assessment focuses on four (4) key elements of an individual's preferences for taking in and processing information: a) (E)traversion or (I)ntroversion - how an individual

directs their attention and energy; b) (S)ensing or (N) Intuition - how an individual takes in information; c) (T)hinking or (F)eeling - how an individual prefers to make decisions; and d) (J)udging or (P)erceiving - how an individual interacts with the external world (Meyers, 1980). These elements result in sixteen (16) distinct psychological types. These types can reveal an individual's personality, interactions with others, and approach to the world (Martin, 2010; Myers, 1980).

Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory (LSI)

Kolb's (1981) learning styles and experiential learning model views learning as a four stage cycle of concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). According to Kolb (1981) effective learners must:

be able to involve themselves fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences (CE); they must be able to observe and reflect on these experiences from many perspectives (RO); they must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (AC); and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems (AE). (p.236)

An individual's learning style is determined by which two learning modes an individual relies upon most. The learning styles identified are: (a) converger [AC/AE], (b) diverger [CE/RO], (c) assimilator [AC/RO], or (d) accommodator [CE/AC]) (Kolb (1981).

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Analyzing the Literature

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The authors limited this literature and research review to refereed scholarly journal articles and dissertations found primarily in EBSCOhost and ProQuest database searches. Search parameters included a combination of the potential collaboration partners (i.e., student affairs administrators, academic administrators, and faculty) and the selected typology measures (i.e., MBTI and Kolb's LSI). To facilitate comparison, the authors organized and added the data into a consistent structure, thus standardizing it across studies. Tables within the findings section present the percentages of the four letter MBTI types, the individual MBTI preference dichotomies, and the Kolb learning styles.

Findings from the Literature Review

This research review yielded few studies identifying typologies within higher education subcultures and only one research project examining differences and similarities between subcultures concurrently (see Anderson, 1997). As such, the discussed studies' findings fit into

and are more readily compared when organized and presented in a table format. Table 1 provides an overview of the MBTI literature on student affairs administrators, academic administrators, and faculty.

Table 1

Overview of Student and Academic Affairs and MBTI Literature

Study	Academic and student affairs analyzed in the same study	Study participants	*n*	Most common MBTI types (% of sample size)
Student Affairs – Chief Student Affairs Officers				
Anderson, 1997 Note: Only student affairs data were included here	Yes	Chief student affairs administrators at two (2) year colleges	56	• ISTJ (17.8) • ESTJ (14.3) • ENFP (10.7)
Daugherty, Randall, & Globetti, 1997	No	Chief female student affairs administrators	153	• INTJ (18.3) • ENTJ (13.7) • ESTJ (10.4)
Student Affairs Administrators				
McNickle & Veltman, 1988	No	Student affairs administrators	39	• ISTJ (10) • INFJ (10) • INTJ (10) • ESFJ (10) • ENFJ (10)
Wittstruck, 1986	No	Student affairs administrators	36	• ESTJ (25) • INTJ (16.7) • ISTJ (13.9) • ENTJ (13.9)
Academic Affairs				
Anderson, 1997 Note: Only academic affairs data were included here	Yes	Chief academic affairs administrators at two (2) year colleges	53	• ENTJ (17) • ESTJ (15.1) • ISTJ (15.1)
Faculty				
Horstein, 1995	No	Associates Degree Nursing faculty	13	• ENTJ (23) • ISFJ (15.3) • INFJ (15.3)
Allchin, Dzurec, & Engler, 2009	No	Baccalaureate Degree Nursing faculty	58	• ISTJ (17.2) • ST (37.9) • SF (25.9)

Table 2 disaggregates the MBTI findings by preference type and studied population.

Table 2

Percentages of MBTI Letters from the Sample Sizes of each Study Broken Down Separately Between Student and Academic Affairs

Study	Extraversion/ Introversion		Sensing/ Intuition		Thinking/ Feeling		Judging/ Perceiving		
	E	*I*	*S*	*N*	*T*	*F*	*J*	*P*	*n*
Chief Student Affairs Officers									
Anderson, 1997 Student Affairs Data (chief student and academic affairs administrators at two-year colleges)	54	46	54	46	64	36	66	34	n = 56
Daugherty, Randall, & Globetti, 1997 (chief female student affairs administrators)	60	40	31	69	57	43	73	27	n = 153
Student Affairs Administrators									
McNickle & Veltman, 1988 (student affairs administrators)	54	46	41	59	49	51	72	28	n = 39
Wittstruck, 1986 (student affairs administrators)	53	47	50	50	83	16	78	22	n = 36
Academic Affairs									
Anderson, 1997 Academic Affairs Data (chief student and academic affairs administrators at two-year colleges)	57	43	30	70	79	21	68	32	n = 53
Faculty									
Horstein, 1995 (associate degree nursing faculty)	46	54	31	69	62	38	77	23	n = 13
Allchin, Dzurec, & Engler, 2009 (baccalaureate degree nursing faculty)	N/A	N/A	64	36	55	45	N/A	N/A	n = 58
Moehl, 2011 (faculty from various academic disciplines)	59	41	34	66	65	35	63	37	n = 426

Table 3 presents an overview of the literature and findings associated with student affairs,

faculty, and Kolb's Learning Styles.

Table 3

Overview of Student and Academic Affairs and LSI Literature

Study	Academic and student affairs analyzed in the same study	Study participants	*n*	Most common LSI type (%of sample size)
Student Affairs				
Forney, 1994	No	Master's students in college student affairs programs	253	• Accommodator (36) • Diverger (26.5) • Converger (19.8) • Assimilator (17.8)
Faculty				
Joyce-Nagata, 1996	No	Baccalaureate Nursing faculty	19	• Assimilator (36.8) • Accommodator (31.5) • Converger (26.3) • Diverger (5)
Kruzich, Friesen, & Van Soest, 1986	No	Social Work faculty	36	• Most preferred the Converger learning style
Schwartz, 2011	No	Academic faculty from various academic disciplines	149	• Assimilator (33.6) • Accommodator (23.5) • Diverger (22.8) • Converger (20.1)

Once organized in this manner, the results of all studies showed strong similarities between each subculture's MBTIs and LSIs. Across the student affairs administrators, academic affairs administrators, and faculty sub-populations, the majority of MBTI preferences were E, N, T, and J and the most common types were ISTJ, INTJ, and ENTJ. The most common student affairs learning style, the accommodator, was also the faculty's second most common style. Despite this core typology within higher education at large, differences in the magnitude of style and preference in each subculture population were also present. Those differences are highlighted below.

Student Affairs Administrators, Academic Administrators, Faculty, and the MBTI

Of the research found on this topic, Anderson's (1997) dissertation was the only one to have investigated MBTI typology for both student and academic affairs administrators. Her work examined how MBTI results reveal communication preferences in chief student and academic affairs administrators at two year colleges. Slightly more males than females responded from each group (n=109). A slim majority of chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) preferred sensing

(S), while 70% of chief academic affairs administrators (CAAA) compared to 46% of CSAO's preferred intuition (N) (Anderson, 1997). Both groups of administrators largely classified as thinkers and judgers (TJs), meaning these individuals are likely to be adept with technical tasks, but tend to overlook recognizing communication, teamwork, and contributions from staff members.

McNickle and Veltman (1988) and Wittstruck (1986) featured the MBTI types of student affairs administrators at four year colleges. When looking at the complete MBTI types from both studies in Table 1, student affairs administrators preferred judging (J) over perceiving (P). Wittstruck (1986) illustrated that most student affairs and academic affairs administrators scored as either intuitive, thinking, and judging (NTJ, 30.5% of the sample size) or sensing, thinking, and judging (STJ, 38.8%).

Daugherty et al. (1997) reviewed the psychological types of female chief student affairs officers. Before analyzing the results of their work, the authors questioned if women in the chief student affairs officers position were more likely to identify as feeling (F) types. They explored whether female chief student affairs officers would be similar to other women in "helping" professions or would these women compare closer to individuals in executive level positions who typically identify as intuitive and thinking (NT) types (Daugherty et al., 1997). The results of the research indicated that the psychological types INTJ (over 18%), ENTJ (almost 14%), and ISTJ (over 10%) represented most of the participants. Participant preferences for intuition and thinking (NT) was higher (39%) than all other temperaments, though the second highest temperament observed, intuition and feeling (NF), represented over 30% of participants (Daugherty et al., 1997) .

Academic faculty plays important roles in student and academic affairs collaborations (Magolda, 2005). Understanding the MBTI types of academic faculty is crucial in deciphering cultural differences that can negatively impact collaborations between student and academic affairs subcultures. In the literature, research on the MBTI types of faculty varied mostly between those that examined types in one specific academic discipline to those that explored types across multiple academic disciplines. For example, studies on the MBTI types of faculty in the nursing discipline were well-represented in the literature through Horstein's (1995) dissertation and a study by Allchin et al. (2009); the latter of these two found that, out of

approximately 60 clinical nursing faculty, the most common type was ISTJ (17.2% of the sample).

Moehl's (2011) dissertation examined MBTI types of faculty across multiple academic disciplines. The most common MBTI types of the 426 faculty participants in her study were ISTJ (14.3% of sample size), INTJ (13.8%), and ENTJ (9.4%). Sensing and perceiving (SP) faculty (i.e. ISTP, ESTP, ISFP, and ESFP) represented the smallest percentage of participants in the sample (7.5%) (Moehl, 2011).

Liang's (2007) work included data on Taiwanese faculty MBTI types across multiple academic disciplines and ages, though a majority of the sample (n=100) were females (n=62). Liang (2007) attributed the higher number of females in the sample to a preference within the culture for female teachers. Given the vast differences between Taiwanese culture and the American culture, this analysis does not include Liang's findings. Nevertheless, a review of the study's descriptive statistics reported 44% of the sample preferred sensing and feeling (SF), 28% preferred sensing and thinking (ST), 20% preferred intuition and feeling (NF) and 8% preferred intuition and thinking (NT) (Liang, 2007).

Student Affairs Administrators, Academic Administrators, Faculty, and Kolb's LSI

Forney (1994) was the lone contributor to the discourse on this topic for student affairs administrators. Her work determined the LSI profile information about Master's students in college student affairs programs. Out of 253 respondents in her study, 91 identified as an accommodator (36.8%) and 45 preferred the assimilator learning style (17.7%) (Forney, 1994).

Studies investigating faculty learning styles typically focused on a singular academic discipline. For example, Joyce-Nagata (1996) investigated the learning styles of baccalaureate nursing faculty. She found that 36.8% identified as assimilators, 31.5% as accommodators, 26.3% as convergers, and 5% as divergers. Kruzich et al. (1986) measured the learning styles of students, faculty, and field instructors within the social work discipline. A total of 36 faculty completed the LSI for this study and associated closest with the Converging learning style.

Schwartz (2011) conducted the most extensive research project examined the LSI results of faculty across multiple academic disciplines. This dissertation investigated if the learning styles of college faculty impact their openness towards using technology when teaching. Full-time faculty across various academic disciplines from two mid-Atlantic community colleges had

their learning styles measured by completing the LSI. Among her 149 participants Schwartz (2011) discovered 50 assimilators, 35 accommodators, 34 divergers, and 30 convergers.

Discussion and Implications

Overall, the literature review reveals more similarities than differences between the two subcultures of student (i.e. student affairs administrators) and academic affairs (i.e. academic administrators and faculty) and their respective MBTI types and LSI styles. The majority of MBTI preferences across all groups are E, N, T, and J and the most common types are ISTJ, INTJ, and ENTJ. Further exploration of student affairs and academic affairs administrators' preference levels of MBTI types indicate that although academics and student affairs shared similar majority responses, the individual elements (i.e. E vs. I, S vs. N, etc.) of each preference are substantially different when compared to the other subculture.

The core similarity between each subcultures' LSI preferences are that student affairs administrators mostly identified with the accommodator learning mode, the academics' second most common style. Upon deeper examination, however, differences regarding learning styles emerged. The most common faculty learning style is the assimilator, which is the opposite of the accommodator and the least common style of student affairs administrators. These MBTI and LSI results imply there are similarities between student affairs and academic affairs subcultures, but there are also important differences that could impact communication patterns, information gathering, decision-making, and time management behaviors, which may account for the collaboration difficulties noted in the literature.

MBTI Discussion

Both groups appeared to have a preference for extraversion (E) over introversion (I). While this might not surprise student affairs employees whose work requires extensive interaction with students and the public, for faculty whose work requires solitude this realization might be useful. This pattern was even more pronounced between the E/I preferences of female chief student affairs administrators and faculty, as nearly 60% of both groups prefer extraversion.

Looking at sensing (S) and intuition (N) preferences, academic affairs as a whole preferred the latter considerably more than student affairs. This preference was especially true when examining the preferences of chief student affairs officers (54% prefer N) and chief academic affairs administrators as their academic counterparts (70% prefer N) at two year colleges (Anderson, 1997). These differences were important given how closely these groups

tend to work together and how closely tied sensing (S) and intuition (N) are to communication. This finding suggested that CAAAs at 2 year schools were more idea driven and focused on possibilities when processing information, while CSAOs took a more concrete fact-based approach to taking in information. These differences could create barriers toward communicating effectively and contribute to conflict in collaborative projects. Another notable finding in the sensing (S) and intuition (N) data was the strong similar preference female chief student affairs administrators and faculty have for intuition; this preference was less sizable in the student affairs staff data.

Both student affairs and academic affairs administrators preferred thinking (T) over feeling (F), but there was evidence that academic administrators and faculty prefer thinking (T) more than student affairs. Moehl's (2011) study (the most reliable and generalizable results considering its diversity of academic disciplines represented, large sample size (n=426), and recent collection of data) suggested that 65% of faculty preferred thinking (T). CAAAs at two (2) year colleges preferred thinking (T) more (79% versus 64%) than their CSAO counterparts (Anderson, 1997). Additionally, female CSAOs and faculty in Moehl's (2011) study, both of whom were similar with their E/I and S/N preferences, differed on the degree to which thinking is preferred (57% to 65% respectively). These findings were not surprising given the high number of women in the samples and that women tend to preferred feeling (F) over thinking (T). Differences in preference for thinking (T) and feeling (F) can lead to a lack of understanding of and different priorities in decision-making.

As previously discussed, each subculture (i.e. student affairs administrators, academic administrators, and faculty) overwhelmingly preferred judging (J) over perceiving (P). What was notable was that independent of Anderson's 1997 study (specifically, if the J versus P data for CSAOs was eliminated), the data showed faculty preferring perceiving (P) by more than 10 percentage points compared to student affairs administrators. It was not surprising that the (J) trait was stronger in all administrators versus faculty given how administrators provide organization and structure to colleges.

These differences (i.e. T/F and P/J) when considered in combination also had the potential to strongly effect collaboration. As shown earlier, academic administrators and faculty had a robust preference for intuition (N) and thinking (T) compared to their student affairs counterparts. Academics might view collaborative undertakings with only the big picture in mind

and neglect, or miss the details or practical possibilities of their ideas. At the same time, the theoretical and abstract approach of an academic affairs administrator or faculty could seem foreign to a sensing (S) student affairs administrator who may be used to thinking about the details of a project first over the ideas behind it.

Academic administrators or faculty possessing strong thinking (T) preferences over feeling (F) may exacerbate this disconnect. Thinking driven decision-makers are motivated by logic without regard for the emotional impact. More feeling-orientated (F) student affairs administrators might question decisions that do not appear to consider or address the needs of all parties and issues involved. Similarly the high desire for structure found in judging (J) student affairs administrators, clashes with perceiving (P) oriented faculty who are able to respond to changes in circumstances. For example, consider collaboration between female CSAOs and their slightly less feeling (F) and judging (J) faculty counterparts. Differences in decision-making, organization, and rigid structure of a project are all possibilities. Conversely, the slightly more perceiving (P) faculty member may feel uncomfortable with all of the structure their student affairs partner could build into their collaboration and may prefer to work with fewer constrictions.

Kolb Learning Style Discussion

The overall literature on student and academic affairs and the LSI suggested that, though learning styles between these groups were somewhat similar, their styles were ultimately different. Twice the percentage of faculty were assimilators as were found in student affairs staff. The percentage of faculty accommodator learning styles were a third less than the student affairs staff percentage, although accommodators remained prominent as the second most common faculty learning style. When analyzing the research results of Forney (1994) and Schwartz (2011), the two most substantive studies on this topic, differences in the two subcultures' learning styles became especially apparent. In Forney's (1994) sample of over 250 prospective student affairs workers, 36% identified as an accommodator. Forney (1994) suggested that this result is unsurprising given the hands-on nature of the student affairs field and the hands-on approach accommodators prefer when learning. Participants in this sample size identified least with the assimilator learning style (17.8%). Conversely, Schwartz's faculty sample size of nearly 150 mostly identified as assimilators, which is the opposite of the accommodator learning style (Kolb, 1981; Osland, Kolb, & Rubin, 2001).

Despite the observed typological similarities across all of the observed populations and studies, dissimilarities were found in the magnitude of MBTI preferences in each sub-population; more dramatic dissimilarities were found in each sub-population regarding Kolb Learning Styles. These differences indicated possible sources of the cultural challenges to collaboration referenced in the literature. The prevalence of assimilators and virtual absence of Accommodators in the faculty ranks and the inverse of each in student affairs administration explains another source of the many difficulties experienced during collaboration. Other foreshadowing challenges to collaboration include: a) the 34% (S)(N) and 15% (T)(F) variation in CSAO and CAAA preferences at two year colleges; b) the 12% (T)(F) and 10% (J)(P) variation in women CSAOs and faculty preferences; c) all of the noted variations between associate degree and bachelor's nursing faculty preferences; and d) the predominance of the SJ combination in student affairs and the NP combination in faculty.

Implications for Practice

Recognizing these personality types and learning styles assists administrators and faculty to more effectively engage in collaboration. For example, as partnerships develop, being sensitive to all partner's type and style impacts how to organize the agenda, create talking points to communicate vision, discuss expectations, and achieve consensus. To accomplish these outcomes, partners should educate themselves about their own personality type and learning style by engaging in professional development, reflexivity journals, and debriefing with colleagues

The breadth of typological similarities found across all populations and studies suggest a core higher education culture shared by student affairs administrators, academic administrators, and faculty; however, a close examination of the data reflects heterogeneity in typology by sub-populations and contexts, indicating a possible source of difference in culture. Recognition calls for intercultural sensitivity and communication skills. Underestimating the strength of our similarities or failing to appreciate the significance of these nuanced differences in subculture results in miscommunication, failed planning, and missed opportunities for partnership. Awareness of and sensitivity to cultural difference and similarity allows student affairs and academic affairs administrators and faculty to collaborate effectively.

Limitations

Researching and reviewing the literature on this topic led to the discovery of certain trends within the literature. Very few studies focus on the MBTI or LSI typology of student affairs officers/administrators and/or academics. Apart from Moehl's (2011) comprehensive study of faculty MBTIs by discipline and Schwartz's (2011) large study on faculty LSI typologies, both of which boasted large responses, most studies either lacked sufficient rigor because of small sample sizes or contained old data from the 1990s and earlier.

One larger study by Daugherty et al. (1997) did collect female chief student affairs officers' MBTIs, but there was no comparable study for male chief student affairs officers. Both of the two student affairs staff studies found in the literature were conducted in the 1980s (McNickle & Veltman, 1988; Wittstruck, 1986), each with sample sizes less than 40. Two of the faculty studies (Allchin et al., 2009; Horstein, 1995), although more current, were conducted with equally small sample sizes and were limited to nursing faculty. The literature review also revealed that most research on this topic did not compare the MBTI types of each subculture together in the same study, nor were there studies examining academic affairs administrators except at two year schools. Overall, these trends in the literature point to a lack of comprehensiveness. This greatly limits the generalizability of the data and tempers the drawing of any absolute conclusions related to the similarities and differences between student and academic affairs in terms of Myers Briggs Type Indicator and Kolb's Learning Style Inventory.

Future Research

Several areas of future research emerged from these conclusions about the literature. Large studies that collected and compared the typologies of academic administrators, student affairs administrators, and faculty at four year colleges and universities together in the same study would advance insight into how different typologies interact with each other in collaborations. Studies that feature a search for the typologies of academic administrators and disaggregated student affairs staff functional duties, similar to faculty by discipline studies, would also assist in determining the role of typology in cultural difference. Studies designed with target samples that allow for gender and institutional context representativeness would provide a foundation for meaningful and useful comparison and analysis that is currently unavailable. Finally, the scholarly value of these descriptive studies would be enhanced if multiple theoretical

lenses were used to examine the intercultural interaction dimensions of student affairs and academic affairs collaboration.

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