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As a department that is ubiquitous within higher education, what does it signify to have a student ‘orientation’? By, toward, around, and from what are students oriented? Through a hermeneutic phenomenology of the ‘orientation’ of student orientation, I aim to conceptualize the ‘orientation’ in the standard model of student orientation as well as conceptualize possibilities for alternative student ‘orientation(s).’ The works of Sara Ahmed (2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014) provide the guiding theoretical framework for this study—in both her style and subjects of inquiry. Weaving together questions about subjects like diversity, others, and institutions, Ahmed’s writings engage hermeneutic phenomenology to develop novel interpretations that draw from the theoretical, personal, and conceptual in order to craft new narratives about concepts that recede into the background of experiences. Mirroring Ahmed, what would happen if I were to follow student orientation around? Centering the role of interpretation, this study is a hermeneutic (interpretation) of student orientation.

Drawing from my own experiences as well as relevant literature from the tradition, I enter into the hermeneutical circle exploring the ‘orientation’ in the standard model of student orientation. As this inquiry invites the potential to re-envision the ‘orientation’ of student orientation, I cannot help but question: what is the current model of student orientation? Further, I offer the following additional research questions: in line with Ahmed, what is the primary orientation of the standard model student orientation? What does it mean when we ‘orient’ students? From what are students turned away?

Toward what? Around what does student 'orientation' cohere? What would constitute an alternative student orientation? What are the implications for student affairs as different student orientations are compared? In orienting students, what are the straightening devices reinforcing this orientation? What bodies are extended through the standard model of student 'orientation'? What bodies are stopped? How does 'student orientation' connect with histories of orientation(s)?

Ultimately, I move to offer an alternative interpretation of student 'orientation(s)' as a public orientation. Echoing Ahmed's (2006) imagery, Masschelein and Simons (2010) speak of the world as a public table where both teacher and students can place "something on the table, as an act of deprivatization" (p. 545). At the table, the world is not simply a biological environment to be consumed by humans as zoological animals, but instead, the world provides the relational environments that supports life as biographical. Masschelein (1998) offers a directive to sustain this opening of the relational, human world, "do not forget the encounter, do not forget that life is always the life of someone" (p. 382). By placing something on the public table, the world unfolds itself through the human world of encounters, encounters that confront us with a responsibility to respond. Drawing from Masschelein and Simons alternative model of a public university, what might be made public regarding student orientation(s)? How does an alternative for student orientation(s) engage the world? What is the place of *scholé*, or the scholastic, in this alternative model? How does an alternative student orientation(s) incorporate *e-ducere*, or leading out?

WELCOME TO NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION!: A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT ON
ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF STUDENT ORIENTATION(S)

by

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To all who believed in me

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Anna L. Patton has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION: S.O.A.R.ING THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

My first experience with new student orientation was as an incoming first-year student at North Carolina State University during the summer of 2005. Although to be honest, I am unable to recollect many details owing to the fact that I skipped most of the programmatic sessions. I believed I did not need to be ‘oriented’ as I had grown up on NC State’s campus: my mother’s father was a faculty member and my own father was an alumnus. Throughout high school, I even used NC State’s library to complete research projects while trying to blend in with the bleary-eyed undergraduate students I often saw there. By the time new student orientation started, I already felt adequately oriented with both the physical layout of campus and the academic expectations of university life. Despite skipping my own new student orientation, I fit into the fabric of the university with great success. I joined clubs and organizations; I participated in campus programs and traditions; and I maintained a 4.0 GPA. In fact, I was selected as NC State’s version of homecoming queen my junior year in recognition of my involvement and service to the campus community. While I deliberately avoided involvement in new student orientation as an undergraduate, my perspective changed during my graduate studies.

While pursuing a Master in Education in College Student Affairs Administration at the University of Georgia, I took a summer internship with Academic Affairs that resulted in my direct participation in new student orientation. I attended multiple

orientation sessions throughout the summer, and I was enamored with the production, spirit, and comradery of it all. From the orientation leaders' enthusiastic parody of the popular song *Party in the USA* to the practice of university chants and cheers to be used in future football games, I could feel my affinity to UGA growing with excitement. My responsibility during new student orientation was to represent our Division at a booth during an all-campus information fair, but that was the least of my actual interests. I was captivated by the promise of the collegiate experience available to these new students entering UGA, by the allure of campus traditions and brands, and by the overwhelming feeling of belonging to this institutional community. As a department that is ubiquitous within U.S. higher education, what does it signify to have a student 'orientation'? By, toward, around, and from what are students oriented? Through a hermeneutic phenomenology of student orientation, I aim to conceptualize the 'orientation' in the standard model of student orientation as well as conceptualize possibilities for alternative student 'orientation(s).'

Arriving at Orientation: Positionality

I arrived at questioning the 'orientation' of student orientation through my experiences as a student, student affairs professionals, and as a doctoral student. As shared above, I had a drastically different response to new student orientation as an undergraduate than I did as a graduate student. However, my experience with new student orientation continued when I took my first full-time student affairs position as a Coordinator for Residence Life (CRL) at UNCG. As a CRL, my summer assignment during the summer of 2012 was to assist with S.O.A.R., Spartan Orientation, Advising,

and Registration. I worked with a colleague supervising a staff of student leaders who managed distribution of keys for students' temporary S.O.A.R housing assignments. This experience was illuminating to say the least; S.O.A.R was a well-oiled machine. From the designated parking lot with signage leading to the check-in table where parents and new students separated, to the matching dress of the orientation leaders, every piece of the program was coordinated with precision down to the minute. In the spirit of total transparency, I regarded the S.O.A.R. staff with a mixture of awe and disbelief for their relentless cheer, unbreakable smiles, and seemingly unending reserves of energy. I had no doubt that I did not have the capability to work as a full-time orientation professional. However, despite my own feelings of incompetence, it seemed clear to me that these students would, undoubtedly, be well-oriented to the institution at the conclusion of the program, but I never questioned what such an orientation might mean. Only as a doctoral student, have I found the pathway that lead me to ask about the 'orientation' in student orientation.

As I have navigated my time in the ELC doctoral program, I have found myself gravitating toward educational philosophy. Through educational philosophy, I have begun to ask what Scutt and Hobson (2013) refer to as the big questions of philosophy—questions about meaning, value, truth, justice, being, and consciousness—in education. Like troubling the very notion of student 'orientation,' I have aimed to invite thinking into my work by exercising epistemological curiosity to disrupt established conceptual boundaries (Scutt & Hobson, 2013)—namely, the boundary between student affairs practice and educational philosophy. However, I do not arrive at this work strictly as an

educational philosopher; I also bring my previously mentioned background as a student affairs professional to bear in this undertaking.

Indeed, as Ahmed (2006) might say, I write as an outsider to philosophy who happens to come near to, then drift away from, the philosophical throughout my writing. In my drifting away from philosophy, I drift toward my previous studies in college student affairs administration, which focused on serving college students, understanding shifting campus environments, and navigating campus administrative demands and policies. More specifically, my interest in student affairs stems from my experiences during my undergraduate studies as a student leader on campus. A number of professionals impacted me on my journey, and many encouraged me to pursue a career in student affairs. The impact of those professionals folded into my interest in education, ultimately positioning me toward higher education. Thus, I continued in a graduate program in student affairs with a supportive faculty and fulfilling graduate assistantship. As a white, cishetero-woman from a middle-class background, I was fully committed to a lifelong career in student affairs as the field had served me so well.

As a profession concerned with applied practice, I cannot help but dwell in the irony of my recent pull toward the philosophical. It is from this space between the philosophical and the practical that I enter this inquiry about student orientation. For me, this analysis represents a personal commitment of bringing the philosophical into conversation with student affairs in the hope of generating new ways to consider and conduct our work with students. As all student affairs work ought to do, this work represents my passion and desire to serve college students by interpreting and challenging

the philosophical grounding of the ‘orientation’ within the standard model of student orientation.

Further, taking steps away from student affairs through educational philosophy has allowed me to examine some critical aspects of the field, like the assumption that students inherently need an orientation and that, that orientation is necessarily good. Before I moved away from student affairs professionally, I was immersed in the field without questioning it as a larger system—a system with ideologies, power structures, and politics—that also interacts with other social systems. I want to begin interrogating and critiquing the field to develop a practice of professional reflexivity that contemplates the backgrounds within/upon the field now operates. My desire to examine the field of student affairs is grounded in a strong personal belief in and commitment to living a life of a love. In a world where violence on campus is a near daily occurrence, the need for infusing love in the world—including the academy—is palpable. My aim in approaching student affairs from a systemic level is not to make a sweeping, moral judgment of student affairs on the whole as either 'good' or 'bad,' 'unnecessary' or 'essential.' Instead, my interest is to bring forward, to uncover pressures, such as orientation(s), that may be operating in the background, influencing the profession, in order to imagine possibilities for alternatives through understanding, interrogating, and challenging our field.

An (A)methodology: Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Orientation(s)

What would happen if I were to follow student orientation around? How might a ‘student orientation’ unfold? Centering the role of interpretation, this study is a hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology of student orientation. Broadly, hermeneutics

highlights the interpretation between one's conscious experience in the world and then using that experience to interpret and give meaning to the world. Indeed, "one of the central assertions of hermeneutics is that research and analysis of any variety involves an awareness of one's own consciousness" (Steinberg & Cannella, 2010, p. 191). However, it is too reductionist to equate hermeneutics to conscious interpretations and end the discussion there; hermeneutics casts a wide net as a field with its own history, tensions, questions, and methods. In this section, I present a very brief overview of the development of hermeneutics as well as its interrelationship with phenomenology. Rooted in practices of meaning making and interpretation, hermeneutics etymologically stems from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, to express aloud, and has a disputed connection with Hermes who served as the messenger and interpreter of the Greek gods (Schmidt, 2006). From its historical outset, hermeneutics centered on making meaning of written signs and symbols generating space for practices of interpretation and placing a high value on language. As it spread in practice, hermeneutics included a strong emphasis on interpretation of written texts, including sacred such as Biblical or legal texts (Bruns, 1992; Bubner, 1988; Schmidt, 2006).

Branching from its roots in interpreting texts, hermeneutics shifted focus from strictly textual interpretations to interpretations of consciousness and experiences. Schleiermacher (1999) expanded hermeneutics to encompass the process of understanding required by all communications—both written and verbal—thus unifying previously discipline-specific usages of hermeneutics. Dilthey (1900) sought to outline a methodology for the human sciences using hermeneutics as the methodological

opportunity to understand and interpret other's expressions of inner experiences (Dreyfus, 1994; Schmidt, 2006). While outside of the scope of this work to address in full, the development of philosophical hermeneutics continued to evolve through the works of contemporary writers including Gadamer (Bruns, 1992; Bubner, 1988; Gadamer, 1976) and Habermas (Bubner, 1988; Gadamer, 1976) who sought to address the potential critical power of hermeneutic interpretations. Without providing a full recounting of the history and development of hermeneutics at this time, it is incumbent to address the historical tether between hermeneutics and phenomenology. More specifically, the way in which philosophical hermeneutics opens a connection to the philosophical tradition of phenomenology via Husserl and Heidegger.

Husserl (1931) sought to address shortcomings in traditional approaches to human sciences that neglected to recognize the role of human consciousness in making interpretations about the world. Thus, Husserl shifted his focus toward a transcendental phenomenology that separated individuals' intentional, mental content from the transcendental essence of phenomena themselves through bracketing (Ahmed, 2006; Bruns, 1992; Dreyfus, 1994; Gadamer, 1976). By bracketing out the natural attitude of what is familiar, Husserl sought to transcend any individual's personal description to an understanding of phenomena in their essence. Whereas Husserl strove for a transcendental phenomenology, Heidegger broke from his mentor and moved toward a hermeneutic phenomenology (Bruns, 1992; Dreyfus, 1994).

Influenced by Dilthey's pursuit of a hermeneutics as a method, Heidegger claims that interpretation is bound up with the ontological experience of Being-in-the-world, or

Dasein. Dasein represents the capacity for human beings to recognize that they are human and the ability to make sense of that existence through self-interpretation. Dreyfus (1994) summarizes this claim stating "to exist is to take a stand on what is essential about one's being and to be defined by that stand. Thus Dasein is what, in its social activity, it interprets itself to be" (p. 23). For Heidegger, Dasein plays a critical role in interpretation by bringing out the everyday activity of existence not attended by conscious attention. In this vein, Dreyfus (1994) states

Dasein is constantly, in its activities, making sense of itself and everything else. Heidegger, in investigating the question of being, in seeking to understand the understanding of our practices, sees himself as doing thematically what every human being does unawares all the time. (p. 29)

Through an intentional emphasis on Dasein, or being, Heidegger moves to focus on how human existence, or self-interpretation, takes place without conscious attention. This is the heart of Heidegger's project: "we are to investigate not consciousness but Dasein. Our method cannot be the inspection of self-evident meanings in our mind; the understanding of being is not mental, and besides, our understanding of being is covered up" (Dreyfus, 1994, p. 33). Underlying Heidegger's hermeneutic position of phenomenology as interpretation between conscious experiences and the world, Heidegger engages the hermeneutical circle—a circle that works between individual parts and a larger interpretive whole.

In the hermeneutic circle, or spiral, the individual elements of an experience or text contribute to the meaning of the experience or text as a whole; conversely, the text or experience as a whole must be understood through examination of its parts. Schmidt

(2006) explains “one example of this relationship is where the parts are the words of a sentence and the whole is the sentence itself” (p. 4). While named in the tradition of hermeneutics long before Heidegger, Heidegger leveraged the hermeneutic circle as an ontological concern (Schmidt, 2006). Dreyfus (1994) illuminates that for Heidegger the “hermeneutic circle refers to the fact that in interpreting...one must move back and forth between an overall interpretation and the details that a given reading lets stand out as significant” (p. 36). The hermeneutic circle represents the complex movements between the individual and the world. Indeed, Heidegger’s Dasein is in itself an ontologically circular being as its being is self-interpreting (Dreyfus, 1994). Representing an exercise in the circular nature interpretation, it is appropriate then that Ahmed’s (2006) hermeneutic phenomenology speaks back to both Husserl and Heidegger by moving among interpretations of individual texts, personal experiences, and understandings of the larger phenomenon of orientation: the orientation of phenomenology, the ‘orientation’ in sexual orientation, as well as the ‘orient’ in orientation.

Taking this brief historical overview into account, a hermeneutical phenomenology gives up the illusion of positivistic control of knowledge of the world by owning our own subjectivity as we interpret our experiences in the world. Rather than striving for objective answers, hermeneutics commits to offering understanding(s). A hermeneutic stance resists arriving at definitive, objective renderings of the world, instead, opting to allow a multiplicity of interpretations to develop. Steinberg and Canella (2010) explain that:

In hermeneutics, we are no longer talking about statements matching up to objective states of affairs, but an experience of the breaking forth and opening up of the world in which we already live and in relation to which we are not the commanding, clarifying, and demanding centre of that life. (p. 145)

Interpretation accepts and lives with ambiguity rather than trying to contain it in a superficial construction of objectivity. In this inquiry, I embrace the challenge of recognizing that we cannot arrive at pure, objective truth because the lived world is only expressed through our interpretations. Steinberg and Cannella (2010) capture this attitude that “no final interpretation is sought in this context, as the activity of the circle proceeds with no need for closure” (p. 193). I offer this project not as an authoritative interpretation of student ‘orientation’ but to offer one rendering in a world of infinite possibilities.

Research Questions

Drawing from my own experiences as well as relevant literature from student affairs and hermeneutic phenomenology, I enter into the hermeneutical circle exploring the ‘orientation’ in new student orientation. As this inquiry invites the potential to re-envision the ‘orientation’ of student orientation, I cannot help but question: what is the current standard model of student orientation? Further, I offer the following additional research questions:

Following Ahmed, what is the primary ‘orientation’ of the standard model student orientation?

What would constitute an alternative student orientation?

What are the implications for student affairs as different student orientations are compared? Would alternative orientations be possible?

This study represents a unique perspective on the field of student affairs that might be of interest to a variety of audiences. First, this study tries to make sense of my personal, lived experiences as a student affairs professional in order to offer an alternative interpretation of the field at large. Given this focus, this study holds special significance for other current student affairs professionals that feel constrained, puzzled, or restricted within the current interpretation of student affairs work who may also be seeking new ways to understand their own experiences. Additionally, this inquiry aims to develop novel insights that are relevant for students and faculty in master-level graduate preparation programs in student affairs.

As graduate preparation programs aim to prepare future student affairs professionals to enter into the field (CAS, 2009), this work encourages future professionals to approach the field through a hermeneutic, phenomenological lens that holds space for ambiguity and divergence, which ultimately, has the potential to multiply the number of existing interpretations of the field. For faculty members in preparation programs, this study could be a non-traditional curricular selection to examine the development, scope, and purpose of the field. For professionals employed in the field, this study represents one approach to making the familiar components of student affairs, like new student orientation, strange. Finally, this work provides other professionals in higher education an interpretive lens to examine practices beyond the professional boundaries of student affairs.

Importance of the Study

The significance of this study is two-fold: reimagining a common practice within higher education and developing an avenue to reconfigure the purpose and intention of student affairs work. Rather than addressing a gap in the literature, this study works to understand student ‘orientation’ as a quintessential practice throughout many institutions of higher education. Orientation programs take many forms on many campuses, but how might this otherwise taken for granted experience be reimagined? Is it even possible? This study addresses one potential interpretation of student orientation that breaks from the standard model prevalent within higher education. Further, this work has the potential to stimulate curiosity of others in higher education to develop additional interpretations of student orientation beyond the current, standard. As this study illuminates a new way to trouble one common practice within field of student affairs, what additional practices might be reinterpreted? How might other thought experiments highlight other avenues to make sense of the history, purpose, and aims of student affairs? This study is only one attempt to enter into the hermeneutic circle, but the ways in which this type of work might be taken up by others is infinite.

Study Outline

To examine the ‘orientation’ in student orientation, I develop a philosophical thought experiment rooted in hermeneutic phenomenology. Turning among personal, historical, popular, and scholarly accounts of student ‘orientation,’ I seek to engage in a spiral of interpretation to peel back the layers of interpretation bound up in orientation(s).

Through this work, I aim to uncover those layers of student orientation that have otherwise been hidden, obscured, or covered up.

Chapter Two: A Standard Model of Student Orientation

In the second chapter, I develop a summary of the current model of student orientation. I first trace the history of the field of student orientation beginning with the foundation of U.S. higher education. Then, I present major considerations for contemporary student orientation practice. I provide emphasis on four major themes within student orientation program planning and implementation: program format, current concerns, student demographics, and institutional differences. I conclude the chapter presenting topics for future contemplation for professionals working in student orientation including the growing emphasis on orientation's role in retention, the shifting place of technology in orientation, and continuing changes in student enrollment demographics.

Chapter Three: Orientation as Individual

In the next chapter, I introduce Ahmed's (2006, 2010, 2014) works as a framework regarding the individual dimension of 'orientations.' From this point, orientations are always orientations of *someone*. I employ this Ahmedian framework by following the 'orientation' in student orientation around. I provide brief summaries of the major works that bear upon this research and their applications to new student orientation. This chapter focuses on orientation as the orientation of an individual including individual bodies (2006) and individual emotions (2010, 2014). I conclude the

chapter by recognizing how the individual dimension of orientation is always in tension with an institutional dimension.

Chapter Four: Orientation as Institutional

Bridging from an examination of orientation as individual, Chapter Four explores orientation as institutional (2007, 2012). In this chapter, I also comment on a critical engagement with Ahmed and her concepts of home and disorientation. Finally, I propose a method of conceptual archiving as a form of *not* philosophy in order to examine the interplay between the institutional and individual elements of the standard model of student orientation. I take up this mode of analysis for the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: An Analysis of the Standard Model of Student Orientation

In Chapter Five, I undertake a conceptual analysis of the standard model of student orientation, as developed in the second chapter, by utilizing Ahmed’s framework on orientations, as presented in the third and fourth chapters. By extending the question of orientation, Ahmed’s conceptual analyses offers a guiding theoretical perspective for this inquiry: what is the ‘orientation’ in student orientation? What is the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation? Additionally in this chapter, I pose Ahmed-inspired questions such as: What does it mean when we ‘orient’ students? From what are students turned away? Toward what? Around what does student ‘orientation’ cohere? In orienting students, what are the devices reinforcing this orientation? What bodies are extended through the standard model of student ‘orientation’? What bodies are stopped?

How does ‘student orientation’ connect with histories of orientation(s)? With whiteness?
With other orientations?

Chapter Six: An Emerging Alternative, Discussion, and Conclusions

The sixth chapter defines the scope of a conceptual ‘alternative’ and presents an alternative model of student orientation(s) through the development of a public model for student orientation(s). Influenced by writers like Arendt (1968), Ranciere (2009), and Biesta (2013), Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons have worked together on a variety of projects concerning the social ‘orientation’ of universities, resisting the current orientation toward entrepreneurialism with an alternative orientation that reclaims the public nature of the university (Decuyper, Simons, & Masschelein, 2011; Masschelein, 2011; Masschelein & Simons, 2013; Simons & Masschelein, 2009a; Simons & Masschelein, 2009b; Simons & Masschelein, 2007). In this chapter, I extend their alternative model of university orientation to address student orientation(s) with particular attention to their concepts of the world, *scholé/scholastic*, and *e-ducere*.

After establishing an alternative interpretation and orientation for the ‘orientation’ in student orientation, I offer thoughts in this final chapter on whether or not this alternative is possible to realize. If the alternative is not possible to realize, I address the value of this study as a failed orientation. Drawing from these conclusions, I explore implications for both orientation professionals specifically as well as student affairs professionals generally. I conclude this chapter and the overall study by offering my own personal conclusions and insights from the work as well as outlining additional

considerations for future inquiries regarding student orientation(s) and the field of student affairs.

CHAPTER II

A STANDARD MODEL OF STUDENT ORIENTATION

In this chapter, I present a standard model of student orientation, but before I begin in earnest, I must clarify my meaning of ‘standard.’ Here, I do not invoke ‘standard’ to denote a normative, one-size-fits all model of student orientation that implies orientation might occur the same way across all campuses and student populations. Rather, I use the term ‘standard’ as it represents a shared set of expectations, aims, considerations, and qualities for orientation program professionals that may vary with shifting contexts and concerns. Pursuing this line of standard(s), I begin with two national organizations that address best practice standards for student orientation work: the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and the Association for Orientation, Transition, Retention in Higher Education (formerly NODA, National Orientation Directors Association). Briefly, CAS (online) “a consortium of professional associations in higher education, promotes the use of its professional standards for the development, assessment, and improvement of quality student learning, programs, and services.”

Working in conjunction with other professional organizations, CAS provides best practice standards for both higher educational professionals, generally, and functional area specialists specifically. A CAS member since 1979 (CAS, online), NODA is the national, professional association for those student affairs practitioners who are engaged

in work related to student orientation. The mission of NODA is to “provide education, leadership and professional development in the fields of college student orientation, transition and retention” (NODA, online). It is from these professional perspectives that a standard model of student orientation emerges with considerations from the field’s past, present, and future.

History of Student Orientation

To begin developing a standard model of student orientation, it is essential to situate the discipline through its historical development. While the roots of U.S. higher education can be traced back to the Oxford-Cambridge model (Rentz, 2004; Thelin, 2003) European colonizers imported (Patton, forthcoming), I focus on the historical development of student orientation originating within the U.S. context for a focused, national scope. Unsurprisingly, the beginnings of student orientation work align with the beginnings of U.S. higher education. For example, Harvard dons and tutors were responsible for supporting the college transition of students as early as the mid-1600s (CAS, 2013). However, student orientation and transition programming would not emerge in earnest until the late 1880s. Boston University held the first official orientation programming in 1888, which increased to 25 campuses by 1925 (Fabich, 2007).

Coinciding with the development of other formalized student services professionals, like deans of men and deans of women (Nuss, 2003; Rentz, 2004; Rhatigan, 2009), the presence of student orientation responsibilities and professionals solidified in the early 1920s. The increasing number of dedicated orientation professionals also fostered increasing levels of interconnectedness and communication

within the profession. By 1948, twenty-four orientation professionals from six different states met in what would become the first of an annual meeting of these professionals (Andrews, 2007; Fabich, 2007). After 1948, the annual meetings continued and professional networking solidified, eventually laying the foundation for the emergence of a professional association for orientation personnel.

In 1976, the National Orientation Directors Association board began as a board of regional directors with regionally- and special-interest based networks of volunteers, and in 1977, NODA received its official articles of incorporation and became a founding member of CAS (CAS, 2013; Fabich, 2007; NODA, online). After its founding forty years ago, NODA began expanding its programming, services, and administration over the following decades. Major association milestones for this period included launching the *NODA Journal* in the 1980s, publication of the first NODA First-Year Experience joint-monograph in the 1990s, and expansion of the Parent Services Network in the 2000s (Fabich, 2007; Rode, 2007a). In 2007, NODA celebrated the 30th anniversary of the organization's founding. The 30th anniversary marked the successful creation of association headquarters and hiring of an executive director for the association (Andrews, 2007; Fabich, 2007; NODA, online; Rode, 2007a).

Now on the eve of the 40th anniversary of NODA, the association has continued to expand its scholarly activities, annual programming, professional development, scholarship and awards, responsiveness to individual and student demographic needs, as well as strategic partnerships with other associations and companies (Andrews, 2007; CAS, 2013; NODA, online; Rode, 2007a; Rode, 2007b; Williams, & Rode, 2007).

NODA is currently lead by a leadership board with nine geographic regions and special interest committees for topics such as extended orientation programs, graduate student orientation, as well as various identity groups. NODA has also developed strategic partnership with other professional associations including College Student Educators International (ACPA), the Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals (AHEPPP), the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA), the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), and the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS), as well as entities like Campus Labs, Comevo, GNP Brand Gear, Public Identity, National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition (NODA, online). Grounded in an understanding of how student orientation has changed and developed over time, I pivot toward articulating the current state of the standard model of student orientation using research from both NODA publications and large, national student affairs association publications.

The Current Model of Student Orientation

To provide the most robust understanding of the current model of student orientation as possible, I begin by surveying the professional associations responsible for influencing this particular field: CAS and NODA. First, NODA (online, “OTR Definitions”) offers definitions differentiating between orientation, transition, and retention as approved by the NODA Board of Directors, and they define orientation as:

Deliberate programmatic and service efforts designed to facilitate the transition of new students to the institution; prepare students for the institutions [sic] educational opportunities and student responsibilities; initiate integration of new students in the intellectual, cultural, and social climate of the institution; and support the parents, partners, guardians, and children of the new student.

Further, CAS (2013) compliments NODA's definition by adding that the mission of orientation programs is to "provide a clear and cogent introduction to the intellectual, cultural, and social facets of the institution" (p. 2) by providing introductions to services like academic advising, registration, and campus departments in support of student retention. CAS (2013) also collaborates with representatives from NODA to co-create the standards, or best practices, which ought to guide the work of orientation professionals. CAS standards are written to cover a wide variety of programmatic concerns including content, management, ethics, equity, technology, and assessment while offering orientation professionals both mandatory requirements, written as 'must' statements,' as well as preferred suggestions, written as 'should' statements.

OP CAS Standard

The CAS (2013) standard for Orientation Programs (OP) addresses requirements and suggestions for: the programmatic content itself; OP organization and leadership; human resources; ethics; law, policy, and governance; diversity, equity, and access; internal and external relations; financial resources; technology; facilities and equipment; and assessment. While impractical to review the entire standard here, there are some critical points that merit highlighting. First, the role of OP on campus is to contribute to students' formal education; support timely progression toward graduation; prepare students for future roles as citizens, workers, and people; and promote student learning and development through learning outcomes that are aligned with the CAS domains, assessment of program outcomes, and evidence-based improvement (CAS, 2013). CAS (2013) underscores that OP must:

Aid students and their parents/guardians and families in understanding the nature and purpose of higher education, the mission of the institution, and their membership in the community. OP must articulate the institution's expectations of students and provide information that clearly identifies relevant administrative policies, procedures, and programs to enable students to make well-reasoned and well-informed choices. (p. 6)

Additionally, OP must be designed intentionally with a strong theoretical framework, integrated into the life of institution, reflective of student demographics, responsive to needs of diverse populations, multimodal in program delivery, designed to provide universal access, collaborative across campus, informative for students and families about campus history and culture, and allow interaction with fellow students and campus services and programs (CAS, 2013).

Ultimately, best practices recommend that a well-trained, well-organized department of ethical professionals develop dynamic, responsive programming that facilitates new students' affinity to and integration with the institution (CAS, 2013). While CAS provides the overarching recommendations for best practices in student orientation programming, student orientation work is taken up in a variety of formats, topics, student demographics, and institutional characteristics. NODA (2014) provides orientation professionals a resource to guide them in the planning and implementation of orientation programs through the *Orientation Planning Manual* (OPM). According to NODA (2014), the *OPM* includes "chapters specifically written for target audiences such as transfer student, parent and families, and two-year campuses...newly written chapters addressing the technology needs of today, management of risks and emergencies, professional development of staff, and staff selection" (p. 5). Based on information from

the *OPM* and related research, I present themes in orientation formats, orientation concerns, student demographics, and institutional considerations.

Student Orientation Program Formats

Whereas orientation programs were once designed as standalone, one-stop programs, there has been increasing development in alternative programmatic formats including changes in length, leadership, and delivery. NODA (2014) explains:

Too often, orientation is seen as a brief, one-time event. The amount of information and type of experience that new students need during their transition can be overwhelming and an anxiety-producing day-and-a-half. It is highly unlikely that in a day and a half students can absorb everything they need to be successful, meet and become comfortable with faculty and staff, make new friends, and develop a bond with their new institution. As a result, colleges may offer extended orientation programs, welcome weeks, convocations, and first-year seminars. Extended orientation programs are gaining momentum and students are being offered choices of experiences. (p. 9)

As noted above, extended orientation programs can take a wide variety of formats (Haynes & Atchley, 2013; NODA, 2014; Padgett, Keup, & Pascarella, 2013; Soria, Clark, & Koch, 2013; Vlamis, Bell, & Gass, 2011). One example of an extended orientation format that is growing in popularity is the use of adventure orientations.

According to Vlamis, Bell, and Gass (2011), an adventure orientation program “occurs in the outdoors and involves adventure experiences combined with reflection activities” (p. 128) and may include wilderness or outdoor orientation programs, recreational wilderness trips, residential adventure orientation programs, service adventure orientation programs, or academic adventure orientation programs. Not only breaking from the short one- or two-day format of traditional orientation programs,

adventure orientation also breaks with the location-bound custom of orientation programming taking place only on campus. Extended orientation programs also include programming that occurs both before and after official, dedicated orientation programming.

Summer bridge programs, for instance, compliment the work of orientation by increasing interactions before students begin the first academic semester and support a variety of focused interests such as connecting underrepresented students (Mitchell, 2013) or cultivating leadership and involvement skills (Duvall & Phillips, 2013). Coupled with summer bridge programs, first-year seminars extend orientation into and through the beginning of the academic semester. An increasingly common component of the first-year experience, Padgett, Keup, and Pascarella (2013) explain these courses receive sustained support because “many educators identify first-year seminars and their structural and pedagogical characteristics as premier vehicles for students’ development, including intellectual and cognitive domains” (p. 134). First-year seminars provide a space for students to navigate their orientation and transition process in real-time as the transition happens—not just prior to their arrival on campus. In addition to orientation format considerations about program length, orientation literature provides important thoughts on program leadership.

As noted in the historical development of orientation programming, fellow students are often incorporated to serve as peer guides through the orientation and transition process. Commonly called orientation leaders, these students are the primary responders to new students navigating orientation experiences (Barnes, 2015; Bono, Pei,

& Bristow, 2013; Gansemer-Topf & Economos, 2012; Hodges & Tankersley, 2013; Mellish, Corbin, Smith, & Bowen, 2014; NODA, 2014; Theroux, 2012). Barnes (2015) describes the position in the following way:

A selective and prestigious paid leadership position, orientation leaders help new students and their parents or guests make the transition to our university through relationship building activities, student life presentations, goal setting exercises and academic advising in one-day orientation sessions throughout the summer. (p. 34)

Mellish, Corbin, Smith, and Bown (2014) similarly echo the centrality of the orientation leader in program formatting because “the dissemination of the cultural capital needed by the students, particularly those in the freshman class, has to be specific, intentional, applicable, useful, and timely. The OAs are the frontline for this distribution” (p. 40).

However, the orientation leader is much more than just a network of robotic information delivery messengers; the orientation leader is also a significant student development opportunity. Hodges and Tankersley (2013) demonstrate that serving as an orientation leader supported the students’ process of self-authorship, or the “shift from an external to an internal way of knowing” (p. 47). Further, beyond campus guides, orientation leaders “are also coordinators, facilitators, presenters, resource persons, and problem solvers. Performing these various roles enhances students’ intrapersonal growth, skill development, and understanding of others” (Gansemer-Topf, & Economos, 2012). Finally, orientation leaders are also able to communicate more deeply about campus culture, tradition, and history as a peer-to-peer interaction. Specifically examining campus artifacts, Theroux (2012) notes that while orientation professionals may be able

to speak about important campus objects affirming that “it was ultimately the student orientation leaders who passed on the meanings of these artifacts on to other students” (p. 41). Given the wide-ranging, positive impacts of the orientation leader role, it is unsurprising that selecting current students to assist and support orientation programming for incoming students remains a critical element in orientation program formatting.

A final component of research regarding orientation formats is the role of technology in orientation. Without a doubt, technology is a growing influence on all aspects of higher education—including new student orientation (NODA, 2014). Technology can be leveraged as both a content delivery mechanism as well as a communications platform. Hale and Buzas (2014) recognize that many institutions are “investing time and effort into integrating technology into orientation programs and creating online student services like online orientations. Online orientations can prepare distance students not only to transition to the college, but also for the online learning environment” (p. 18). However, orientation research has yet to fully catch up to the boom of online orientation delivery leaving a gap in understanding about the best practices and impacts of online orientations. Addressing this gap, Futch and Guthrie (2012) hold that:

Higher education institutions need to investigate how orientation programs can potentially be delivered in an online format. A new framework should be explored to make this information more accessible to those students who are unable to attend the more traditional programs on campus, and to continue communicating with students throughout their transitional year. (p. 49)

Hale and Buzas (2014) undertook one effort to better understand what students most valued in their online orientation experiences and found students placed high levels of

emphasis on interactive orientation modules/components as well as on levels of customization of orientation content. Despite the lingering gap in research in online orientation, Hale and Buzas (2014) ultimately advise orientation professionals to “begin with the CAS standards that provide guidelines for a quality orientation program” (p. 24) even when developing online content. In addition to orientation delivery, technology has also impacted orientation-related communications strategies.

As well as online orientation services, technology also enhances communication options for orientation programs. Swecker (2012) makes the observation that “orientation programs are well positioned to finish the recruitment of a student and provide necessary information to positively affect academic and student life environments after school begins” (p. 69), and that technology is shifting the means through which institutions transmit this information. Instead of print materials like newsletters, technology allows for e-communications, online help centers, games, and social media interactions. Nehls and Smith (2014) examines the ways in which transfer students and orientation professionals interact using the social media platform Facebook. The dynamic, responsive nature of social media allows for more direct interactions including both student-to-student interactions as well as student-and-professional interactions (Nehls & Smith, 2014). However, online communication is not a cure-all for those students not attending an in-person orientation program. Acknowledging the tension in online delivery, Swecker (2012) asserts that “while online orientation courses thrive in breaking the spatial and time constraints of face-to-face orientation, creators of online orientation courses must strive to supplement the amount of social interaction that is often lacking”

(p. 53). Despite its rapid rise and continued influence, technology is one trend orientation professionals will continually need to assess for its impacts on and applications for new student orientation.

Student Orientation Program Concerns

The current model of student orientation reflects an interest in exploring and addressing the wide of array of topics related to student orientation with a strong emphasis on academic, multicultural, and family concerns. Historically, the primary concern of orientation was to ensure students were prepared for the academic expectations awaiting them on campus, and this goal of academic acculturation remains an important component of orientation programs now (NODA, 2014). It is unsurprising, then, that the current model of student orientation includes a concern for many topics related to academic concerns. Littlepage (2015), as one case, explores the impact of late registration on new students: “these students commonly miss opportunities to participate in intensive rapport-building academic advising sessions, freshmen orientation, learning skills refresher courses, and other interventions aimed at promoting retention” (p. 43). Gast, Michael, Eskridge, Hermann, & Turnage-Butterbaugh (2014) leverage an extended orientation wellness course format as a potential intervention for student on academic probation. Gast and Burt (2013) measured correlations between first-year students on academic probation and their incoming ACT scores. The academic concerns facing orientation professionals are not only confined to questions of academic status, but also, evaluations of potential supplementary programs that support successful academic transitions.

Orientation scholarship has included many potential tools for orientation professionals to consider in support of incoming students' academic preparation. Developing networks of peer mentors in conjunction with orientation programming is one potential vehicle for increasing academic success. Foxx (2015) clarifies that "peer mentoring, derived from traditional mentoring, has become an efficient tool that educators employ to help students navigate and adapt to their college environments" (p. 52-53). The power of peer mentoring resides in the ability to connect students, particularly historically underrepresented populations, to both social and campus resources through networks formal mentors (Foxx, 2015). Increasingly, orientation programs are including shared academic assignments as a form of high-impact practice that develops shared student experiences, demonstrates academic expectation, and cultivates student curiosity. For example, "Common Reading Experience (CRE) programs are a recognized and valued component in many first-year experience programs" (Smith & Rode, 2015, p. 28). Generally selected around an intentional theme, common reading experiences may take place over the summer or upon arrival to campus, and some orientation programs are opting to add more than a shared reading component. Johnson, Duncan, and Schoener (2015) document their campus' effort to implement a more comprehensive summer assignment to:

introduce students to good work concepts through a brief reading, then reinforce the concepts through two case analyses, and finally challenge students to apply their understanding of the concepts by writing an essay about their own professional role model of good work. (p. 38)

While incorporation of various forms of academic assignments gains popularity within student orientation work, the use experiential education is also increasing as a way to ease academic transition. Experiential education can take place both in and out of classrooms but requires a focus on engaging students with their environment to create knowledge through transformative experience (Mixson-Brookshire, Foote, & Brookshire, 2013). Within student orientation literature, experiential education has been used to foster self-confidence during an extended orientation seminar course (Mixson-Brookshire, Foote, & Brookshire, 2013), to support academic engagement and persistence through a camp orientation (Haynes & Atchley, 2013), to develop different adventure-based formats of orientation (Vlamiš, Bell, & Gass, 2011). While taken up in many different veins, orientation reflects a deep concern for new students' transition to the academic life on campus. NODA further evidences the strong academic tie of the current model of student orientation through its partnership with NACADA, the global community for academic advising. Following their vision statement, NACADA holds "recognizing that effective academic advising is at the core of student success, NACADA aspires to be the premier global association for the development and dissemination of innovative theory, research, and practice of academic advising in higher education" (NACADA, online, "NACADA Purpose"). True to the roots of student orientation, the current model of student orientation places a strong emphasis on academically-related transition concerns.

In addition to matters of academic integration, orientation programs must also address a number of issues related to multiculturalism. In the *OPM*, NODA (2014) affirms that "by addressing distinctive groups institutions can align programs with an

individual's developmental needs. Traditional populations that have been served through specialized programming have included: multicultural students..." (p. 42). It is important to note, that the *OPM* does not provide provisions for specific multicultural groups of students, but instead, provides general insights for professionals about planning for and serving "special populations" (NODA, 2014, p. 41). Further, a review of the last five years' set of issues of the *Journal of College Orientation and Transition* offers articles addressing orientation and transitions for African American and historically underrepresented students—there were no articles specially naming other dimensions or considerations regarding multiculturalism.

Despite these parameters, Bourke and Bray (2012) contend that "examining elements that support or preclude persistence of African American students is of compelling interest to higher education" (p. 5). Even while orientation administrators actively work to develop multicultural programs, Bourke and Bray's (2012) work found that African American students "persisted due to their own desires and efforts, and not as a result of efforts made by the institution to retain African American students... at an institution that they feel is chilly and unwelcoming" (p. 6). Given this mismatch between institutional effort and student experience, Tovar-Murry, Metz, and Jones (2012) urge that "university outreach activities should continue to challenge stereotype threats... university personnel should continue to make college a welcoming and supportive environment" (p. 67). According to Mitchell (2013), summer bridge programs represent one such institutional effort to facilitate the transition of underrepresented populations into the university—particularly "placing a primary emphasis on belongingness—rather

than [only] academic measures” (p. 85). The current model of new student orientation has a responsibility and commitment to understanding and developing programs that are responsive to the needs of diverse, multicultural populations of students arriving on campus.

Further, parents and families are a continuing topic of interest for professionals engaged in orientation work (Hale & Buzas, 2012; Hudesman, Millet, & Clay, 2013; NODA, 2014; Sax & Weintraub, 2014). Sax and Weintraub (2014) acknowledge parental and familial involvement is still a contentious theme in the standard model of student orientation with some practitioners advocating separation of students from ‘helicopter parents’ while others support inclusion and incorporation of families in student transitions to campus. Despite the mixed feelings the literature has expressed about parental involvement, orientation professionals must take familial involvement seriously in program planning. Mullendore in NODA (2014) urges “in order to meet the needs of family members today, it is important to be sensitive, not only to their concerns and anxieties, but also to their time” (p. 8). However, meeting the needs of parents and families during orientation work does not fall to orientation professionals and NODA alone. The Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals, AHEPPP, is one of NODA’s partner organizations that also focuses on the best ways to engage and include parent and family members throughout their student’s higher education experience. AHEPPP’s purpose is to “support professionals in higher education who promote student success through informed parent and family engagement” (online). Programmatic topics provide one source of analysis for professionals in student

orientation, but student orientation must also address the demographics of students enrolled on their respective campuses.

Student Demographics

Just as there is a wide array of topics incorporated in orientation programming, there is also an extensive consideration for diverse student demographics involved in orientation programs. NODA (2014) explains:

Historically the field of orientation has focused on the traditional student, those entering as first-time freshmen. As the profession has matured, awareness of students with special or discreet needs has become more pronounced. The challenge to the orientation, transition, and retention professional is how to best address these micro-communities. (p. 41)

Drawing from the *OPM* and NODA's specialty networks, this section presents a brief review of student demographics emphasized within the current model of student orientation: transfers, veterans, first-generation college students, GLBTA, international, non-traditional, and graduate.

As one beginning point of exploring considerations for special populations in student orientation, professional literature, including the *OPM*, has highlighted the specific considerations needed for transfer students. NODA (2014) illustrates the category of 'transfer' student is far from uniform and differentiates the following types of transfers: traditional, co-enrolled, reverse, lateral, multiple, swirling, and international. Sulak, Massy, and Thompson (2014) further confirm the heterogeneity of transfer students through latent profile analysis to uncover hidden subgroups within a larger population. After finding four distinct subgroups within one first-year transfer cohort, the

authors confirm that “blanket interventions for all transfer students are not appropriate” (p. 17). While transfer students might be comprised of subsets of distinctive characteristics, one common experience for many transfer students is the concept of transfer shock. Transfer shock is a form of integration difficulty where “some transfer students have academic difficulty adjusting to new teaching styles, grading expectations, and levels of effort required to succeed” (Clausen & Wessel, 2015, p. 15). Further, Clausen and Wessel (2015) advocate for “the creation of a transfer student integration program. This could include a mandatory transfer orientation in which specific conversations could be had about the potential causes and impacts of transfer shock” (p. 24). With the increasingly complex role of transferring among institutions of higher education, NODA maintains a partnership with the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students, or NISTS. NISTS “exists to improve the lives of transfer students. Through research, education, and service, we support professionals who directly serve transfer students, as well as those who create transfer policy and conduct transfer-related research” (NISTS, online, “Who are We?”).

In addition to the focus on students who transfer during the collegiate experience, veterans returning to campus are a rapidly growing population for higher education professionals, including those who work in orientation (Bagby, et al., 2014; Bagby, Barnard-Brak, Sulak & Walter, 2012; Darcy & Powers, 2013; Elliott, Gonzales, & Larsen, 2011; NODA, 2014, Ritz, Heggen, Ericson, & Harris, 2013). Research related to veteran experiences on campus is not a newly emerging trend. Bagby et al. (2014) share that “research on how those in higher education can best assist returning military

personnel can be traced to the years following World War II” (p. 21). However, pivoting to more contemporary concerns, Elliott, Gonzales, and Larsen (2011) note that due to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) there are many veterans returning with combat experiences including death of friends, threat of attack, being under fire, injury, and saving and losing lives of others. Due to their unique life experiences, veterans reflect a student population with distinctive orientation and transition needs.

Ritz, Heggen, Ericson, and Harris (2013) assert that campus orientation professionals “need to thoughtfully design programs to offer veterans a safe, smooth, and supportive transition to educational advancement with the emphasis of future occupational opportunities...Planning should incorporate collaboration across campus with a point person in the Veterans’ Affairs office” (p. 77). However, this recommendation should not be taken solely as a means of rectifying potential negative veteran experiences as military service also provides veterans with positive skills, strengths, and attributes. Darcy and Powers (2013) utilized focus group interviews to identify both strengths and challenges of the veteran experience, and the authors found “advantages these student veterans had in their transitions include the themes of maturity and focus, based on their unique military experiences, and strength of camaraderie with fellow veterans” (p. 57). With a wide range of life experiences, veteran students represent just one of many specific student populations for orientation professionals to take into account when developing orientation programs.

First-generation college students are one student demographic of persisting interest for student orientation. Hicks, Heastie, Allen, Ford, and Taylor (2013) provide the following context, “students who are the first in their families to attend college, commonly known as first-generation college students, have been receiving the attention of researchers and practitioners” with the caveat that “the dominant research available on first-generation college students would support the contention that most first-generation students are deficient in many aspects of the college experience,” (p. 62-63). Buffy Stoll (2013) confirms that “numbers of first-generation students have been increasing along with widened access to postsecondary education in recent decades; the number of first-generation students enrolling in two- and four-year colleges in the United States continues to rise” (p. 5).

In providing a review of services for first-generation colleges students, Buffy Stoll (2013) notes “typical campus resources for first-generation students focus on providing financial, academic, and social supports, which are certainly important elements of first-generation students’ transitions to college” (p. 10). However, simply disseminating names of and offices responsible for various parts of the college experience falls short of filling the needs of fist-generation college students; orientation must address socialization elements of transition. Hicks et al. (2013) explains:

an effective college transition and orientation program aimed at first-generation college students, which focuses on enhancing those essential socialization skills, would be beneficial...orientation administrators could use this information to continue and develop additional programs to better facilitate retention and, ultimately, degree attainment for first-generation students. (p. 74)

Addressing the needs of first-generation students in isolation neglects the role of family involvement for this particular population. Buffy Stoll (2013) asserts “if we are to support the whole first-generation student, we must address the difficult balance of home and school that these students experience” (p. 12), including communicating with parents as well as siblings (NODA, 2014). As their enrollment continues to climb, orientation needs for first-generation colleges students will remain a point of reflection for orientation professionals.

Using the same terminology as the *OPM*, GLBT students are “those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender” (NODA, 2014, p.13), and they represent another special population to consider within the standard model of orientation. Squire and Norris (2014) observe that orientation is intended to serve as a retention tool by easing the transition of diverse populations to campus life, but in developing programming for LGBTQ [Squire and Norris’ selected phrase] students, orientation professionals must first understand students’ precollege experiences, identity development, campus climate, leadership development, and ally development to better clarify the ways in which their lives are marginalized at colleges and universities (Squire & Norris, 2014). Indeed, Squire and Norris (2014) powerfully illustrate, “whether it is the inability to find an all-gender bathroom, lack of support around legal name changes on campus documents, or a health center’s absence of services for transgender students, navigating campus as an LGBTQ person can be daunting” (p. 196).

Given these barriers, student orientation considerations for LGBTQ-centered programming must include a multi-faceted plan with curricular, co-curricular, and queer-

focused events. Ultimately providing flexibility for individual campus contexts, orientation must “extend beyond social integration and focus truly on the retention of the LGBTQA student population through the holistic integration and support into the campus community” (Squire & Norris, p. 203). The current model of student orientation is increasingly working to develop and implement programming that centers GLBT student enrollment.

In an era of rapid globalization, global access to higher education is also increasing, which contributes to raising enrollment of international students. International students experience challenges stemming from the intercultural nature of their status such as differences from educational systems in their home country as well as cultural norms and expectations in their country of origin. Kovtun (2011) highlights these needs noting that “international students require specialized interventions due to the unique aspects of their transition, including language barriers, cultural differences, and personal and social vulnerability” (p. 350). NODA (2014) offers some suggestions for international student orientation including a specialized international parent and family orientation, sessions in multiple languages, reduced use of jargon and colloquialism, employment of current international students as guides, and presentations about American culture, laws, and immigration.

Of particular concern for international students are the required documents, like the I-20, which may warrant a dedicated orientation break-out session (NODA, 2014). Finally, extended orientation initiatives should be considered as mechanisms for supporting international students’ transitions, such as first-semester seminar courses

(Kovtun, 2011). International students will continue to be a critical consideration for student orientation as more students are seeking higher education around the world.

While potentially encompassing many of the groups already addressed, non-traditional students make up a large student demographic. Often invoked to describe any student who is not an 18-21 year-old, first-time enrolled residential student, non-traditional students are “increasingly...older, working, married, part-time, and living away from campus” (NODA, 2014, p. 191). Given this range, non-traditional students can cover previously mentioned groups such as transfer, veteran, or international students. Another segment of the non-traditional student population are adult learners. Adult students are students who are older than 24 years of age (NODA, 2014). While often omitted from dominant conceptualization of college students, adult students bring unique strengths and skills to their academic experiences.

Instead of adopting a deficit model, Bohonos (2013) argues that “staff members may not often get a chance to understand their students’ specific personal and professional accomplishments, but when working with adult learners, we must start with the assumption that they have them” (p. 133) and further that “adult students are usually deeply knowledgeable people with incredible life experience as well as expertise in their career fields. This knowledge, however, may not translate into specific understandings of academic jargon and protocol” (p. 133). In considering student orientation programming for adult students, the traditional, multi-day residential model may not suit adult students’ time or availability. Instead, NODA (2014) recommends “abbreviated, evening, or weekend programs provide more options for non-traditional student schedules” (p. 50)

with programmatic emphasis on topics like “technology training (using the student record system and setting up an e-mail account), academic support services, campus and library tour, time management, child care, study skills, connections with adult learner organizations or support groups” (p. 50). Finally, orientation for adult and other non-traditional students might include childcare services to accommodate those students who are also balancing family obligations (NODA, 2014).

While much of the research on student orientation emphasizes undergraduate enrollment, graduate students are another area of student demographics that has received growing attention within the standard model of orientation (Hodes, 2014; NODA, 2014; Poock, 2002; Witkowsky, 2012). Poock (2012) highlights the unique needs of graduate students regarding a dual-orientation process to both their respective academic departments as well as their chosen professional specialization and provides recommendations for information that is best delivered by the students’ home department versus by cross-campus resources. Witkowsky (2012) echoes Poock’s (2012) observations about graduate students and professional socialization—especially for doctoral students.

Witkowsky (2012) states “one of the main purposes of doctoral education is to socialize students into a scholarly profession, and a well-intentioned orientation program can provide the impetus to the socialization process” (p.95). Hodes (2014) documents one example of a potential orientation strategy for graduate students in higher education programs: observation of undergraduate orientation. Hodes’ (2014) rationalization is that “observing the orientation program gives students information and experience they might

not obtain in their graduate program. Orientation provides a comprehensive view that will benefit graduate students” (p. 54-55). Whether delivered through campus-wide orientation or department-specific formats, the standard model of orientation is clear that there must be specific considerations for graduate students.

In addition to the groups discussed above, other scholars have proposed added underrepresented student populations of relevant concern for student orientation professionals. For example, scholars have provided perspectives on unique student demographics such as rural students (Ast, 2014), students from low-income or working-class families (NODA, 2014; Soria, 2012), students with disabilities (NODA, 2014), and homeschooled students (Kranzow, 2012). As college and university enrollment continues to reflect wider student demographic changes, orientation professionals will need to remain proactive in identifying and addressing the unique needs of these emerging groups. In addition to responding to the breadth of student demographics, the standard model of orientation must also consider a wide range of institutional differences.

Institutional Characteristics

Finally, the standard model of student orientation also reflects the multiplicity of institutional types within higher education. Historically, orientation literature on institutional differences has focused on four-year institutions. For example, the *OPM* provides example considerations for orientation programming at large versus small colleges. At a large institution, for example, “a public university of 50,000, whose students primarily come from in-state, may use a one-or two-day program, which begins in June and accommodates groups of several hundred students throughout the summer”

(NODA, 2014, p. 14); while, “small, elite, private liberal arts college drawing a national student body may opt for a multi-day program the week before classes begin” (NODA, 2014, p. 14). Other scholars have researched differences in orientation needs and programs between predominantly or historically white institutions from historically black colleges and universities (Gurley & Herd, 2009; Hicks, Heastie, Allen, Ford, & Taylor, 2013). In addition to the variance of institutional types of four-year institutions, orientation programs must also consider institutions other than traditional four-year campuses.

While traditionally centering four-year institutions, literature regarding two-year colleges are a final institutional type receiving increasing attention within orientation programs. For a range of reasons including economic, vocational, and academic motivations, more students are opting to attend two-year colleges (Hale & Buzas, 2012; Hudesman, Millet, & Clay, 2013; NODA, 2014; Stebleton & Schmidt, 2010). NODA (2014) clarifies that “community colleges serve a high number of minority, first-generation, and part-time students. Students also typically have a multitude of additional commitments outside of school obligations including work, family, and involvement in their community” (p. 59-60), which may shift the roles of orientation and transition work. More specifically, Stebleton and Schmidt (2010) argue that student affairs professionals at two-year colleges must engage in orientation and first-year experience efforts to combat the low retention rates often endemic at two-year institutions.

Further, NODA (2014) provides specific considerations for orientation professionals at two-year institutions suggesting that “a community college with a local

clientele may offer a half-day orientation program with the option of an online version to meet the needs of students who are also full-time employees” (p. 14). Similar to four-year institutions, orientation professionals at two-year institutions must also grapple with the question of how to engage parents and families in orientation efforts. Distinctive to community colleges, however, Hale and Buzas (2012) note that “community colleges are in a unique position to engage with parents not only as supporters of their sons and daughters in college but also as prospective students” (p. 41). Hudesman, Millet, and Clay (2013) also affirm the important role parental inclusion plays at two-year institutions, especially the need to develop reasonable expectations for parental involvement based on student and parent academic preparation. As two-year institutions keep receiving additional focus, a clearer picture will continue to develop regarding the similarities and differences between orientation programming at community colleges versus four-year colleges and universities.

Recognizing this breadth of higher education institutional types, campus experiences, and student demographics, NODA also offers a variety of networks for practitioners with specialized interests including groups focused on institutional types (Canadian, highly selective, etc.), student demographics (GLBT, first-generation, etc.), and programmatic considerations (multicultural, parents and families, etc.). Taken together, Hodes (2014) provides an apt summary of the rationale for the standard model of orientation programs emphasizing “new students need information to succeed” (p. 51), and the current model of student orientation is grounded in concerns for the breadth of institutional and student experiences guided by the best practices and definitions set forth

by NODA and CAS, which create conditions for new students to receive the information they need to succeed.

The Future of Student Orientation

Even with the many considerations of the present-day, standard model of student orientation, there are still elements for future concern within the work of student orientation. One element of continued evaluation for orientation programs is the focus on institutional acculturation as well as orientation's role in retention. One indication of this shift is the renaming of NODA from National Orientation Directors Association to the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education (online). Increasingly, orientation programming is linked to the ability to retain students beyond enrollment to graduation through successful socialization and adjustment to campus (Nehls & Smith, 2014; Poock, 2002; Stebleton & Schmidt, 2010).

Indeed, Stebleton and Schmidt (2010) underscore this call to action asserting that “administrators, faculty members, and student affairs professionals must remain committed to the retention efforts. Retention programs should be integrated into the day-to-day culture, lexicon, and mission of the institution” (p. 93). CAS (2013) notes this change is reflects shifting understandings of orientation programming from standalone events to a comprehensive transition and socialization process. A second point of evaluation for future practice is the role of technology and its impacts on student learning. Orientation and transition programs must consider not only the ways in which technology changes where orientation happens, but also, when and how. For instance, Nehls and Smith (2014) take up this line of inquiry by exploring how the social media

site, Facebook, is used in institutional pre-transition efforts for transfer students. Nehls and Smith (2014) note that:

With its origins on a college campus for the purpose of connecting students, Facebook is not only an intuitive means of communication for students, but a relevant tool that higher education professionals can use to integrate transfer students into the campus community and ease the transition experience. (p. 392)

Through online engagement via Facebook, orientation work is able to begin prior to a student's arrival on campus for any in-person programming and allows students to begin connecting with each other facilitating the socialization process.

Finally, the future of orientation work must remain responsive to demographic changes within the student body such as non-traditional students. CAS (2013) is clear about this mandate in the best practice document for orientation programs stating that, "maintaining current orientation and transitional programs by simply reacting to change does little to address the interests of all constituents" (p. 3). Kortegast and Yount (2016), for example, highlight the transition and orientation needs of Third Culture Kids (TCKs) repatriating in order to attend U.S. colleges and universities. Due to increased globalization and expatriation of U.S. citizens, TCKs are "children and adolescents are raised outside of the United States, hold U.S. citizenship, and have no intentions of relinquishing their U.S. citizenship" (Kortegast & Yount, 2016, p. 23). Exploring implications for orientation and transition programs, Kortegast and Yount (2016) explain TCKs are not classified as international or immigrant students due to their citizenship status but have not necessarily grown up in the U.S.—placing them in an ambiguous classification for orientation needs. TCKs represent just one of the many complex,

various ways in which orientation programs must remain proactive and responsive as the make-up of college and university enrollment continue to change.

NODA (online) also spells out potential areas of future research through their “Research Agenda,” which includes themes like institutional-specific research, practices related to enrollment and retention, as well as academic credit policies and outcomes. Having moved through the past, present, and future of the standard model of student orientation, I introduce hermeneutic phenomenology as another route to examine the ‘orientation’ in student orientation.

CHAPTER III

ORIENTATION AS INDIVIDUAL

In the third and fourth chapters, I introduce Ahmed's (2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014) works as a framework for studying the 'orientation' in student orientation. In Chapter Three, I focus understanding the ways in which orientation operates on an individual level (Ahmed, 2006; Ahmed, 2010; Ahmed, 2014). Attending to orientation as individual, or personal, I provide brief summaries of Ahmed's works that bear upon this research demonstrating how orientation is always the orientation of *someone*, while providing illustrations of their connections to the work of student orientation. Understanding orientation as the orientation of an individual centralizes both bodily and affective components of orientation.

In this chapter, I will focus on conceptualizing and applying Ahmed's key concepts to the issues at hand in the standard model of new student orientation. For example, I summarize how Ahmed (2010) analyzes happiness as a phenomenological practice lived out through an individual's life choices; then, I provide illustrations of her conclusions about happiness and how they are put into action within the standard model of student orientation. Through these sections, I found that adopting a lens of hermeneutic phenomenology provides new insights for understanding the best practices within the standard model of student orientation. In Chapter Four, I then extend

Ahmed's stance on orientations from orientations of a single *someone* to also conceptualize orientations as institutional influences (Ahmed, 2007; Ahmed, 2012).

A Theoretical Framework of Orientation(s)

The works of Sara Ahmed serve as the guiding theoretical framework for this study—in both her style and subjects of inquiry. In this section, I will present a brief overview of her major works that support this inquiry as I take up the question of 'orientation' in student orientation. As presented in Chapter Two, the standard model of student orientation is typically approached as a series of programs, events, and activities designed by an orientation department to introduce new students to campus. While the move toward extended orientation programming illustrates that orientation professionals are conceptualizing orientation as a longer process than a one-stop day event, the standard model, regardless of length, is rooted in a psychological, behavioral approach of acclimating and socializing students to appropriate campus activities. However, the standard model of student orientation does not address orientation as an embodied practice, like the way a student turns to face a session presenter; as an affective practice, like a parent turning toward their crying student; or a larger institutional practice, like all the other campus departments that support the work of a single orientation office.

In Chapter Three, I have selected works that focus on Ahmed's conceptualizations of 'orientations,' 'happiness,' and 'will' to address the physical and emotional components of an individual's orientation, as they each provide different turns to illuminate the 'orientation' of student orientation. In Chapter Four, I expand my selections of Ahmed's writings to include pieces that demonstrate orientations as

institutional through social institutions like whiteness or educational institutions such as higher education. I chose these works because of their deep ties to the standard model of student orientation; more specifically, the standard model of orientation focuses on orienting new students, who are new to the campus community, through programs and information aimed at cultivating happiness, highlighting diversity, and molding student's motivations. Ahmed's related pieces thus provide an avenue for constructing each element of the standard model as a phenomenological practice. As an aspiration for this work, I hope to underscore Ahmed's ability to conceptualize rich descriptions of otherwise taken for granted concepts, like happiness or orientation, in order to reimagine innovative alternatives, such as happiness dystopias or queer politics, in a tentative world of conceptual possibility. As I undertake my own analysis in Chapter Five, I aim to develop a similar alternative for student orientations in Chapter Six.

Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others

As presented in the standard model of student orientation in Chapter Two, orientation programs hinge on the process of receiving new students, and providing enough information, resources, and experiences such that these new students become part of the campus community. When new students arrive to campus, the standard model of orientation then works by acclimating and socializing them to campus—by orienting them. Ahmed's (2006) context around the concept of orientations provides a launching point for further investigation. Ahmed (2006) explains "orientations shape what bodies do, while bodies are shaped by orientations they already have" (p. 58). Orientation is a dual interplay between what orientations a body already possesses and what orientations

are placed upon the body. Within the standard model of student orientation, what ‘orientations’ are entailed in this process of familiarization to campus? How do newcomers become recognizable members of the campus community? Like a campus map given to newcomers, are there other objects of student orientation that orient new students? What might they reveal about the ‘orientation’ of student orientation programs? What bodies expand through student orientation? What bodies are stopped? What are the histories inherited through student orientation? Who is (dis)oriented by student orientation? Who is straightened out?

Ahmed (2006), *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, uses the concept of dis/orientation to enter the work of queer(ing) phenomenology. For Ahmed, she takes her point of departure into queer(ing) phenomenology through orientation as an exploration into the perverse, the out of place, or rebellious. Ahmed (2006) explains “for some queer theorists, this is what makes ‘the perverse’ a useful starting point for thinking about the ‘disorientations’ of queer, and how it can contest not only heteronormative assumptions, but also social conventions and orthodoxies in general” (p. 78). Within the standard model of student orientation, heteronormative assumptions surface through processes like admissions applications, housing assignments, and event programming. More specifically, new students are often asked to designate their legal, sex assigned at birth on their admission materials, but the reporting options may be constrained to a strictly binary convention of man/woman.

These limited self-identifying measures are then used in campus housing processes rooted in heterosexual attraction expectations, resulting in campuses

overwhelmingly defaulting to rooming men with men and women with women, an arrangement in which queer students might be placed in unsafe, hostile, or inaccurate housing situations for deviating from the ‘straight’ path of heterosexuality. Further, heteronormative assumptions are also prevalent in language and content of campus events, such as events like ‘speed dating’ with only heterosexual pairings, sexual health education that centers heterosexual sex with the exclusion of queer intimacy, or presenters that rely on language like ‘girlfriend’ and ‘boyfriend’ exclusively in relation to partners of the opposite sex. Thus for Ahmed and the standard model of new student orientation, queer bodies represent sites of resistance to wider societal norms grounded in heterosexuality.

However, Ahmed (2006) then draws an important link between that which is queer and the concept of a sexual orientation noting “it is worth, then, rereading the ‘perverted’ as that which ‘turns astray’ or moves off the straight line. The straight line would be that which moves *without any deviation* toward the ‘point’ of heterosexual union” (p. 78). Thus, Ahmed’s queer phenomenology is one that is concerned with those experiences and bodies that break the straight lines of socially acceptable orientations, such as whiteness or heterosexuality. In Chapter Five, I model Ahmed’s approach of queer phenomenology to develop an analysis of the standard model of new student orientation in order to identify and illustrate the ‘orientations’ of new student orientation.

Ahmed’s work also has an intention of queering the historical practice of phenomenology as a response to Husserl’s method of bracketing—beginning with Husserl’s writing table. Bracketing removes what is familiar, or social, from the object of

interest stripping the object of its natural attitude. For Husserl, “the bracket means ‘this table’ becomes ‘the table’...and in the bracketing, I do not see the table as my field of action but rather see it as an object” (p. 35). This parallels the arrival process of new students to campus through new student orientation. When students are asked to separate from their families during orientation programs or after move-in, for example, the student is effectively being asked to bracket out the familiarity of their family of origin transforming from a particular new student into one of any number of new students. By removing the ‘natural attitude’ home, however, these students are not embarking on a transition to become phenomenologists themselves—they are not examining the essence of being a college student.

Rather, bracketing out the familiar is completed through a more subtle pressure to turn from the familiarity of home and replace it with a familiarity of campus. Ahmed (2006) asserts this ability to set aside the familiar character of the table is an impossible illusion pointing out that even as Husserl seeks to remove the table from the natural attitude of the familiar, the familiar still exists in the background, like the new student who still goes home on the weekend. Husserl himself recognizes that to start with his table includes an attention that wanders through the familiar world, such as his children playing in their summer house (p. 28). Ahmed (2006) thus muses “what does it mean to assume that bracketing can ‘transcend’ the familiar world of experience...the activity of bracketing may sustain the fantasy that ‘what we put aside’ can be transcended in the first place” (p. 33) and further concludes “what is ‘put aside,’ we might say, is the very space of the familiar, which is also what clears the philosopher’s table and allows him to do his

work” (p. 34). For the standard model of new student orientation, putting aside the familiar of the family might thus work to ‘sustain the fantasy’ that by clearing the familiar from the student, space is made to do the work of being a college student. Meaning, that ideally, the new student would be able to focus solely on being a college student without the demands of family life by leaving the familiar behind.

The philosopher’s table consequently becomes the point of emergence for Ahmed’s (2006) conceptualization of orientation, “this book thus considers how objects that appear in phenomenological writing function as ‘orientation devices’ ...it is not surprising that philosophy is full of tables” (p. 3). For Ahmed, she centers Husserl’s writing table as it becomes the material surface that physically orients him toward his work of phenomenology; Husserl’s work takes place as his body faces the table and his back faces the rest of the house. Similarly, there are objects that tend to emerge repeatedly in the standard model of new student orientation, like clipboards, campus maps, schedules, welcome signs, that through an Ahmedian lens can be understood as orientation devices. Ahmed (2006) provides the definition, “an orientation device, a way of in habiting the world or of being at home in the world” (p. 175). For Ahmed, orientation devices are those tools by which we make sense of making our way through the world. Inhabiting the world of the standard model of student orientation, for example, schedules not only provide new students a simple summary of events; schedules literally orient the time of orientation programming into pieces that demand the body of the new student follow at certain time periods and locations.

Orientation does not only connect us with certain physical objects; orientation also positions bodies among other bodies. Ahmed (2006) offers a succinct definition: “orientations involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others. Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as ‘who’ or ‘what’ we direct our energy and attention toward” (p. 3). Through this deceptively short description Ahmed is unpacking the relationships between bodies, objects, other bodies, and the world. First, bodies are oriented around as well as by physical objects. For example, Ahmed uses the illustration of Husserl’s writing table to demonstrate this relationship. As a writer, Husserl’s body is literally turned toward the table, and accordingly, the table then also positions the body in a specific way to write. Further, Husserl’s place at the table represents a certain degree of closeness, or proximity, to the task of writing reflecting what has Husserl’s attention.

Conversely, as Husserl turns toward his table and his writing, he turns away from the rest of inhabitation of the home, including other objects and people. As opposed to other tables, like a kitchen table, Husserl understands the world in relationship to his place at the writing table, which turns his attention away from other bodies in his home like his partner or children. In the case of new student orientation, campus maps tend to be objects in close proximity to many attendees who are focusing their attention on finding their way around new settings. The map physically orients bodies on campus toward or away from certain destinations and objects. Perhaps, a campus map directs new bodies closer to a campus library and farther away from off-campus distractions like bars. Through the relationship to and direction of the map, certain bodies are also placed

in closer proximity, like students residing in the same housing facility, than others, like graduate and family housing versus first-year living facilities. Orientations can ultimately then point bodies toward or away from certain objects as well as other bodies.

However, sometimes orientations fail—fail to extend, fail to turn, fail to appear—and here Ahmed (2006) accounts for the queer, out-of-place, astray experiences of disorientation. Ahmed (2006) explains “in simple terms, disorientation involves becoming an object” (p. 159) and that “queer moments happen when things fail to cohere” (p. 170). From this view, I ponder how the standard model of student orientation might create moments of disorientation by turning embodied newcomers into objects of ‘new students’? Disorientation is a jarring, disturbing feeling and can either “persist and become a crisis. Or the feeling itself might pass” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 157). For many students, their first experiences on campus include discomfort from feeling out-of-place. The idea behind the standard model of new student orientation is to ensure that these moments of disorientation do not persist and do not become crisis. However, there are still moments with the standard model of orientation fails to cohere in the bodies of new students.

Because orientations shape “how bodies cohere by facing the same direction” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 120), disorientation occurs when a body fails to face the same direction, like the homesick student who moves into crisis and panic once their parents leave campus. In this illustration, the homesick student is one who has failed to face the direction of the institution; rather than looking forward at all that is promised to them in new student orientation, the homesick student remains facing the familiarity of their

home, of their family, of their past. By facing the ‘wrong’ direction of home, the orientation of the institution fails to cohere in the body of the homesick student resulting in disorientation, a disorientation that may even persist into an emergency.

Reconciling the interplay of dis/orientation, Ahmed offers a queer—or perverse, oblique, slanted—politic that does not mandate disorientation but does engage it. Meaning, disorientation does not become the new orientation but that multiple orientations can emerge simultaneously out of disorientation. Ahmed (2006) clarifies “perhaps this is a different kind of politics of sides: one is not asked to ‘take sides’ when one is ‘beside’—one walks beside and alongside. That is enough to clear the ground” (p. 169). In the standard model of student orientation, for example, a queer politic may place new students beside enrolled students without the pressure on new students to categorically orient themselves toward those already there. Rather than asking new students to take the ‘side’ of the institution, the new student and enrolled student can encounter one another traveling along separate, yet intersecting, lines rather than forcing the new student onto the existing line of orientation.

The intent is to rupture the unidirectional force of new student orientation—that of institutional information being thrust upon new students without space for return. Instead, what happens is that the new student and the enrolled student would work together to remain side-by-side as a queer alternative to new students trailing behind those already enrolled because

to walk in ‘unison’...requires work: one has to keep up. You walk together through such gestures of following, a following in which on is not left behind.

Perhaps the simple gesture of bodies that keep up involves a radicalization of the side. (Ahmed, 2006 p. 169)

Even within this queer politic of being beside, there is still an encounter—an encounterer and an encountered. Ahmed (2006) states “disorientation requires an act of facing...the face ‘matters’ as it acquires significance through direction. In other words, the significance of the face is not simply ‘in’ or ‘on’ the face, but a question of how we face the face, or how we are faced” (p. 171). Ahmed closes this work without offering definitive answers but instead providing an invitation to the table—the queer(ed), out of alignment, out of place table of disorientation(s).

Ahmed’s invitation is not only an offer for queer bodies to cohere, to coexist together; it is an invitation for bodies whose orientations would others keep them separate, like bodies aligned with heterosexuality and bodies oblique to heterosexuality, to find a commons, a point of connection. Ahmed (2006) clarifies “queer tables are not simply tables around which, or on which, we gather. Rather, queer tables and other queer objects support proximity between those who are supposed to live on parallel lines, *as points that should not meet*” (p. 169). For new student orientation, beyond introduction of specialized offices or campus departments for various student demographics, perhaps the table extends a powerful space to bring together diverse student populations that might not otherwise intersect: the Honors student and the academically ‘at risk;’ the secular student and the religious student; or the commuter and the residential student.

The Promise of Happiness

The standard model of student orientation does not focus solely on orienting new bodies to campus—through activities like campus tours and objects like campus maps—such that they are no longer physically out of place. The standard model of student orientation also has an affective component, a concern that students emotionally feel connected to the institution in a positive, lasting way. For example, the affective element of student orientation is evident in the ever-present smiles, relentless energy, and unwavering cheer of orientation staff working to ensure orientation is an enjoyable, pleasing experience. There is a palpable air of happiness in new student orientation programs. Where does happiness lead, if followed into student orientation? Is the purpose of student orientation to support happiness? To enable a pursuit of happiness? Whose happiness? Who are outsiders to happiness in student orientation? How is student orientation invested in happy futures over possibilities of the present? Using Ahmed (2010), *The Promise of Happiness*, I will offer my own, perhaps unhappy, answers to these proposed questions.

Similar to her other works, *The Promise of Happiness*, (Ahmed, 2010) seeks to get behind the surface of happiness to uncover what and who is hidden by it. From the outset, Ahmed (2010) asserts, “the question that guides the book is thus not so much ‘what is happiness?’ but rather ‘what does happiness do?’ I do not offer a definition of happiness, or a model of authentic happiness” (p. 2). Instead, the primary aim is to construct a critique of the conceptual supremacy of happiness as the key pursuit of life. Ahmed situates the timing of her work as coinciding with the “happiness turn” (p. 3)

evidenced by the rapid growth of entire industries, like self-help, predicated on the production and consumption of happiness as a form of capital.

The happiness turn and subsequent consumption of happiness is evidenced in the standard model of orientation's emphasis on entertainment, fun, and amusement of those attending new student orientation. Between field day events with giant inflatables to evening dance parties, new student orientation relies on happiness as benchmark of successful programming. Referencing its associate members, NODA (online) includes a section explicitly for booking entertainment: "need a speaker, magician, or musician to entertain some students during your orientation, transition, or retention programming? Look no further! Choose from this plethora of NODA Associate Members to fill this programming piece on your campus" (para. 3). Happiness emerges as a key concern for best practices in student orientation programming.

Ahmed (2010) traces the conceptual lineage of happiness from philosophers, like Aristotle, through to psychologists, like positive psychologists, to suspend the commitment to happiness as a necessary good. Ahmed describes this process as following "the word *happiness* around. I notice what it is up to, where it goes, who or what it gets associated with. If I am following the word *happiness*, then I go where it goes" (p. 14). Ahmed begins her following of happiness by exploring the connection between objects and happiness—specifically, to what objects is happiness attributed? Regarding happy objects, "happiness might play a crucial role in shaping our near sphere, the world that takes shape around us, as a world of familiar things. Objects that give us pleasure take up residence within our bodily horizons" (p. 24). Happy objects in new

student orientation, those objects that become familiar and bring satisfaction, may seem less obvious, but there is one object that has become synonymous with new student orientation: the student ID.

The student ID becomes the hallmark of entrance into institutional life with a photograph added to a physical card as one of the critical components of new student orientation. It remains with the student at all times: to enter residence halls, to purchase meals, to receive discounts. The ID is familiar not only from the inclusion of the student's photograph, but also from the constant reminders from orientation staff to always carry their ID. The ID becomes a happy object as it signifies achievement, through admission to college; belonging, as a member of the institutional family; and access, to campus goods and services. Similarly, the lack of an ID may signal unhappiness both literally, like being locked out of one's residential building or dining facilities, as well as symbolically, like the student who was not admitted to their school of choice. Thus, a happy student is one who keeps their happy ID close at hand at all times.

However, happiness not only orients the objects that are in close proximity in our lives; the future promises of happiness also direct our actions as attempts to attain happiness. Ahmed explains, "the promising nature of happiness suggests happiness lies ahead of us, at least if we do the right thing" (p. 29). Because happiness has been conceptually linked to morality and pursuit of ideals about a good life, happiness thus supports following social norms in order to avoid unhappiness, which restricts the overall number of potential pathways to happiness. Currently, ideals about a happy, good life are increasingly tied to a requisite pursuit of higher education: a college degree means a

better job and higher pay. Graduation from a college or university then becomes the pathway to avoid unhappiness by following social expectations about education, employment, and economy. New student orientation's support of the supremacy of college completion as a source of happiness is demonstrated through profession's language shift from 'orientation' to words like 'transition and retention.' The standard model of orientation is now not only concerned with student's arrival to campus but with their continued persistence and eventual graduation—the fulfillment of the educational promise of happiness.

Pivoting from the historical recounting of happiness, Ahmed then works to uncover the ways in which the preeminence of happiness marginalizes those who dare to break from society's promises of happiness by strategically silencing or discounting their stories. Ahmed then teases out the oppressive power of happiness through social characters who serve as outsiders to happiness via their divergence from the status quo: feminist killjoys, unhappy queers, and melancholy migrants. Feminist killjoys, for example, shun the joy of the good life promised by following the concepts of happiness rooted in patriarchal gender roles, such as the happy housewife.

This rejection illustrates the conditionality of happiness, or “how one person's happiness is made conditional upon another's—[and] ensures that happiness is directive: happiness becomes what is given by being given as shared orientation toward is good” (p. 56). While society might reduce feminist killjoys to a few bitter, angry women, Ahmed (2010) counters that “there is solidarity in recognizing our alienation from happiness...there can even be joy in killing joy. And kill joy, we must and we do” (p. 87)

as killing joy can reveal oppressive sources social norms coded as a goody and happy life.

In new student orientation, the parallel outsider to happiness is the student who shuns the social norm of college education as the pathway to happiness via career opportunity and financial stability: the unenthusiastic undergraduate. Perhaps this is the student who wants to take a break from school before enrolling in a college or university. Perhaps this is the student who is disillusioned with the failure of higher education to deliver on its promise of a happy life through better employment and higher pay. The standard model of new student orientation, however, holds on to the conditional nature of a future-oriented happiness: if you orient yourself to the institution, you will be happy. The shared orientation becomes the institution, and the promise of happiness is a future good life after graduation. Rather than working to convert happiness outsiders into conformity with the social promises of happiness, Ahmed (2010) suggests:

If we listen to those who are cast as wretched, perhaps their wretchedness would no longer belong to them. The sorrow of the stranger might give us a different angle on happiness not because it teaches us what it is like or must be like to be a stranger, but because it might estrange us from the very happiness of the familiar. (p. 17)

For new student orientation, Ahmed's passage suggests taking time to listen to those students who are outsiders to the happiness of the standard model of new student orientation before automatically working to assimilate and socialize them to campus as these outsiders may make the familiarity of a formerly happy campus strange. After developing what Ahmed (2010) deems her unhappiness archives, she turns to offering

alternatives visions of happiness that include happiness dystopias, which disconnect happiness from its future-oriented promises, as well as orientations of happenstance. For the standard model of orientation, this would call for a decoupling of happiness from the promise of a future good life as a college graduate but that happiness can be a function of the present, which may allow happiness to take many forms that no longer include college.

For example, more authors are arguing that the promise of happiness once guaranteed by a college degree is quickly eroding (Leef, 2014; Selingo, 2013; *The Economist*, 2012; Vedder, 2011); yet, the promise of the good life after graduation is still a foundational element for the ever-increasing emphasis on and rationale for higher education retention efforts (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013; Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010; Karen & Dougherty, 2005), like student orientation. How can higher education professionals continue touting college as a promise of happiness when it is now no longer a promise, but a gamble? Decoupling a happy future from four-year higher education may allow for a reinvigoration of other types of education, such as technical training or apprenticeships for skilled labor, or innovation in business or non-profit work.

Ahmed summarizes her vision for possibilities of happiness stating that if happiness is “not something that we promise to another, is not something that we imagine is due to us or which we have a duty toward, is not something that we anticipate will accumulate from certain points, other things can happen” (p. 220). Here, happiness would no longer be the focal point in the standard model of orientation, which opens up space for new ranges of emotional expressions. Ultimately, not only are alternative

conceptualization of happiness created, so are alternative affirmations of all the possibilities of life.

Willful Subjects

The standard model of student orientation's commitment to happiness demonstrates the standard model's want, wish, and desire for happy students both during orientation programming as well as through the promise of their future good life after graduation. Ultimately, the standard model of orientation includes a will of happiness. Ahmed's (2014) *Willful Subjects* builds on her vision of the feminist killjoy, as not only someone refusing to partake in the acceptable pursuits of happiness (Ahmed, 2010), but as a subject that is willful. How are bodies willed, pressed through student orientation? What is the general will of student orientation? Who are the willing and the willful in student orientation? What would be an orientation of willfulness? Like her other works, Ahmed (2014) selects a centralized topic, which she then 'follows' around for where it appears anecdotally, popularly, and personally. By following will around, Ahmed examines under what conditions will arises, the tensions between being willing versus being willful, ill will versus good will, as well as the generalized will versus the specific will.

Ahmed (2014) begins with conceptual history of will through philosophy and literature without the intention of defining will outright. Ahmed (2014) develops such a genealogy out of an interest to "deepen the critiques of voluntarism by reflecting on the intimacy between freedom and force" (p. 16). Ahmed calls into question the deep, historical connections of will to selfhood and individuality, recognized through Western

understandings of selfhood, resulting in will as expressions/suppressions of certain wills over others. Ahmed moves from her historical recounting of the appearance of will conceptually to unpacking willing as an orientation. Ahmed (2014) describes “a willing subject leans toward what is being willed. To get behind something is to orientate the body that way” (p. 35). Willing represents a certain commitment to be together, to go with the flow, to pursue good will. The good will represents those wills that, through a willingness to come together, have gained momentum over others’ wills.

In the standard model of student orientation, willing students are those ready and able to ‘lean toward’ the orientation of the institution—meaning those students, like orientation leaders, who are ready to take up their membership within the institutional community demonstrated by behaviors such as collecting university merchandise, attending campus events, or enthusiastically participating in school chants and cheers. For example, even though I skipped my own orientation programming as an undergraduate, I still expressed my overall willingness to take up an orientation, or lean, toward the good will of NC State through my eagerness to don NC State apparel, to get involved on campus, and to engage in the university’s traditions, like homecoming. While it expresses a degree of willfulness to shun the orientation programming, I eventually went with the flow of being an NC State student and my initial willfulness became willingness.

Willfulness, however, becomes a contentious position that no longer wills, or goes with the flow of the good will with others. Ahmed emphasizes the dominance of the process of breaking willfulness, particularly children’s, into willingness. Aptly, Ahmed

(2014) begins with a Grimm brothers' tale about a child who failed to yield her willfulness into willingness and who died as a punishment from God for it. In this story, the child's mother sought to press society's 'good will' of obedience upon the daughter, but the child was unwilling, willful and cast as naughty, refusing to follow the will of her mother. In this way, will becomes a directive, a command, a tool for shaping a willful subject into a willing one.

Ahmed (2014) clarifies "we could think of will as a pressing device: bodies are pressed this way or that by the force of a momentum. The will in having direction becomes directive" (p. 57). Like the way an iron literally presses a wrinkle from fabric, will becomes a mechanism that leverages the momentum of a good will to put pressure on those willful subjects who resist the good will. As with ironing, if sufficient pressure is applied wrinkles eventually give way to smooth fabric. Similarly, if the good will places enough tension on the willful subject, the willfulness can give way, perhaps give in, to willingness. This process of converting willfulness into willingness is what Ahmed (2014) describes as the breaking of will, especially in the case of parents and children.

In new student orientation, a willful student is one who resists the press to 'get behind something.' The willful student may be the student who is hesitant to leave their parents or hometown. The willful student may be the student who eschews participation in chants, cheers, or icebreakers. The willful student may be the student who wishes to be at a different institution. From this vantage, the standard model of orientation can be viewed as a pressing device that works to break willful students into willing ones oriented toward the institution. While I was working with orientation professionally, for example,

it was common practice to separate students from parents immediately upon check-in to the residential facilities and to keep parents and students separated throughout the orientation programming by using distinct scheduling. Following the standard model of student orientation, this practice readies students to be on campus, independent from their parents, and provides rehearsal for the autonomy and freedom students will experience once on campus for the semester. However, from a perspective of willfulness, separating a hesitant student from their parent into a willing peer-group shifts the force of the momentum pressing the student from willfulness to willingness, leading to a breaking of will. With willful students broken into willing ones, “the point of willing compliance is to prevent struggling and repining. We could add that the point of willing compliance is to save the child trouble” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 71). Hence, students broken into willing pupils through the standard model of orientation are saved from the trouble of discomfort or the struggle of transition from being a new student on campus.

Through a breaking of wills, some wills become generalized into social institutions, a good will, through which undesirable, unacceptable wills can be straightened out. Ahmed (2014) illustrates

the acquisition of good will, as the will in pursuit of right ends, becomes a way of creating social harmony: a good will is in agreement with other wills. Willfulness as ill will is often understood as a will that is only in agreement with itself: a willing that is agreeable to the self. (p. 95)

In the standard model of student orientation, the good will in agreement with other wills is the will of institutional orientation toward the pursuit of the right end of graduation.

The general, or good will, works to erase willfulness as ill will. For example, the good

will of graduation aims to (re)align willful students, who represent an ill will. Take the willful student who wishes take time off before higher education, and therefore refuses to take up the good will of graduation. This willfulness is called upon when the individual will is at odds with general will.

For Ahmed, willful subjects, like feminist killjoys, disrupt the flow of the general will. She explains, “once you are charged with willfulness, you are not with...to be not with is to get in the way, to ‘go against the flow’ in the way you go” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 152). The willful student who wants to take time off might then interrupt the flow of the institution’s general will of graduation by skipping programs like new student orientation. In this way, willfulness can be claimed in a movement toward a politics of willfulness. While a queer politic centralizes the role of the body in physical orientation, a politic of willfulness concentrates on one’s affective orientation. A style of politics that embraces willfulness is “to claim to be willful or to describe oneself or one’s stance as willful is to claim the very word that has historically been used a technique for dismissal” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 133). Like the student resisting the general will toward graduation, a politic of willfulness pushes against the general will, which seeks to break willfulness into willingness.

In Relationship: The Individual and the Institutional

Ahmed’s works on orientations (2006), happiness (2010), and will (2014) provide compelling perspectives on the ways in which our orientations are deeply personal, intimate, and particular. In the previous sections, I illustrated the ways in which orientation, when examined from a phenomenological lens, functions to orient an

individual's body, actions, and emotions. However, Ahmed also notes that these individual orientations do not develop in isolation; rather, one's orientations are a function of the tension between an individual and various social institutions of the world in which an individual resides.

Beginning with an embodied individual, orientations then extend out into how we interact with and in the world. Ahmed (2006) observes, "the body is 'here' as a point from which we begin, and from which the world unfolds...The 'here' of the body does not simply refer to the body, but to the 'where' the body dwells" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 8) and further that "orientations are about the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 151). In these observations, Ahmed is making the explicit connection between an individual body and the larger world in which it resides, or dwells. Indeed, she is setting up the point that the orientation of an individual cannot occur without a connection to the context of the world a particular individual inhabits, and further, that individual orientation emerges through the pressure worldly institutions, like history, exert on the individual.

Orientation as the interplay between the individual and the institutional is beautifully laid out by the phrase 'two peas in a pod':

To be like two peas in a pod is to be alike. Anyone who has shelled peas knows that peas are not all alike and that seeing them as being alike is to already overlook some important differences. But it is the pod and not the peas that interests me here. This saying suggests for me that likeness is an effect of the proximity of the shared residence...rather, the very proximity of pea to pea, as well as the intimacy of the dwelling that surrounds them like a skin, shapes the very form of the peas. Likeness is thus not 'in' the peas, let alone 'in' the pod, but rather is an effect of their contiguity of how they are touched by each other and envelope each other. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 124)

Through this seemingly simple expression, Ahmed unravels the complex way in which an individual pea takes shape as a function of the pod in which it develops and that the likeness of two peas is less about sharing an identical appearance but about embodying a particular relationship between the pod and the peas. Like the pea and the pod, Ahmed also gives attention to the institutions, or social ‘pods,’ that envelop human bodies thus influencing their orientation(s).

One institution Ahmed highlights in relationship to individuals’ orientations is history. For Ahmed, a consideration of history requires looking beyond the present object to not only “‘look at’ the object that they face, [because] then they would be erasing the ‘signs’ of history” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 41). Through this invitation of historical looking, Ahmed is remarking that like the way the phrase ‘two peas in a pod’ obscures the role of the pod in influencing the ‘likeness’ of the peas, looking at an object only in its present form obscures the history that has supported the object’s development and current appearance. Modeling this work of looking beyond the present, Ahmed begins many of her analyses with a detailed history of the topics, concepts, and questions she undertakes. For example, Ahmed (2010) grounds her pursuit of (un)happiness in the classical Greek conceptualization of *eudemonia* then traces happiness all the way through present-day efforts at self-help and the happiness industry.

Instead of ‘looking’ at happiness as a function of the present moment alone, Ahmed (2010) is attentive to the way in which social orientation(s) toward happiness have changed as a function of the larger institution of history. Again, recognizing the connection between the individual and the institution of history, Ahmed (2006) states

“we could say that history ‘happens’ in the very repetition of gestures, which is what gives bodies their tendencies” (p. 56). Thus, the institution of history becomes the accumulation of individual orientations replicated over time, which in turn influence the individual orientations of bodies in the present. Ahmed provides another specific illustration of this historical accumulation and its impact on bodies in the present while examining the ‘orient’ in orientation. Ahmed (2006) explains

the making of ‘the Orient’ is an exercise of power: the Orient is made oriental as a submission to the authority of the Occident. To become oriental is both to be given an orientation and to be shaped by the orientation of that gift. (p. 114)

In this example, the history of ‘the Orient’ is a history of bodies made subject to Western bodies—a history that then actively shapes individual’s racial orientation in the present. Attentive to the relationship between the individual and the institutional in creating orientation(s), I pivot toward a deeper examination of the role of institutions and their impact on and interplay with individual orientations in Chapter Four. Seeking to probe further into this tension, I give specific attention to Ahmed’s work on whiteness (2007) as a racial institution and her work on higher education and diversity (2012) as an educational institution as well as how these institutions appear within the standard model of student orientation.

CHAPTER IV

ORIENTATION AS INSTITUTIONAL

In Chapter Three, I presented the ways in which ‘orientation’ is always the orientation of *someone*—one’s body and one’s emotions. However, an individual orientation is also a function of the tension between the *someone* and social institution(s). Happiness, for example, orients an individual’s emotions toward pursuit of those things which bring, create, or result in happiness; however, those ‘happy objects’ and ‘happy lives,’ as Ahmed (2010) outlines, are directed by the institution of societal expectations regarding happiness. But, what are these institutions that press upon and influence individual orientation(s)? How are they analyzed? In Chapter Four, I present two additional works by Ahmed (2007, 2012) that illustrate institutions’ dynamic relationships with individuals resulting in the push and pull of orientation(s). Specifically, I include two works about the social institution of race (2007) and the educational institution of higher education (2012)—providing brief overviews of each text as well as applications of the texts’ themes to the question of student orientation.

In this chapter, I also provide collective observations about Ahmed’s works reflecting the interplay between institutions and individuals. From these observations, I present a critical engagement with her works, particularly around her key concepts of dis/orientation, home, and orientation devices. Through critical engagement, I find that, while addressing the pressure between institutions and individuals, Ahmed’s conceptual

framework of orientations is grounded in a relatively linear, two-dimensional vision of orientation, and instead, I offer thoughts about a potential transition from ‘orientation’ (n.) to ‘orienteering’ (v.). In considering how this action of orienteering might take place conceptually, I return to the Ahmed’s works for guidance and insight on how this analysis develops. To close the chapter and demonstrate how orientations—both individually and institutionally—might be explored, I present Ahmed’s methodology of *not philosophy*, not strictly philosophy but not quite anything else, through a method of conceptual archiving. In Chapter Five, I then employ this Ahmedian framework and *not philosophy* to embark on my own hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of the ‘orientation’ new student orientation.

Orientation as Institutional

A Phenomenology of Whiteness

As Ahmed’s other works illustrate, orientation takes place across both bodily and affective planes; however, she also expands orientation as institutional practices that further press upon individuals through organizational habits and patterns of behavior. Given that new student orientation is an institutional program, how does whiteness as a habit manifest in student orientation? How is race (re)inscribed on bodies through student orientation? What bodies are at home or expand in student orientation? Building from previous observations and interpretations of whiteness, *A Phenomenology of Whiteness* (Ahmed, 2007) uses phenomenology as a means to talk about whiteness without simply reifying it as a critique complicit with whiteness itself. In this work, Ahmed argues that whiteness is an ongoing, unfinished historical habit that orients bodies in space, how

bodies take up space, and what bodies can do in certain space(s). In relation to new student orientation as an institutional habit, whiteness is sewn into the fabric of U.S. higher education from its very beginnings with the Oxford-Cambridge model as an import by European colonizers and supported through institutional histories that included legal exclusion and segregation of people of color (Patton, forthcoming). The supremacy of whiteness is still underscored today as evidenced by continuing systemic disparities in access, enrollment, and persistence (McCoy & Rodricks, 2014). Even the standard model of student orientation's history is indicted for its roots in whiteness given that student orientation's origins reside with the dons of Harvard. Through questioning the background habit of whiteness, Ahmed asks how is whiteness lived as background experience without assuming race as an ontological given, but that race is something received?

Leveraging hermeneutic phenomenology, Ahmed seeks to bring to the surface what is hidden by tracing bodies that appear and bodies that stop. Incorporating a stance of orientation, Ahmed observes that what one can see in/of the world depends on the way they are facing as well as from what they are facing away. Whiteness is thus invisible to those who are already oriented by it while non-white bodies interrupt the corporeal orientation of the white gaze becoming both invisible and hyper-visible. For example, check-in for SOAR at UNCG is managed with precision down to the details of considerations like timing, greetings, body language, and customer service. While working with SOAR, I was always struck by the immensity of the amount of planning that had to go into organizing check-in such that it proceeded without a single hiccup.

Until, one session a family arrived that literally interrupted the flow of check-in when a set of parents would not separate from their student. Assessing the situation, I approached the family and learned that the parents only spoke Spanish and that they had planned on having their student interpret the program content for them. Simultaneously, this Latinx family was both invisible from pre-planning considerations for access and hyper-visible while stopping the established orientation of the check-in process in ways that white, English-speaking bodies were not.

Ahmed (2007) concludes “whiteness becomes a social and bodily orientation given that some bodies will be more at home in a world that is orientated around whiteness” (p. 160). The contrast of undergraduate experiences between myself, a white woman, and peers of color provides a perfect illustration of Ahmed’s point. At NC State, I passed freely around campus and was automatically conferred respect from professors, campus staff, and university administration. Being at home on campus was second-nature; for all intents and purposes, I was *home*. For others, however, first-encounters on campus were fraught feelings of being out of place. In a first-year required English course, for example, having a professor question your language capability and fluency based on a last name and bodily presentation—without knowing any details about your family, life, and experiences. While the feeling of home was an automatic for me everywhere on campus through the whiteness of my own body, non-white bodies had to fight to create their own spaces that felt like home a campus oriented by whiteness.

However, whiteness does not only reside in the histories of race of individual bodies; institutions also function to confirm orientations of whiteness. Ahmed (2007) explains:

We can also consider ‘institutions’ as orientation devices, which take the shape of ‘what’ resides within them. After all, institutions provide collective or public spaces. When we describe institutions as ‘being’ white (institutional whiteness), we are pointing to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather, and cohere to form the edges of such spaces. (p. 157)

Institutional whiteness also serves further to underscore how I was able to feel at home throughout the entirety of State’s campus in ways students of color do not. This is not surprising when situating whiteness as a historical process that shapes institutions.

Whiteness resides in the heart of my undergraduate institution’s history. White bodies had been cohering at State since its founding in 1887, but nearly 70 years passed before the enrollment and graduation of Robert Clemons, the first African-American student to graduate from the University (NCSU Libraries, online). With decades and decades of white bodies preceding my own white body on campus, I was already physically and socially oriented in alignment with institutional whiteness, allowing me to be at ease at State.

Additionally, Ahmed observes institutions come into being through repetitive action, positioning white bodies comfortably in spaces that extend their reach, while using orienting devices for order and ease. As an illustration of Ahmed’s point, the week before classes was an important extension of summer orientation when I was working in housing at UNCG from 2011-2013. The Rawkin’ Welcome Week schedule was beyond

full of extra events, programs, and traditions—including new student convocation. For those of us working in buildings with first-year students, it was tacitly mandated that we bring all our residents to The Chancellor’s New Student Convocation as the official kickoff of the new academic year. Since it was such a large, formal event, Convocation took place in Aycock Auditorium, named in 1928 for former North Carolina governor Charles B. Aycock (UNCG Libraries, online).

In 2014, a statewide discussion about Aycock’s involvement in white supremacist politics prompted the UNCG Board of Trustees to investigate changing the facility’s name (Aycock Ad Hoc Committee, online). In 2016, the auditorium name change was finally approved; however, this means for nearly 90 years the building represented the legacy of a vocal white supremacist. How many iterations of Convocation, including the years of my employment, took place in Aycock auditorium unthreateningly welcoming white bodies to campus who are able to comfortably extend and exist in the space? Yet how many students of color were ‘welcomed’ to the institution and their first academic year under the mantle of the building’s racist namesake?

While a phenomenology of whiteness focuses on bodies that spread and move, Ahmed (2007) ends her piece by offering “a phenomenology of ‘being stopped’ might take us in a different direction than one that begins with motility, with a body that ‘can do’ by flowing into space” (p. 161). For example, a phenomenology of students ‘stopped’ by Aycock auditorium during UNCG’s convocations. Still resisting the tendency to offer solutions, Ahmed opts to focus on asking better questions than what should be done; instead, Ahmed considers questions that analyze the presence of resistance to whiteness

or questions that take up the premise if whiteness is bad habit, with what ought it be replaced?

On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life

Expanding on whiteness as an institutional habit, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Ahmed, 2012) opens by asking “What does diversity do? What are we doing when we use the language of diversity?” (p. 1). Blending interviews with diversity professionals, document analysis of diversity documents as well as interpretations of personal experience, Ahmed seeks to examine the background of diversity work within higher education—its potential change and also the way(s) in which it colludes with racism. Once again concerned with the background, Ahmed (2012) holds that “I do make a case...for thinking about diversity work as phenomenological practice...phenomenology provides a critical lens through which to think about ‘institutional life’” (p. 15). Since new student orientation stems from an institutional effort, where is student orientation work in relation to the work of institutional diversity? Does student orientation serve as another form of proceduralizing diversity work? Another check box commitment?

Ahmed particularly highlights the tension between what institutions espouse as the aims of diversity work and the resistance institutions have toward enacting such work. Indeed, Ahmed observes that the need for diversity work necessarily confirms that institutions of higher education are already oriented around whiteness. In the standard model of new student orientation, for example, the emphasis upon ‘multicultural students’ (Moock in Orientation Planning Manual, 2014, p. 42) as an area of special

programmatic consideration positions white bodies as the norm while black and brown bodies are situated as other, outside, or exotic. Ahmed's observations serve to underscore the point that institutional orientation(s) around whiteness precede diversity work.

Troubling the invocation of diversity as institutional language, Ahmed questions the ever-present inclusion of the word diversity over terms like equality or social justice. Diversity-oriented language is prioritized institutionally because "diversity has a commercial value and can be used as a way not only of marketing the university but making the university into a marketplace...diversity becomes something to be managed and valued as a human resource" (p. 53). Ahmed holds that diversity is institutionally desired as a pleasing, marketing-situated buzzword. Positioning the standard model of orientation, NODA (online) opts for the language of diversity in their core values stating, "we value diversity of ideas, institutions, and individuals. We practice integrity and model ethical behavior through adherence to professional standards" (para. 3) reflecting the connection between diversity and human resource values.

Building on the market and managerial value of diversity, Ahmed also examines the implications of proceduralizing and documenting diversity work into a series of checkboxes—such as offering a buffet of diverse programming sessions at new student orientation without acknowledging or challenging the structural elements that may marginalize students while on campus. Rather than being committed to systemic changes toward equity, institutions instead develop commitments to checking boxes, thus documenting that diversity work is supposedly occurring. Ahmed (2012) explains "if commitment can become a tick in the box, it suggests that institutions can make

commitments without being behind them. Even a commitment can involve going through the motions” (p. 119). To further illustrate her meaning, Ahmed (2012) uses a metaphor of a brick wall to represent diversity work in higher education,

the feeling of doing diversity work is the feeling of coming up against something that does not move, something solid and tangible...the official desire to institutionalize diversity does not mean the institution is opened up in; indeed, the wall might become all the more apparent, all the more a sign of immobility, the more the institution presents itself as being opened up. (p. 26)

Ahmed’s final conclusions do not advocate for the end of diversity work but for conceptualizing diversity work as phenomenological practice, or the focused interrogation of the lived experiences of those engaged in diversity work. For example, Ahmed (2012) includes qualitative interviews with professional diversity workers to illustrate their narratives about the tensions of functioning as those individuals charged with creating and sustaining diversity on campus while lacking institutional support for sustainable structural or policy changes.

Since professionals in diversity work are living the day-to-day challenge of advancing equity on campus, their experiences provide an important source of information and insight for how to approach diversity work in ways that foster inclusion and promote systemic change. Ahmed explains, “we can offer a different angle on the task at hand by thinking about how phenomenology can work as a practice or even ‘practically’” (p. 174) because “diversity workers acquire a critical orientation to institutions in the process of coming up against them. They become conscious of ‘the brick wall’” (p. 174). This approach issues a unique challenge for the standard model of

orientation with regard to whose experiences influence the development of orientation programming on campus and whether or not these experiences reflect an awareness of the ‘brick wall’ of diversity work or simply deflect the presence of the wall into a procedure. Through phenomenological practice, Ahmed holds that diversity work can be the work of transforming the brick wall into an open table for institutional action as the lived experiences of diversity work professionals can call conscious attention to the ‘brick wall’ as well as provide insight into how to dismantle it.

Summative Observations

In addition to providing a brief overview of the key concepts from Ahmed’s body of work, Chapters Three and Four illustrate how orientation is a phenomenological practice with physical, emotional, and institutional components. The standard model of new student orientation rests in a psychological-behavior approach to acclimating students to a new campus through programs and activities. However, this model fails to unpack the ways in which orientation includes demands by the institution on the body and feelings of new students. Viewed as a phenomenological practice, new student orientation is more than a series of workshops or events planned to welcome students to campus and prepare them for the college experience; new student orientation includes compliance with both bodily and affective commitments from students to either align with the institution’s orientation, or risk remaining disoriented, aslant, or sideways. However, this stance is not equivalent to a sweeping claim that all orientations and orientation devices are inherently objectionable; instead, Ahmed’s works serve as an

invitation to engage more deeply with the dynamics of dis/orientation through critical analysis of her works.

Critical Engagement with Ahmed

Through her works, Ahmed is inviting readers to play with and imagine alternative readings of dis/orientation as she resists developing prescribed alternatives resulting in incredibly abstract visions for the future. Across her pieces, Ahmed conceptualizes a fairly linear approach to orientation: there is some center point around which bodies cohere through lined orientation devices. Stated differently, Ahmed observes that Body A is either in-line with Point A or is out-of-line from Point A based on Body A's ability to take up the straightening device leading to Point A. Bodies that are in-line are then able to expand, travel, move freely toward the center point while bodies that are out-of-line are stopped, disoriented. Ahmed (2006) describes disorientation as a feeling that "can be unsettling...can shatter one's sense of confidence in the ground of one's belief that the ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable" (p. 157)—disorientation moves us from the familiarity of home. Disorientation can be understood as "losing one's place, and an effect of the loss of a place: it can be a violent feeling, and a feeling that is affected by violence, or shaped by violence directed toward the body. Disorientation involves failed orientations" (Ahmed, 2006. p. 160).

Speaking to the violence of disorientation, Ahmed (2006) confides that "being stopped is not only stressful, but also makes the 'body' itself the 'site' of social stress. Let me use a recent personal example of being stopped..." (p. 140) where Ahmed then

recounts an experience of being stopped in an airport due to her brown skin and Pakistani last name despite possession of a British passport. More than an inconvenience, Ahmed asserts that being stopped, or disoriented, can become a crisis if it does not pass, if the disoriented person does not find a way back home. Perhaps this process might more accurately be called orienteering, the consistent need for bodies to feel at home, to find a way home, even in the face of disorientation. Incorporating the action of orienteering underscores that dis/orientation may not be as simple as bodies falling in line through orientation devices. What does an approach of orienteering reveal? Here, a brief anecdote serves as the best illustration.

It is spring: the sun is shining, the trees are budding, and the wind is blowing. It is the perfect day for a hike. You embark on a stretch of woods near the familiar place of your home. Walking, walking, walking. You drink in the changing seasons—relishing the feeling of the sunlight on your skin. Slowly, the light begins to fade as the sun dips below the trees. It is time to return home. However, you realize you are no longer in the woods you know—you are lost. While taking in the beauty of the hike, you did not notice you passed from the familiar to the strange. Time stops for a moment. Fear rises in your chest as the sunlight creeps lower and lower behind the tree line. Your head spins trying to consider the possibility of how to get home in the dark, in the lingering low temperatures of winter. You feel the nausea rising in your stomach as the sun sets. Panic. Crisis. Disorientation.

Then, you remember one of the few items you packed in your hiking bag: a compass! You pull the compass from your sack. With the fading rays of the final light

available, you find north. You now know the orientation in which you must travel. Step by step you follow the steadfast needle of the compass. The panic subsides, and you keep walking. Then, suddenly, you know this place! You look around and can see porch lights in the distance: home! You put the compass away as joy replaces dread. You move forward with energy and excitement rather than anxiety and hesitation. Finally, you arrive back to the well-known space of home. Relief. Calm. Comfort. Home. However, what happens if the compass is broken? When it does not point north? Or if the compass is missing? What happens if you cannot follow north—perhaps there is a downed tree or dangerous water—even when you know the direction of the compass? These questions illustrate the tensions and complexities implied in Ahmed’s works.

Ultimately, Ahmed takes up orientation and orientation devices as oppressive examples of social systems that differentially marginalize and privilege certain bodies. For example, Ahmed (2006) provides a racial example of a straightening device noting that “we can talk of how whiteness is ‘attributed’ to bodies *as if* it were a property of bodies; one way of describing this process is to describe whiteness as a straightening device” (p. 121). Is the response to then do away with orientation devices altogether? Not necessarily, since this would be akin to eliminating the compass from your hiking pack, which would still leave you stranded, disoriented, and panicked. Instead, like a compass pointing over an impassable path, orientation devices become problematic when only certain bodies and lives can achieve alignment, like straight bodies following the orientation device of compulsory heterosexuality; thus, members of any group outside the

orientation device, like Ahmed as a queer woman, are left in perpetual disorientation when pushing against it.

Orientation devices, like a compass, are important tools for finding a way back to home, but the difficulty emerges when these tools are only available to certain bodies, leaving others without a way home. The connection between disorientations and finding our way home is not haphazard. Indeed, Ahmed (2006) acknowledges "orientation involves aligning body and space: we only know which way to turn once we know which way we are facing" (p. 7) such that "the question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how we 'find our way' but how we come to 'feel at home'" (p. 7). Turning from orientation to orienteering casts a new light on Ahmed's key concepts. Far from being a one-way process of in- or out-of-line, orienteering recognizes a dynamic of wayfinding implicit in the tensions of dis/orientation by acknowledging that even disoriented bodies seek out ways to find themselves at home and that not all orientation devices are necessarily oppressive. Indeed, the process of orienteering opens up a vision of finding home that is open to multiple pathways to get there. So what might this orienteering entail? How would an analysis of orienteering occur? Fortunately, Ahmed models this process of orienteering in her conceptual explorations through the use of conceptual archiving in support of a philosophy of the *not*.

Not Philosophy and Conceptual Archiving

In this section, I will move through the writings of Ahmed (2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014), and I will address how Ahmed's methodology of *not philosophy* paves the way for an applied phenomenological method, conceptual archiving, for this study.

Previously, I have only been exposed to phenomenology as a specific research method used to understand the essence of others' experiences while explicitly bracketing out the personal experience of the researcher (Creswell, 2009; Jones, Torres, & Arminio 2006). Through this section, I want to outline an alternative reading of phenomenology, one that is embodied and personally, as well as historically, situated—incorporating the influence of consciousness in how we live moment to moment in the world. Ahmed (2006) speaks to the powerful role of consciousness as “directed or oriented toward objects, which is what gives consciousness its ‘worldly’ dimension. If consciousness is about how we perceive the world ‘around’ us, then consciousness is also embodied, sensitive, and situated” (p. 27). Through consciousness, the world comes alive to our senses embodied through our perceptions and orientations. In this section, I present Ahmed’s phenomenological methodology of *not philosophy* as well as her complimentary, applied method of conceptual archiving. Working from the perspective of *not philosophy*, conceptual archiving allows me to follow around the ‘dis/orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation in Chapter Five, reimagining student orientation as a phenomenological practice.

Not Philosophy

As reflected by the themes in her style, Ahmed’s works are positioned within the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. Stemming from this situatedness, Ahmed (2006) offers a description of the field of phenomenology as one that “emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in

shaping bodies and worlds” (p. 2). While reflecting use of traditional phenomenological concepts, the way in which Ahmed then embarks upon her phenomenological projects is far from a prescribed research methodology that strips the researcher from the inquiry on the quest for an object’s or experience’s essence. As illustrated by the themes of her work, Ahmed opts to centralize the researcher allowing natural shifts of consciousness to emerge.

With this in mind, Ahmed (2014) reimagines her phenomenological work as “*not philosophy*. What do I mean by this? *Not philosophy* is practiced by those who are not philosophers and aims to create room within philosophy for others who are not philosophers” (p. 15). To be clear, this is not a condemnation of the entirety of the Philosophical tradition and discipline; instead, Ahmed is advocating for a permeability of the boundaries of philosophy and those whose works are considered to be philosophical. Through an approach of *not philosophy*, Ahmed’s mode of phenomenology breaks from established disciplinary boundaries opening up philosophical inquiry to those who do not explicitly identify within the philosophical field. In this way, Ahmed develops a methodology that is not strictly philosophical or qualitative but leaves space for something new to emerge.

Ahmed’s methodology of *not philosophy* also breaks open new spaces for the subjects of analysis. Ahmed (2014) clarifies “*not philosophy* also attends to ‘the not,’ making ‘the not’ an object of thought. *Not philosophy* is also a *philosophy of the not*” (p. 15). Here, Ahmed makes it clear that her phenomenological methodology is one that is intent on attending to concepts and questions previously hidden, obscured, or otherwise

covered-up by conventional philosophical approaches. For this analysis, *not philosophy* is a fitting model. First, I have already outlined the ways in which I write as a not philosopher—as an outsider to philosophy who happens to wading into the philosophical. Additionally, I seek to engage a philosophy of the *not* by questioning the not of the standard model of new student orientation: what is covered up, disoriented, misaligned, or *not* in place. Perhaps more directly, who is *not* oriented by the standard model of student orientation? Reflected across the content of her works, *not philosophy* becomes Ahmed’s guiding methodology for entering into phenomenological analysis and provides a platform for an applied method of conceptual archiving to develop.

Conceptual Archiving

To work within the umbrella of *not philosophy*, Ahmed’s method follows a concept around in order to create a conceptual archive. I want to be clear that in this work, a method does not mean a list of prescribed steps to replicate systematically and without creativity. Instead, a method of conceptual archiving provides a general approach to be taken up in unique and imaginative ways. The intention of implementing conceptual archiving is to uncover the *not* of the standard model of new student orientation, or who is not oriented by the standard model and the model’s related straightening devices. The first component of developing a conceptual archive is to follow a concept. For example, Ahmed (2000) follows ‘strangers’ around into places like extra-terrestrial encounters, neighborhood watch programs, and stranger danger. Ahmed (2007) follows whiteness around bodies and institutions. Ahmed (2012) follows diversity-related documents

produced by the university to understand where they go, who reads them, and what they say. Providing a more detailed explanation of ‘following’, Ahmed (2010) clarifies:

I track the word *happiness*, asking what histories are evoked by the mobility of this word. I follow the word *happiness* around. I notice what it is up to, where it goes, who or what gets associated with. If I am following the word *happiness*, then I go where it goes. I thus do not go where the word *happiness* does not go. (p. 14)

For example, Ahmed ‘follows’ happiness into stories, memories, books, movies, and scholarly research. Through this conceptual pursuit of happiness, Ahmed is able to articulate a standard model of happiness. With a standard model in place, Ahmed then turns toward the *not*. By not going where happiness does not go, Ahmed (2010) is then able to question what or who is left out or left behind in pursuit of happiness, or who is *not* happy in the standard model? Her analysis then takes the *not* as the point of departure for developing new readings of happiness as phenomenological practice.

Through the act of following combined with philosophy of the *not*, Ahmed curates these experiences, representations, and objects related to her question of choice into a conceptual archive. For instance, Ahmed (2010) develops an unhappiness archive by attending to the *not* of happiness:

I call the archives that I draw on in these chapters ‘unhappy archives.’ It is not simply a question of finding unhappiness in such archives. Rather, these archives take shape through the circulation of cultural objects that articulate unhappiness with the history of happiness. An unhappy archive is one assembled around the struggle against happiness (p. 18).

Here, Ahmed is seeking to uncover those voices who are unhappy with, or removed from, socially prescribed practices of happiness. Similarly, after following ‘will’ around,

Ahmed (2014) states “I assemble a willfulness archive...what do I mean by a willfulness archive?...a willfulness archive would refer to documents that are passed down in which willfulness comes up, as a trait, as a character trait” (p. 13). The archives serve as a place for the personal, cultural, and academic to interface allowing rich, novel interpretations and observations to emerge.

For this study, I follow the ‘orientation’ in the standard model of student orientation around using a combination of my own experiences as both a student going through new student orientation and a higher education professional supporting new student orientation programming; popular depictions of new student orientation in TV shows and movies; and scholarly literature in the field of new student orientation. As I follow student orientation around, I am attentive to what and who student orientation omits, silences, or ignores in order to develop a ‘dis/orientation archives,’ or an archive of out of place students. In the spirit of *not* philosophy, the ‘dis/orientation archives’ will become a source for analysis and interpretation of the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of new student orientation.

Development of a Student Dis/Orientation Archives

The development of a conceptual archive is less a prescribed method and more an open-ended journey of discovery. In speaking about the development of her willfulness archives, Ahmed (2014) explains “research involves being open to being transformed by what we encounter. This fable [The Grimm Brothers’ story the “Willful Child”] redirected my thinking and became a pivot, or a table, that supported my travels” (p. 13). In this section, I recount my own travels in developing a student dis/orientation archives

including wandering through professional literature, popular sources, as well as my own personal experiences.

Professional Literature

Ahmed grounds her archives in scholarly literature from disciplines like philosophy and women and gender studies. For example, Ahmed's (2010) happiness archive traces the concept of happiness through philosophy beginning with the ancient Greek *edumonia*, or human flourishing, to the field of positive psychology and the current focus on self-help as a function of a broader social turn toward emphasizing happiness. For my student dis/orientation archives, I also began with relevant literature from the profession of higher education and student affairs in development of the standard model of student affairs in Chapter Two. I used the national professional association for orientation specialists, NODA, as the starting point for scholarly literature on student orientation. Coupled with NODA, I also incorporated programmatic standards for orientation programs as outlined by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). Reading across both bodies of literature, I developed the standard model offered in Chapter Two, which incorporated publications and electronic sources from each organization. The bottom line of the standard model of student orientation is the assertion that students need certain information to be successful in their transition to college, and if new students are given the right combination of campus information needed for their particular student demographics, student orientation programs can create conditions for student success.

In addition to the professional literature on student orientation, I also sought out resources created by the professionals in the field—specifically, institutional videos. Institutional videos about orientation serve as preview into the ways in which orientation programs are conducted across various campuses. I was interested in finding an institutional video that highlighted the elements of good practices emphasized by the standard model of student orientation. Using YouTube, I conducted a simple search for “New Student Orientation 2016.” Given my location setting and browsing history, the first returns were institutions in North Carolina, like NC A&T’s *North Carolina A&T State University 2016 New Student Orientation Intro #NCAT20* (Robinson, 2016). Originally, many of the initial results focused on either introducing summer orientation staff members or were produced as a summer-in-review for those who served on staff rather than documenting the entirety of the orientation program.

However, one search result provided the kind of model for which I was searching: *Villanova Class of 2020 New Student Orientation* (Villanova Television, 2016). The *Villanova Class of 2020 New Student Orientation* video captured many of the elements of the standard model of orientation outlined by the professional literature published by NODA and CAS. For example, the video highlights university tradition and inclusion of families, such as a clip from a Catholic mass held for students and their families; the program incorporates currently enrolled students as orientation leaders to guide new students through the program; the video documents efforts to develop relationships through socializing and entertainment such as a “Wildcat Luau” or field day; and the video also showcases institutional pride as students learn cheers and hand gestures

representative of joining the institutional family all while the video concludes with the statement “Welcome home, Wildcats!” Ultimately, professional scholarship on student orientation provided the initial point of departure for my travels in developing a dis/orientation archives, but the journey continued through exploration of popular depictions of student dis/orientation.

Popular Sources

In addition to professional or disciplinary literature, a second element Ahmed incorporates in her conceptual archives is popular sources that depict her topic of interest. Popular sources serve to illustrate how the concept under analysis is commonly presented outside of a strictly academic framework. In *Willful Subjects* (Ahmed, 2014), for example, her introduction begins with the Grimm Brother’s story titled “The Willful Child” (p. 1) about a young girl who is sentenced to death by God for failing to obey her mother’s wishes. Ahmed (2014) uses the fairytale to underscore the historical, cultural emphasis on taming those characters who are considered willful. *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) utilizes the film “Bend It like Beckham” as an illustration of how happiness directs and privileges certain desires over others. Particularly, the film contrasts the directions of happiness chosen by two sisters: Jess, the ambitious footballer, and Pinky, the happy bride-to-be. Ahmed (2010) uses the storyline of the sisters’ pursuits of happiness to unpack where unhappiness bubbles up in their lives and choices. To develop my dis/orientation archives, I followed orientation around through television shows and movies that include representations of new student orientation.

For Ahmed, there is no prescribed method for curating popular sources, but she starts with ones that naturally cross her path of analysis. For me, the first example of this emergence occurred while watching the show *Gilmore Girls* (Palladino & Long, 2003). I had been watching the series as a mental break from proposal writing in the fall when I reached the fourth season, when one of the titular characters begins her first-year at Yale. Unsurprisingly but not anticipated, a primary focus of the episode, “The Loriei’s First Day at Yale” (Palladino & Long, 2003), is Rory’s orientation process once she arrives on campus. I was not explicitly searching for popular depictions of dis/orientation; yet, there it was playing out on screen right in front of me. *Gilmore Girls* served as a launching point for identifying other television and movie depictions of student dis/orientation. Utilizing the streaming service, Netflix, I searched for “college TV and movies,” which yielded a list of suggestions ranging from the quintessential college movie classic *National Lampoon’s Animal House* (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978) to newly released television series such as *The Magicians* (Gamble, McNamara, & Cahill, 2015). Knowing that Netflix has limitations on its search results based on availability as well as viewer history, I wanted to expand from these initial suggestions to cast a wider net of returns.

Using the same search parameters from Netflix, I Googled “college TV and movies” to generate additional suggestions. The Google search provided a wider time period of sources including options not available on Netflix, such as *A Different World* (Levin, Mumford, & Falcon, 1987), *School Daze* (Lee, 1988), *Boston Common* (Kohan, Mutchnick, & Widdoes, 1996), *Felicity* (Abrams & Reeves, 1998), and more. Google

results also spanned multiple genres beyond specifically college-based productions including animated movies, like *Monsters University* (Rae & Scalon, 2013), science fiction shows, like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, 1997), and sitcoms, like *Parks and Recreation* (Yang & Holofcener, 2015). Finally, I also solicited suggestions from friends in student affairs that may have different positionalities and media exposure than what my own searches provided. I was surprised that most of my colleagues' suggestions were confirmations of previous results rather than new sources. To spare listing everything here, *Appendix A* provides a complete listing of all popular sources included in my archiving process, even if not referenced explicitly in analysis.

As a caveat, I will readily name one boundary in my cultivation of popular sources: I did not and will not include any popular sources rooted in depictions of college as a time and place for young men protagonists to sexually pursue fellow classmates—particularly young femme classmates—at any and all costs. While I am sure there is ample analytical content there, and certainly another study altogether, it physically revolted me watching some of these titles, to the point that these movies make *Animal House* (Reitman, Simmons, & Landis, 1978) look like a fun family film. For example, both *Van Wilder: Freshman Year* (Bernard, D'Amico, Spillman, Zahavi, & Glazer, 2009) and *Freshman Orientation* (Halsed, Merjos, Nazarian, & Shiraki, 2004) open with the main characters—both men—receiving fellatio under less-than consensual conditions. *Blue Mountain State* (Falconer & Robbins, 2010) features a threesome as a reward for a player on the football team before the opening credits of the film even roll. While there may be depictions of dis/orientation in these films that might provide new insights,

I recognize I am making the intentional decision not to include their content in this study as to not normalize the narrative that college is made for men to ‘hunt’, ‘obtain’, or ‘conquer’ other classmates as nothing more than sexual objects or props.

Personal Experiences

A third element in constructing a dis/orientation archive includes my own memories and experiences about new student orientation—like with my orientation toward my undergraduate institution. While traditionally bracketed out of phenomenological work through epoché (Creswell, 2009; Jones, Torres, & Arminio 2006), Ahmed (2006) acknowledges the role of the personal account in her writing as it “moves between conceptual analysis and personal digression. By why call the personal a digression? Why is it that the personal so often enters writing as if we are being led astray from a proper course?” (p. 22). Indeed, Ahmed does not separate her experiences from the phenomena she writes about; she does not write about phenomenon happening ‘over there’ away from herself. On the contrary, her observations on direction and orientation are formed directly from her bodily experiences of being a lesbian in a heterosexual world. Ahmed (2006) explains:

I think one of the reasons I became interested in the very question of 'direction' was because in the 'middle' of my life I experienced a dramatic redirection: I left a certain kind of life and embraced a new one. I left the 'world' of heterosexuality, and became a lesbian. (p. 19)

Similarly, my interest in new student orientation stems from the profound impact in my own change in direction from high school graduate to college student had on me—demonstrated by my professional career path in higher education.

In practice, however, my orientation to NC State began long before I set foot on campus for new student orientation; indeed, it began before I was even born. With two grandparents who worked there as well as a father and two aunts who graduated from there, NC State was a fixture in my family's history of higher education decades before I was born. (If it serves as concrete evidence of my preexisting orientation around NC State, there are actual baby photos of me wearing NC State branded onesies before I was old enough to walk!) Tellingly, I grew up hearing my dad tell stories about the legendary NC State coach, Jim Valvano, and the miracle of the 1983 NCAA Men's National Championship basketball team. I listened as my grandmother, a former nurse in the campus infirmary, told stories about students' various escapades that landed them in her care. I played in the Courtyard of the Carolinas in front of Poe Hall and the 1911 Building where my grandfather had his offices.

Through my family history, I was already oriented toward the institution long before I arrived for my own new student orientation, which then only further supported my ability to extend my reach on campus comfortably and easily. In Chapter Five, I will use a series of thought experiments to highlight the orientation devices utilized by the standard model of student orientation, and I will analyze the potential exclusionary elements of each. In this fifth chapter, the intention is not to argue for the elimination of new student orientation altogether but to offer a reading of new student orientation as a phenomenological practice of orienteering.

CHAPTER V

AN ANALYSIS OF THE STANDARD MODEL OF STUDENT ORIENTATION

In Chapter Five, I undertake a conceptual analysis of the standard model of student orientation, which was developed in the second chapter, by utilizing Ahmed's framework on orientations, as presented in the third and fourth chapters. The standard model of student orientation is founded in programmatic efforts to effectively socialize students to campus through transmission of institutional knowledge and opportunities for deeper campus connections. However, the standard model's approach omits three important facets of orientation when orientation is examined as phenomenological practice: the bodily, the affective, and the institutional components. As points of origination, Ahmed (2006) expands on these components noting, "orientations are about how we begin; how we proceed from 'here,' which affects how what is 'there' appears, how it presides, as well as having different sides" (p. 8) and that "orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward" (p.1). In this chapter, I embark on Ahmed-inspired problems through her method of conceptual archiving as a form of *not philosophy*—specifically the *not* of the standard model of student orientation.

In this chapter, I ask questions such as: What does it mean when we 'orient' students? From what are students turned away? Toward what? Around what does student 'orientation' cohere? In orienting students, what are the orientation devices reinforcing

this orientation? What bodies are extended through the standard model of student ‘orientation’? What bodies are stopped, disoriented? How does ‘student orientation’ connect with histories of orientation(s)? With other orientations? What is the *not* of the standard model of student orientation? Through this analysis, I propose the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation coheres around the individual institution itself and is upheld through orientation devices essential to the standard model of new student orientation including the history of U.S. higher education and campus engagement. I conclude the chapter by offering additional observations about the ‘orientation’ in student orientation including the role of time, applications to staffing, and potentials for future inquiry. As I present my analysis about the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation, my own experiences serve as illustration of how, and for whom, the standard model of orientation works while calling into question who is left out-of-place, who are the outsiders, and who is the *not* with regard to the standard model.

Analysis of the Standard Model of New Student Orientation

As presented in Chapters Three and Four, an Ahmedian approach to orientation is concerned with the tensions between objects, bodies, and institutions—particularly as functions of alignment, or extension, through proper orientations. In Ahmed’s conceptualization, orientations express social values along which certain bodies are able to line-up, or cohere, while placing others out of alignment. For example, Ahmed (2006) clarifies the ‘orientation’ implied by a proper ‘sexual orientation’ is an orientation of heterosexuality: bodies that follow an orientation of heterosexuality are able to pursue

correct social placement along the lines of sexual desire. However, Ahmed (2006) contrasts the alignment achieved by heterosexual bodies with her own experiences as a lesbian—a body out of alignment with the sexual orientation of heterosexuality—or a body that is *not* oriented by heterosexuality. Thus, Ahmed is not able to travel the socially acceptable line of heterosexual orientation as a queer woman, which prevents her body from cohering or extending the same ways as heterosexual bodies. By tracing her ‘sexual’ orientation as a queer woman, Ahmed reveals herself as an outsider to the directions of heterosexuality; she represents the *not* of sexual orientation.

While heterosexual bodies can extend sexual desire unhesitatingly from heterosexual attraction to fulfillment of heterosexual union in marriage, Ahmed (2006) describes how the sexual desires of queer bodies do not extend but are stopped and straightened out through straightening devices. Straightening devices are tools that work to reinforce and uphold the social expectation of compulsory heterosexual orientation. These devices work to convert the *not* into the oriented. Ahmed (2006) uses the illustration of a family tree as one such straightening device in that “the point that lines meet is the ‘point’ of reproduction” (p. 122); the visual image of the family tree predicates descendants as straight lines born of straight, or heterosexual, reproduction. The conventional image of a family tree reinforces the socially desirable orientation of heterosexuality as appropriate and necessary while eliminating the appearance or presence of queer bodies, consequently ‘straightening out’ the family tree. While straightening devices ‘straighten out’ queer bodies specifically, Ahmed also describes orientation devices, which are tools that work to uphold other orientations more broadly.

In the following sections, I employ Ahmed's approach to analyze the standard model of student orientation including the point at which the standard model coheres as well as the orientation devices utilized to maintain and support the orientation of the standard model. Through Ahmed's framework, I argue that the 'orientation' in the standard model of new student orientation has less to do with students and more to do with the specific institution they attend, and that the 'orientation' of the institution is supported through orientation devices including the history of U.S. higher education, which is reflected on campus through the standard model's emphasis on spirit and tradition, as well as the current professional emphasis on student belonging and engagement. I conclude the chapter by offering suggestions for future analyses including works that focus on a longitudinal consideration of time with regard to student orientation or shift to trace the 'orientation' of new staff orientation. Finally, I close the chapter by inviting an exploration of what happens next: if not new student orientation then what? I take this question as my point of departure for Chapter Six.

The 'Orientation' of the Standard Model

For the standard model of new student orientation, there is an important understanding that beginning college as a first-year student can be a disorienting time but that the work of orientation professionals can minimize and manage that disorientation. Indeed, the standard model of new student orientation is rooted in the belief that providing appropriate information and resources to students as they arrive on campus can alleviate the stress and anxiety of transitioning to the newness of college life. However, the standard model of new student orientation omits the dynamic that relieving

disorientation requires a (re)orientation toward something else. Ahmed (2006) clarifies this process: "in order to become oriented, you might suppose that we must first experience disorientation. When we are oriented, we might not even notice that we are oriented: we might not even think 'to think' about this point" (p. 5). The standard model of orientation fails 'to think' about what point students are then (re)oriented around, after new students experience the disorientation of coming to campus.

In this way, the standard model of new student orientation conceals the 'orientation' of the model itself. If the 'orientation' of the standard model of new student orientation is obscured, how might it be brought to light? This hidden orientation of the standard model can be explored by tracing the directions in which objects and bodies turn and extend during new student orientation. Ahmed (2006) holds that "when things are oriented they are facing the right way: in other words, the objects around the body allow the body itself to be extended" (p. 51). Conversely when things and bodies fail to correctly orient themselves, they exist as the *not* oriented, the *not* in place and are left out of the right orientation. Here, Ahmed is providing a clue that orientations are reflected and exposed by paying attention to the objects and bodies that are able to stretch themselves easily through a given space by 'facing' the correct direction. What are some of these objects that serve as indicators of the 'orientation,' of the standard model of new student orientation? Some such objects that comes to mind when thinking of campuses and new students following 'correct' directions are welcome banners and other institutional signage. Signs and banners are objects that are archetypal features of new student orientation that serve to reveal the standard model's 'orientation.'

In the *Villanova Class of 2020 New Student Orientation* (Villanova Television, 2016), for example, the video begins with a montage of multiple residence halls all featuring ‘welcome’ banners. Even popular portrayals of new student orientation include varying sorts of banners greeting incoming students from the “Welcome Law Students/Class of 2004” banner during the student check-in scene in *Legally Blonde* (Platt, Kidney, & Luketic, 2001) or the banner that reads “Harmon, Ohio Welcomes New & Returning Students” in *Accepted* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). Indeed, *not* facing or following the right direction(s) is a recurring theme in representations of new students attending orientation programs—particularly the importance of *not* being lost. From Rory’s panic about losing her campus map while moving in (Palladino & Long, 2003) to Rusty’s attempt to avoid looking lost by getting directions to his residence hall from his older sister (Smith & Junger, 2007), new students on television shows and in movies are depicted as desperately trying to escape the embarrassment of getting lost as getting lost gives away that you do not yet belong, you are out of place, you are *not* yet properly aligned. Thus, the lost student embodies the *not* of correctly finding and following campus directions.

Coupled with specific banners of salutation, general campus signage is also a key object in the standard model of new student orientation. From the residential building names in *Villanova Class of 2020 New Student Orientation* (Villanova Television, 2016) to opening scenes of TV shows highlighting campus building signs (Whedon & Whedon, 1999; Yang, & Holofcener, 2013), there is an emphasis on campus signage as signals of knowing where you are and where you are going. Coupling the ‘welcome’ banners with

campus building signs creates a message of ‘yes, you are meant to be here, even if you are lost right now. Do not fear, these signs will point you in the right direction. They will (re)orient you.’ By following the signs and banners, new students might successfully face the right way on campus toward a given destination.

Through objects like campus signs and welcome banners the bodies of new students are literally oriented around the physical layout of an institution: to ‘face the right direction’ is to physically face the right direction on campus. Perhaps this is why the image of the lost, new student wandering aimlessly about campus until they find their way with a map, directions, or another person has endured for so long; they exemplify the turning from a state of disorientation to the adoption of the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation. Ultimately, the tracing of these objects and their impacts on the bodies of new students on campus reveals that the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of new student orientation is the institution itself—not the new students. What is more, through orientation work, students are encouraged to further cohere around institution such that for new students “to be comfortable is to be so at ease with one’s environment that it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 134). For the standard model of new student orientation, the aim is to successfully ‘orient’ students to the institution such that all of campus becomes comfortable, accessible—no longer separate from the bodies of new students but enmeshed together one with the other.

As one demonstration of this process, best practices in orientation programming encourage professionals to highlight a variety of campus resources, offices, and services

such that students and their families feel *comfortable* using them during their transition and time on campus (NODA, 2014). Comfort, then, is not coincidental. With an ‘orientation’ of the institution, the standard model of new student orientation works to ensure students can easily extend themselves through these campus opportunities. From this perspective, successful new student orientation programming is not a specific curricular intervention designed around students as conceptualized in the standard model of new student orientation; rather, successful new student orientation is how effectively a new student can adopt and extend through the orientation of the institution. *Not* philosophy, in this case, asks who are the students *not* comfortable extending their bodies on and through campus? Where *not*? Why *not*? Even as the standard model strives for all students to develop this sense of comfort, it does not always succeed. Perhaps a phenomenology of *discomfort*, of those outsiders to easy extension, creates a new picture of campus services? With the understanding that the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation is the individual institution itself, we must now also evaluate the implications of this ‘orientation’ for various new students.

Despite the work of the standard model of new student orientation, *not* all bodies are able to extend themselves with equal ease on campus. This is evidenced by the growing emphasis on specialty orientations for populations considered at-risk for leaving the institution prior to graduation, like transfer or first-generation students (NODA, 2014). Even with the support from the standard model of student orientation, why do certain groups of students still struggle to complete their degree to graduation? Ahmed (2006) provides the insight that “an action is possible when the body and the object

‘fit’...objects, as well as spaces, are made for some kinds of bodies more than others” (p. 51). Similarly, the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation is made for some kinds of bodies and *not* for others, and the action of graduation is only made possible when the body and the ‘object’ of the institution fit. While for some bodies, the act of graduation is made impossible because the body and institution do *not* fit, or when the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation fails. Here, it is critical to emphasize:

When orientation ‘works,’ we are occupied. The failure of something to work is a matter of a *failed orientation*: a tool is used by a body for which it was not intended, or a body uses a tool that does not extend its capacity for action. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 51)

Within the failure of an orientation, there is a dual process at play where there must be a fit between the body and the tool. Neither the body nor the tool cause the failed orientation in isolation but through their relationship, or lack thereof. When the body and the tool do not correspond, the failure of an orientation results in disorientation, a body is stopped and cannot extend along the intended directions. It becomes the *not* of the particular orientation. Put simply, "if orientation is about making the strange familiar through extensions of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 11). Taking the dynamics of the fit between bodies and tools into account, for what bodies does the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation fail? Who becomes the *not* of the standard model?

As the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of new student orientation is the individual institution, the specific details of which bodies do not fit at a specific place will certainly vary from campus to campus; however, the history of U.S. higher education

provides insight on larger patterns that extend across institutions illuminating which bodies are intended to ‘fit’ within an institutional orientation of U.S. higher education and which are the *not*. Traditional materials about the history of student affairs reflect an overall progressive attitude illustrating how higher education has opened up to more and more student populations over time stressing major moments of progress like racial integration, co-education for women, or inclusion of individuals with disabilities (Nuss, 2003; Rentz, 2004; Rhatigan, 2009; Thelin, 2003). From this perspective, the history of student affairs signals that the standard model of student orientation should be one open to all bodies to ‘fit’ at their institutions; however, this is not the case as some bodies, do indeed, fail to cohere to the orientation of the institution. Some bodies are positioned as the *not* of an institution.

A more critical perspective on this history of student affairs is attentive to the ways in which certain bodies have been historically centered within US higher education as the norm at the exclusion of those deemed ‘other,’ or *not* aligned. For instance, Patton (forthcoming) deconstructs the history of the field of student affairs illustrating how the history of U.S. higher education is rooted in white, colonial, cishetero-patriarchal, ableist, and classist norms. Meaning, U.S. higher education is predicated on the prototypical student being a white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, neurotypical student from financial means and was never originally intended for bodies that do *not* ‘fit’ these historical beginnings. This type of critical reading of the history of student affairs illuminates which bodies were not historically intended to ‘fit’ within U.S. higher education, such as people of color, and for which bodies the ‘orientation’ of the standard

model of student orientation is likely to fail. Given the historical foundations of U.S. higher education and white, European colonizers, it is unsurprising that racial components of institutional orientation still factor into the success or failure of the 'orientation' of the standard model to cohere in bodies of color. Within a system of education in a white supremacist society, bodies of color become part of the *not* of U.S. higher education.

Focusing specifically on the role of whiteness in its development, U.S. higher education can be understood as an export of white colonizers designed by and for the support white higher education during colonialization (Patton, forthcoming; Wilder, 2013). With this origin in whiteness, white bodies can be understood as those meant to 'fit' and expand through the tool of U.S. higher education while placing the bodies of people of color out of place. But how can this still hold true in light of the progressive racial triumphs noted in student affairs history, like the creation of HBCUs, Tribal Colleges, racial integration, and the proliferation of other institutional types devoted to serving students historically marginalized through their racial background (Nuss, 2003; Rentz, 2004; Rhatigan, 2009; Thelin, 2003)? Ahmed (2006) provides a poignant counter perspective: "consider racism as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orients bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space" (p. 111) and that "spaces become racialized by how they are directed or oriented" (p. 120). In this process, race is not an attribute simply ascribed to a body but deeply tethered to history of spaces and to who has occupied those spaces contributing to a space's particular racial orientation. Ahmed (2007) elaborates:

whiteness ‘holds’ through habits. Public spaces take shape through the habitual actions of bodies, such that the contours of space could be described as habitual...spaces acquire the shape of the bodies that ‘inhabit’ them. We could think about the ‘habit’ in the ‘in-habit.’ (p. 156)

In this way, whiteness becomes a habit, a routine, a pattern that develops from the bodies present in a certain space. Like tracks where students walk through grass rather than on institutionally laid sidewalks, the bodies of students at an institution press toward a specific racial orientation as a function of time. Said differently, “institutions become a given, as an effect of decisions made over time, which shapes the surface of institutional space” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 39). My graduate institution, the University of Georgia, provides a relevant example.

While at the University of Georgia, a point of institutional pride was UGA’s title as the first public institution of higher education in the United States. In its *History of UGA* page, The University of Georgia states, “incorporated by an act of the General Assembly on January 27, 1785, Georgia became the first state to charter a state-supported university” (UGA, 2011b). Despite its designation as a ‘public’ university, this did not signal that the institution was to be freely access by any and all peoples. Tellingly, the first students of color, Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter, did not enroll at the University of Georgia until 1961 and only after fighting a legal dispute to do so (UGA, 2011a).

This means that for 176 years the only bodies inhabiting UGA’s campus as students were white bodies and that for 176 years the habit of whiteness was pressed into the orientation of the institution at UGA. For 176 years, the only bodies recruited to

attend UGA were white bodies and all institutional resources were allocated to these white bodies. Ahmed (2006) confirms how these actions contribute to the institutionalization of an orientation of whiteness, “institutions involve lines, which are the accumulation of past decisions about ‘how’ to allocate resources, as well as ‘who’ to recruit. Recruitment functions as a technology for the reproduction of whiteness” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 133). For 176 years, the line of accumulation at UGA was explicitly, exclusively white, positioning bodies of color as *not* included despite the moniker of a ‘public’ university.

However, as a function of this ongoing and unfinished history, racist orientations of whiteness do not disappear just because bodies of color, like Hamilton Holmes’s and Charlayne Hunter’s, appear on campuses already deeply oriented by whiteness. On the contrary, “if whiteness is what the institution is oriented around, then even bodies that do not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 41). When I worked at UGA in graduate school, it was 226 years after the institution was founded but only 50 years after Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter racially integrated campus. Despite the legal desegregation of the campus, the expectations of performing whiteness were still prevalent while I was there—particularly for the women of color I supervised in residence life. While I could comfortably move about our building of 1,000 first-year women, who were overwhelmingly white and often from upper-class economic backgrounds, and automatically feel respected, I was taken aback in my first-year as a supervisor when multiple Resident Advisors on my staff expressed trouble receiving respect from these very same residents. Quickly, however, a pattern emerged. The

women with the most difficulty in their communities were women of color who opted out of embodying whiteness in various ways—simply by wearing natural hair, joining historically black Greek-letter organizations, or promoting events sponsored by the Black Student Union. They represented the *not* of UGA’s orientation of whiteness.

Rather than being able to extend throughout the building as my white body easily did, these women could not. Ahmed (2006) confirms this point that “for bodies that are not extended by the skin of the social, bodily movement is not so easy. Such bodies are stopped, where the stopping is an action that creates its own impressions” (p. 139). While I quickly adopted pride in both our building and UGA, many of these women expressed difficulty in finding their footing on a campus where they felt stopped at every turn. Instead of the institutional orientation of UGA cohering successfully in the bodies of these brilliant, luminous students, they worked to find their own orientations to follow—ones that honored their bodies and histories of color—like joining programs sponsored by Multicultural Services and Programs. Due to the historical orientation of whiteness developed over the 176 years of UGA being a solely white institution, the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation at UGA failed to fully cohere in the bodies of the women of color with whom I worked as the expectation to align with whiteness posed an impossibility simply from the appearance of their skin.

How might this process change on a campus developed specifically for bodies of color, like Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)? Does it? One might be lured into believing that an orientation of whiteness is not present t/here, but, history reveals even these campuses are not free of the grasp of whiteness. Proliferating privately

during the mid-1800s, state-supported action to ensure higher education provisions for black Americans began in response to the 1890 Morrill Act (Thelin, 2003), which allowed the establishment of land-grant institutions specifically for people of color. While the campuses themselves may not have hosted years of white bodies, these campuses were formed in direct contrast to and defined by their separation from whiteness—white institutions remained the norm with HBCUs as add-ons, others, or extras. HBCUs are thus structurally still the *not* of U.S. higher education, which is historically and socially entrenched in whiteness. So even indirectly, the institutions that have become designated as HBCUs were already oriented around a more general societal orientation of whiteness endemic to the broader system of U.S. higher education.

Orientation Devices

Recognizing that some bodies are more readily able to take up certain orientations than others, orientation devices serve as mechanisms to keep correctly aligned bodies in position while working to pressure misaligned bodies into the proper space. Ahmed (2007) gives the following simple definition, “orientation devices...keep things in place” (p. 158). Ahmed’s works are full of examples of these devices that keep things in place. Regarding the ordering of bodies along the lines of sexuality, Ahmed (2006) notes that “the fantasy of a natural orientation is an orientation device that organizes the world around the form of heterosexual couples” (p. 85). Here, Ahmed (2006) is affirming that the belief in compulsory heterosexuality as the ‘natural’ sexual orientation of people is an orientation device that keeps sexual desire ‘in place’ through the privileging of straight bodies and couples.

In addition to keeping bodies in their proper places, orientation devices also support placing emotions in the proper, socially-desired alignment. Ahmed (2010) observes “if happiness is an affective form of orientation, then happiness is crucial to education, which can also be considered an orientation device” (p. 54). Here, education becomes the means of keeping the importance of happiness ‘in place’ for students—that education is the pathway to achieving a good, happy life. Moreover, recognizing institutions as public spaces filled with people, Ahmed (2012) muses “in noticing the crowds, we also notice the orientation devices that direct the flow of human traffic in particular ways” (p. 186), like the way driving on the right side of the road directs motor vehicle traffic in the U.S. That orientation devices can also literally direct human movement reminds me of a tradition from my graduate institution, the University of Georgia: not walking under the Arch. At UGA, the Arch—an archway of three iron columns united in a semi-circle across the top—is the premier campus icon, and campus lore holds that if you walk under the Arch while enrolled as a student, you will never graduate. Not one to tempt the fates, the Arch stood as an orientation device literally (re)directing my path for the two years I lived in Athens. In fact, the Arch is such an effective orientation device of students’ motion that the stone steps on either side of the Arch show visible signs of erosion down to the point of concavity while the steps under the Arch do not.

Considering how orientation devices direct movement, emotions, and bodies to keep things in place, what are the orientation devices that keep the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation in place? As presented in the previous section, the

history of U.S. higher education provides insight into some such devices inherited by individual colleges and universities, such as whiteness. However, these historically-based devices are not the only tools that keep new students ‘in line;’ indeed, additional devices can be identified in the standard model of new student orientation. Grounded in themes that repeated across multiple sources in the dis/orientation archives, there are additional modern orientation devices of the standard model keep students ‘in place’ and ‘in line’ with the institution beyond those imposed by the historical development of U.S. higher education. In the following section, I present the supplementary orientation device of campus belonging and engagement as it supports the overall ‘orientation’ in the standard model of orientation. This orientation device operates through orientation programming as strategies to encourage students to ease their own disorientation of transition by lining up with the institution.

Belonging and Engagement. Coupled with the historical context of the development of U.S. higher education, a second straightening device supporting the standard model of student orientation is the weight placed on belonging to the institutional family through campus engagement. From the perspective of the standard model, engagement is a crucial element in the recipe for successful student orientation, retention, and graduation. Foundational works by student affairs scholars like Astin (1984, 1993), Tinto (1993), and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) underscore the importance of students finding ways to increase their connection to campus through activities like living on campus or joining extracurricular organization. Perhaps more than any other, the organizational fair is one student orientation practice that captures the

supremacy of the role of campus engagement in the standard model of student orientation. During my own undergraduate orientation, the organizational fair is one part of the program I actually attended. Crammed in a tiny ballroom on an upper level of our old student center, table after table displayed the overwhelming amount of student organizations with which I could connect: academically-based organizations, club sports, student government, religious groups and the list goes on and on. Each table had current members of the group vying for our time, attention, and newly minted campus e-mail addresses.

Tellingly, the organizational fair has become so synonymous with orientation, that their depiction has not escaped popular representations in recent college-based films including the comedy, *Pitch Perfect* (Brooks, Handelman, Banks, & Moore, 2012), and the animated film, *Monsters University* (Rae & Scanlon, 2013). Further driving home the emphasis on engagement, *Pitch Perfect* (Brooks, Handelman, Banks, & Moore, 2012) follows the story of a reluctant undergraduate student, Becca, yearning to drop out of school to move to LA and become a music producer until she gets involved at Barden by joining a campus acapella group. In this movie, Beca's engagement with the acapella group reorients her toward staying at Barden rather than leaving for LA. Her story becomes a story of the triumph of belonging and engagement.

However, the organizational fair is not the only vehicle for campus engagement. *The Villanova Class of 2020 New Student Orientation* (Villanova Television, 2016) demonstrates campus engagement through the planning of large-scale campus events like an evening dance party, a nighttime special performer, and a field day where students

connect with one another and, presumably, establish new friendships. The orientation staff members' shirts also send a more direct message of involvement, "live our tradition by pursuing your passion," and the video concludes by repeating that catchphrase plus an enthusiastic "Welcome home, Wildcats!" Here, there is even a coupling of the device of institutional history with the device of engagement—by engaging on campus one can embody the 'tradition' of Villanova and convert into a member of the institutional family. Engagement as an orientation device encourages students to 'line up' with the activities sponsored by the institution, which increases students' feelings of belonging, so is this all bad?

On the surface, belonging and engagement as an orientation device seems positively helpful in supporting a smooth transition to campus life. Ahmed (2006) even confirms the value of belonging and engagement holding that "we know where we are through how we position ourselves in relation to others" (p. 51). Belonging and engagement are ways of positioning students in relation to other students as a form of confirming where students are. However, how might the importance of belonging and engagement actually function to estrange students from one another? Who are the 'outsiders,' to belonging and engagement? The *not* engaged and the *not* belonging? I have already illustrated above how orientations cohere in some bodies easier than others, even despite the work of orientation devices, so who are the students for which this device results in disorientation, or a failure of the institutional orientation to cohere? While there are many ways to travel the path of belonging and engagement on campus, a dis/orientation archives moves off this path to identify those who are strangers,

disengaged, or otherwise disconnected from the institution: a phenomenology of the *not* engaged.

In thinking of the disconnected student, I am automatically reminded of my time as a full-time residence life professional at UNCG from 2011-2013. Upon my hire, one of the first things mentioned in our new professional training was the desire to change UNCG's reputation as a 'suitcase' campus, or a campus in which students go home every weekend rather than staying on campus. The concern was that if students were returning home every weekend, then they were missing out on crucial opportunities to form associations with other students that might increase their sense of belonging in the Spartan community. Simply put, they were *not* sufficiently engaged. As a first-year hall director, I took this responsibility very seriously, seeking out ways to encourage students to remain on campus over the weekend. There was one student in particular who fit the bill; he was the perfect candidate to convert from a weekend homebody into an engaged campus leader. He was affable, well-respected, humorous, and studious, but he never stayed on campus over the weekend leaving Thursday afternoon through Monday morning.

Buoyed by my professional responsibility, this student automatically came to mind as a great fit when it was time to recruit student leaders to join the hall council. If this student joined the hall government, he could easily be a role model of student involvement for other members in the building, and perhaps, he would also stay on campus on the weekends. On one of my daily rounds of the building, I crossed paths with this student on his hall. After catching up on everyday chitchat, I asked the student if he

would consider becoming a member of the hall council given his relationships with people throughout the building and his personal leadership skills. He paused and gave a half-hearted smile. He responded, “You know I would love to, but I really can’t. I work a full-time job Thursday night through Sunday to support my mother and siblings.” Here was the moment of disorientation, the moment in which the ‘orientation’ of the standard model failed to cohere. The moment of appearance of the *not*. This student, branded as *not* engaged from the standard model’s point of view, was anything but: he worked full-time and attended school full-time! However, his engagement did not ‘line up’ with the orientation of the institution as he was not engaged on campus and thus *not properly* oriented. From the vantage of the standard model, this student was one of a larger body of disconnected students flocking home on the weekend and leaving behind the ‘orientation’ of the institution.

As such, a phenomenology of dis/orientation illustrates that within the orientation device of belonging and engagement there is an obscured economic element—an economy of engagement. The *not* of engagement includes students who literally *cannot* afford to be engaged. Emerging research in student affairs (Kezar, Walpole, & Perna, 2014) is also confirming this previously covered over aspect of belonging and engagement. For my student above, as one case, pursuing belonging and engagement as conceptualized by the standard model was not an available possibility due to economic constraints at home. He had to work to support his family as well as pay for higher education, yet, the standard model viewed his weekend absence as disengagement even though his employment is what supported his ability to attend the institution at all. His

experience contrasts dramatically with my own college experience. Coming from a middle-class family, I received financial support to attend college. Coupled with the academic scholarship I received that covered tuition and the leadership role I held in housing that paid for my room and board, I had no remaining expenses to worry about. With finances covered, I was able to devote myself to getting involved on campus to the extent that I was awarded the highest non-academic honor an undergraduate can receive at NC State in recognition for my ‘service’ to the university community. I was literally able to afford to follow the orientation device of campus engagement, and my successful institutional orientation was rewarded and confirmed through recognition, honors, and special titles.

It is important to underscore that my engagement was rewarded insofar as it conformed to institutional expectations of engagement. A phenomenology of the *not* of student engagement considers not only those who are not engaged, like my student above, but also considers those who are *not engaged properly*. Here, proper engagement includes those events, activities, programs, and services sanctioned, supported, and implemented by the institution. So what is the *not* of proper campus engagement? First, the *not* of proper engagement is engagement that challenges the institution and its approved mechanisms for engagement. The 1988 film *School Daze* (Lee & Lee) provides a compelling illustration of this expectation. The film hinges on the tension between two characters, Dap and Julian, attending a fictional HBCU called Mission College. Julian, the president of Gamma Phi Gamma fraternity, clashes with Dap, a student leader calling for the university’s divestment from South Africa due to apartheid.

Throughout the film, Julian chastises Dap for his “African mumbo jumbo” and proclaims “I am here to let you know that your revolutionary activities here at Mission College are detrimental not only to the student body and the administration but to our brothers and sisters in South Africa as well” (Lee & Lee, 1988). This exchange in the opening dialogue sets a clear tone that Dap’s form of engagement with campus is viewed as nonsense, as *not engaging properly* given the potential harm to the institution. While Julian models appropriate campus engagement as a Fraternity president, Dap’s position as the *not* of proper campus engagement is confirmed when Dap is called into a conduct meeting with the Mission College President, Harold McPherson, and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Cedar Cloud. In the meeting, Cloud opens by stating that Dap has “become a disruptive force on this campus” and continues claiming “you’re hindering other folks from an education. Let me make it plain. Inmate, you don’t really have a choice. If you continue these antics, you’ll be expelled. Plain and simple. Short and sweet” (Lee & Lee, 1988). Despite Dap’s active engagement on campus through rallies and protests, Dap is still part of the *not* of campus engagement as he is *not properly engaged* in accordance with the institution.

It is interesting that even though *School Daze* (Lee & Lee, 1988) came out nearly thirty years ago, I have also watched a parallel process play out on UNCG’s campus over the last two years as campus activism has grown around issues of racial justice, police brutality, and #BlackLivesMatter. According to UNCG’s mission and vision statement (online), “UNCG is...a learner-centered, accessible, and inclusive community fostering intellectual inquiry to prepare students for meaningful lives and engaged citizenship.” It

stands to reason, that students who are participating in work, like rallies or vigils, that illustrates the mission of engaged citizenship on behalf of inclusivity would be considered properly performing campus engagement—engagement to be celebrated, supported, and encouraged. However, this does not seem to actually be the case.

During the 2015-2016 academic year, I watched the UNC System install a new president with no academic background in education and professional higher education experience limited to non-profit institutions: Margaret Spellings. Given her contentious appointment, student leaders across the UNC campuses organized walkouts on her first day of employment. So, on March 1, 2016, I walked out of my office hours at noon to join the protest on the lawn in front of the Elliot University Center. As a student affairs professional, I was moved by the passionate, critical engagement these students illustrated regarding issues of systemic racism in higher education, funding disparities across institutions, and policy inequities for diverse populations. I felt these student truly embodied the spirit of engaged citizenship and inclusion as espoused in our institution's mission. Given that these students were demonstrating democracy in action, I was certain institutional administrators would be a visible presence on the day in order to bear witness to their efforts, but that did not happen.

Instead, the lack of staff presence implicitly told us that we were *not* engaging properly. Indeed as we chanted, read policy briefs, and called out for justice in front of a main administration building, one prominent campus administrator exited the building looking at their phone, avoiding interaction or contact with any of us present. Perhaps other students did not notice, but I did. While we were actively engaged in a

demonstration of democratic citizenship, we were still the *not* as our engagement was not properly aligned with the orientation of the university.

Further, it would be remiss of me not to mention the analogous racial elements of both *School Daze* (Lee & Lee, 1988) and my experience in spring 2016 as well as the ways in which both sources loop back to institutional habits of whiteness within the orientation of U.S. higher education. First, Mission College is portrayed as an HBCU, serving students of color with an administration comprised of men of color. However, a striking moment in the beginning of the film reveals that the college's position on divesting from South Africa—and thus the administration's reaction to Dap—is tied to the potential reaction of the Snodgrass family, the white philanthropists who funded the college's founding and who are represented in the film only by their portraits hanging in the president's office (Lee & Lee, 1988). Hence, even on a campus presumably designed as a space to center the bodies and lives of students of color, whiteness still prevails as the institution's orientation echoing through the history of whiteness planted in the College's founding and allocation of financial resources. Similarly, an orientation of whiteness predominated the walkout last spring. The student leadership responsible for planning the walkout intentionally and publicly placed queer, femme people of color in the spotlight. These same student leaders are the ones who were then passed by without recognition, without a peep by a white administrator. Similar to the Snodgrass portraits, the supremacy of whiteness as institutional orientation at UNCG did not even need to make a sound amidst a protest to be heard loud and clear.

In addition to illuminating the *not proper* and *not engaged* of student engagement, how else might a phenomenology of dis/orientation illustrate who is marginalized by the standard model's reliance on belonging and engagement as an orientation device? Perhaps, future work takes up belonging and engagement along lines of dis/ability and who is *literally able* to engage on campus in the ways valued and supported by the standard model? This question has become particularly salient during my doctoral work as I have struggled to remain *engaged* while balancing a chronic illness that causes chronic pain, fatigue, and mental illness. Indeed, severe flares resulted in my inability to engage in any way beyond simply checking and responding to email. Maybe additional work examines the dynamics of the non-residential, commuter student? Or the non-traditional adult learner? What other orientation devices might there be as illustrated in the field of student affairs work? For example, how might the burgeoning use of rhetoric about 'career preparation,' 'entrepreneurialism,' or 'critical thinking' serve as an orientation device? Utilizing a lens of dis/orientation illustrates the ways in which the orientation device of belonging and engagement is available only to certain bodies while casting other bodies, such as working-class or low-income students, as the *not* of campus engagement.

Future Considerations and Areas of Inquiry

In the previous sections, I argued that the standard model of new student orientation coheres around individual institutions through use key orientation devices including the history of U.S. higher education as well as the profession's emphasis on campus belonging and involvement. My analysis focused on reading new student

orientation as a phenomenological practice impacting new students beginning upon their arrival to campus. However, these boundaries leave space for future works to explore additional layers of the standard model of new student orientation—particularly, the role of time and of institutional staff. While I focused primarily on new student orientation as a function of students’ entrance into campus life at the start of their first-year, a phenomenology of new student orientation that focuses on time could illuminate the ways in which institutional orientation commences long before a student ever steps foot on campus and even extends long after graduation.

Like dressing me in NCSU onesies as an infant, my parents started orienting me toward NC State from birth. By the time I applied to attend NC State for college, I already had 17 years of pre-orientation in alignment with the institution, which undoubtedly supported my acceptance as a first-year in the class of 2009. There is also a popular trend in depictions of students who were privileged to be legacies of a certain institution in contrast with those students without access to institutional pre-orientation. In the 2013 film *Admission* (Weitz, Kohansky-Roberts, Milano, & Weitz), for example, there is a striking scene where the Princeton admissions officers meet to “begin the process of choosing the most remarkable freshman class in Princeton history.” During this meeting the main character, Portia, argues adamantly for Jeremiah, a first-generation college student who, although he had weak grades in public school, demonstrates a thirst for knowledge and passion for learning as a self-described autodidact now flourishing at an alternative charter school. Despite Jeremiah’s personification of a spirit of inquiry and learning, the committee denies Jeremiah’s admission while admitting another student,

Daschal Weld Browered, who has terrible test scores but is a fourth generation Princeton legacy. The rationale the committee uses to justify their decision is a concern that Jeremiah would not be cut out to be “Princeton material.” Here, the implication is that Daschal’s pre-orientation toward Princeton outweighs Jeremiah’s love of learning since Daschal has a higher likelihood of successfully adopting the correct institutional orientation.

Thus, a hermeneutic phenomenology of new student orientation centered on time might reimagine the admission process as the process of selecting those students are most likely to successfully take up a given institution’s orientation, rather than selecting the students most prepared to pursue higher education at a given college or university. Similarly, an attention to time in a hermeneutic phenomenology of new student orientation might demonstrate how certain orientations are maintained even after graduation, which may provide new clarification on institutional departments like Alumni Engagement or University Advancement. Finally, an analysis with an attention to time spans in the standard model of student orientation might approach questions of beginnings, transitions, and endings: when does ‘student’ orientation begin? Does a ‘student’ orientation transition to something else upon graduation? Does a ‘student’ orientation ever end, or is replaced by something else?

In addition to a longitudinal exploration of the role of time in new student orientation, future analyses could pivot the focus from new student orientation toward new professional orientation. Just as newly admitted students go through orientation programming, so too, do new student affairs professionals. What happens when a staff

member cannot or can no longer continue to follow the lines of institutional orientation? Of professional orientation? For example, even before the time of my own graduate program in college student affairs, a continuing conversation in student affairs scholarship is a concern for entry-level burnout and attrition from the field (Lorden, 1998; Marshall, Moore Gardener, Hughes, & Lowery, 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Tull, 2006). Perhaps, a hermeneutic phenomenology of new professional orientation may demonstrate professional burnout as a failure of institutional orientations to positively cohere for certain professionals, like Julia Roberts' character in *Mona Lisa Smile* (Johanson, & Newell, 2003) who leaves Wellesley College after only one year of teaching when she bucks institutional orientations of proper women's education.

Further, staff must not only successfully orient themselves to the institution, they then also play a part in effectively aligning students with the institution's orientation. Following the professionals involved in new student orientation may illustrate new orientation devices—perhaps even staff members themselves. If this is the case, then maybe burnout occurs when staff members diverge from their role as institutional orientation devices. Finally, a phenomenological turn toward professionals might also call into question the orientations of the field of student affairs at large and, in turn, question if burnout occurs when professionals fail to take or keep up the orientations of the overall profession. For the field of student affairs, a phenomenology of new professional orientation may be a pathway for retelling the challenge of new professional burnout as a case of disorientation.

Where Does Orientation ‘Go’ From Here?

While the standard model focuses on a behavioral approach to orientation, a hermeneutical phenomenology of the ‘orientation’ in student orientation underscores that orientation is actually a dynamic process playing out between individual student’s bodies and the institutions they attend. By developing and following a dis/orientation archives, my analysis of the standard model of student orientation reveals that new student orientation is much more than a busy season of program offerings and events on campus. Even though the standard model espouses being oriented toward students, the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation is actually the institution itself, which becomes evident when following who is considered ‘facing’ the correct direction on campus and who is *not*.

Further, the standard model’s orientation of the institution is enforced through orientation devices that keep bodies ‘in place,’ such as the orientation device of campus engagement. Through campus engagement, bodies are coded as belonging to the institution or *not*—*not* engaged or *not engaged properly*. The *not* of campus engagement represents those students who are out of place, or are strangers, to the orientation of the institution. While the standard model does work for many students, as demonstrated by my own undergraduate experience, the *not* symbolizes those bodies for which the standard model of student orientation fails to work. The interplay between the oriented and the *not* opens up the question of what comes next.

If not the standard model of new student orientation, then what? In Chapter Three and Four, I already affirmed that the answer is not as easy as simply doing away with

new student orientation, which would be like taking a compass from someone lost in the woods. Rather than completely removing new student orientation, perhaps its matter of asking what else is possible? What kind of reading of new student orientation might emerge from a different phenomenological approach? If the standard model of new student orientation is concerned with fixed points, dichotomies, and straight lines, is it then possible to develop a model that is fluid, rhizomatic, and curvy? Instead of static student 'orientation', perhaps there is a possible model of dynamic student 'orbits'? In the sixth and final chapter, I take up the challenge of exploring an alternative to the standard model of student orientation by striving to 'follow' dis/orientation differently.

CHAPTER VI

AN EMERGING ALTERNATIVE, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

In Chapters Three and Four, I used an Ahmedian frame to explore a number of concepts, like whiteness and happiness, from the lens of phenomenological practice as they bear upon the issue of student orientation(s). Through these two chapters, I demonstrate that an orientation, including new student orientation, includes a (re)positioning of both bodies and affects as well as a complimentary institutional placement. In Chapter Five, I continued to expand the analysis of student orientation(s) by identifying the orientation of the standard model of new student orientation, which points students toward the institution. Rather than a simple series of programs delivered to incoming students, the analysis in Chapter Five demonstrated that orientation is an embodied, lived, or phenomenological process of turning the bodies and emotions of new students toward alignment with the specific institution that individual attends. In the fifth chapter, my analysis also provided an explanation of the orientation devices used to support this turning toward the institution, such as institutional history and student engagement. Chapter Six seeks to offer a vision of an alternative model for student orientation(s) and discusses the implications and conclusions of such an alternative. However, it is imperative to first explain the intention of offering an ‘alternative.’ As we now live in an era in which ‘alternative facts’ are held as reputable, reliable, and real, it would be a lapse in judgement to use the term without sufficient justification.

Taking a page from the ‘alternative facts’ playbook, perhaps I could just say there are no campuses that students need to orient themselves to/toward/around; thus, the alternative model of student orientation does not require orientation whatsoever. This is not the kind of ‘alternative’ I am offering as there really are colleges and universities with campuses, histories, and expectations for students on those campuses. This reality is particularly relevant as new academic semesters open all across the U.S. on the heels of white supremacists marching across the University of Virginia campus spurring institutional responses about behaviors that are and are not accepted within various academic communities. Indeed, I have established that simply doing away with the notion of student orientation altogether would be analogous to stripping a stranded hiker of a compass while lost in the woods.

Instead of an ‘alternative’ that ignores, erases, or disregards the tension between and pressure from institutions and the individual bodies that appear within them, I am interested in the creative potential of imagination to offer a new interpretation of the intentions, processes, and outcomes of student orientation(s). Thus, my own intention for developing an ‘alternative’ model of student orientation is to challenge the singularly-accepted explanation of the pervasive higher education phenomena of new student orientation, particularly the standard model’s view of student orientation as simply a series of programs planned for student attendance and acclamation to campus. To illustrate this need for an ‘alternative’ model, I established in Chapter Five that the standard model of student orientation cannot, will not, and does not work for all students by being attentive to the outsiders, the *not*, of the standard model of student orientation—

like students who are *not* engaged on/with/by campus. Recognizing the limitations of the reasoning supporting the standard model of student orientation, my interest in an alternative model of student orientation(s) is to render new interpretations of student orientation(s) by envisioning student orientation as an embodied, lived, or phenomenological practice.

With an understanding of my invocation of the word ‘alternative’ as an effort to generate a new explanation for the process of orienting students to campus, I move to questioning how might this alternative emerge? I am not interested in an alternative that denies that institutions exist or that there is a process by which students do learn to navigate them. I am interested in an alternative to the rigidity of the standard model. In Chapter Two, the existing literature from student affairs and new student orientation underscores that new student orientation is centered on serving and supporting new students—that the ‘orientation’ of the standard model is the students themselves. In the fifth chapter, my analysis of new student orientation as phenomenological practice reimagines the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of new student orientation. When viewed as a phenomenological practice, the ‘orientation’ of the standard model is not the new students—as scholarship in Chapter Two might argue—but that the ‘orientation’ of the standard model is actually the individual college or university the student attends.

The institution-focused ‘orientation’ of the standard model indiscriminately directs students toward alignment with their institution by asking students to travel fixed pathways like institutional history as well as campus engagement, which serve as orientation devices reinforcing the orientation of the standard model. This unilateral

process of orientation demands students turn toward their institution without consideration for those bodies who cannot do so—such as non-white bodies on college campuses oriented around whiteness. As an example, my alma mater hosted New Student Convocation a few days prior to the first day of classes as a required event for all incoming, first-year students. At Convocation, university administration teaches all students in attendance our institutional fight songs, chants, cheers, and the alma mater, which begins with the lyric, ‘where the winds of Dixie softly blow.’ Mere days after a white supremacist attack in Charlottesville, Virginia—land included in ‘Dixie’—the standard model of student orientation presupposed asking all incoming, new students of color to sing with pride about ‘Dixie,’ while ignoring the racialized, historical ramifications of that word. In the standard model, the institution remains a closed, fixed point toward which students must align themselves without question or examination.

In Chapter Five, I illustrated the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation is actually the individual college or university itself. Rather than a model oriented by/around/toward one particular university or campus as the set direction of new students’ alignment, I am interested in a model of student orientation that shifts the institution into an open, flexible space while supporting student orientation(s) as embodied, phenomenological practice. Here, a phenomenological practice acknowledges orientation(s) as a process, as a lived experience of the interplay between an individual and the world in which they live. In an alternative model, how might the institution serve as a platform, an open table perhaps, for students to travel multiple pathways? On this open table, the alternative model becomes a common phenomenological space for

students to join, meet, move, and live through different orientation experiences. Some students may easily sit and connect at this open table. Other students may remain unseated, instead opting to circle around the table. In this way, the institution is no longer an unyielding constant to which students must submit, but instead, the institution transforms into an open, flexible institutional commons that supports the emergence of a communal space—a public space of lived, phenomenological experience.

Here, I must emphasize that an alternative model is not simply meant to be a game of semantics to rename or rebrand the same practice of student orientation with a slick new terminology. The goal of the standard model of student orientation remains acclimating and turning new students to face the institution such that students ‘line up’ with the institution they attend. In contrast, the aim of an alternative model is no longer about positioning new students to fit a predetermined institutional mold; the goal of an alternative model is to embrace orientation as a phenomenological experience by creating a shared space where vast lived experiences may be shared and supported at the open table of student orientation(s). Inspired by the works of Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, I argue for an alternative model of student orientation(s), grounded in the rendering of orientation as phenomenological practice, by imaging a public model for student orientation(s).

In this final chapter, I extend their alternative model of a public university to address student orientation(s) as phenomenological practice with particular attention to their concepts of public, the world, *scholé*/scholastic, and *e-ducere*. Drawing from Masschelein and Simons, I ask what might be made public regarding student

orientation(s)? How does an alternative for student orientation(s) engage the world? What is the place of scholé, or the scholastic, in this alternative model? How does an alternative student orientation(s) incorporate e-ducere, or leading out? Weaving together their concepts of public, world, scholé, and e-ducere creates an alternative model of student orientation(s) that emphasizes the unique pathway for how an individual might make their way to, through, and away from an institution of higher education. Thus, an alternative model for student orientation(s) influenced by Masschelein and Simons centers the lived experience in way that transforms student orientation from a set of institutional programs into a phenomenological practice.

In this chapter, I also address the possibility of a public model of student orientation. While it would require a drastic reimagining of the landscape of US Higher Education, a public model of student orientation is possible, and I use the film *Accepted* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006) to illustrate how it might develop. Drawing from these conclusions, I explore implications for both orientation professionals specifically as well as student affairs professionals generally. I conclude this chapter and the overall study by offering my own personal conclusions and insights from the work as well as outlining additional considerations for future inquiries regarding student orientation(s) and the field of student affairs. Broadly, I end this work by offering that this study demonstrates the value of integrating philosophical contemplation and analysis into an otherwise applied professional field of student affairs in order to interrogate the foundational claims, purposes, and intentions of our work.

Opening Space toward a Public Model of Student Orientation(s)

Influenced by writers like Arendt (1968), Ranciere (2009), and Biesta (2013), Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons have worked together on a variety of projects concerning the orientation of universities, resisting the current orientation of entrepreneurialism with an alternative orientation that reclaims the public nature of the university (Decuyper, Simons, & Masschelein, 2011; Masschelein, 2011; Masschelein & Simons, 2013; Simons & Masschelein, 2009a; Simons & Masschelein, 2009b; Simons & Masschelein, 2007). Throughout their various pieces, Masschelein and Simons are concerned with the unique contribution of universities as public entities as a means of developing alternative understandings of the role and purpose of universities in today's world. Biesta et al. (2009) provide a succinct explanation of the singular nature of the role and impact of higher education that is 'public' stating that a public institution "exceeds the interests of a particular individual or group, and for that reason turns it into a concern for 'the public' and turns a group of individuals into a public for the concern" (p. 252). There is then a dual transformation of individuals' issues into shared, public concerns and individuals themselves into a public of problem solvers.

As a starting point for new imaginings of 'public' higher education, they ask "what crisis are we facing today, and what does it reveal about the 'essence' of the university?" (Simons & Masschelein, 2009a, p. 205). Whether addressing the crisis of the modern definition of life (Masschelein, 1998) or the crisis of democratic citizenship (Simons & Masschelein, 2009a), the heart of their alternative vision of the university is the potential for the university to constitute a public space. Simons and Masschelein

(2009a) explain “from this viewpoint, the public university thus is a place where people and things gather to create a public: in sum, the university and its public” (p. 214). In Masschelein and Simons’ rendering of a ‘public’ university the very intention is bringing together multiple, embodied perspectives around one common table to address concerns and issues held in common by the public. In this way, a ‘public’ model is one that honors phenomenology by inviting the lived experience as a source of input, information, and analysis. A ‘public’ vision of higher education positions the space of campus as a phenomenological space of public forum where the lived issues of one can be brought forward and shared as a public concern; thus, a ‘public’ model is a model of phenomenological practice. Given the connection between a ‘public’ model of higher education and student orientation as phenomenological practice, an alternative ‘public’ model for student orientation must first define and situate what constitutes the ‘public’ in a public orientation.

Defining ‘Public’

A public model of student orientation must be grounded in a clear vision of the meaning of ‘public.’ Masschelein and Simons’ notion of public(s) is heavily influenced by Arendt’s (1968) distinction between private and public realms. For Arendt (1968), the private realm is the world of the home, the family, and the domestic; it is a place of nurture, protection, and growth—particularly for children. Conversely, Arendt’s (1968) public realm is the shared, political space of community, a public space that is messy, unpredictable, and chaotic from which children must be protected until maturation. While the private realm is one of withdrawal and safety, the public realm is a space of encounter

and convergence. Schutz in Gordon (2001) explains that for Arendt “a public space...is created when individuals come together in a particular way around an issue or object of common concern, something perhaps best understood as a ‘common project’” (p. 99). In the public realm, unique persons are invited to join with one another in communion over some issue of common interest. Embracing this Arendtian conceptualization of a public, “the realm of education constitutes an actual public space that brings together young people with partial perspectives; education for judgment emphasizes exposure to and interaction among these perspectives in order to spark imagination and critical reflection” (Smith in Gordon, 2001, p. 85). Education, then, can thus serve as a transitory position between the private world of home and the communal world of the public. It is from this framework that Masschelein and Simons’ work to untangle the ‘public’ of public higher education.

For Masschelein and Simons, their interest is in identifying the unique power and contribution of the ‘public’ portion of public education. Echoing Arendt’s public realm, Masschelein and Simons identify that the beauty and power of ‘public’ schooling is the capacity to bring together distinct individuals over ideas that are made common. Masschelein and Simons (2013) assert that the heart of “the public character of the school” is that public school is “the place where anything can happen because two generations are brought into contact in relation to ‘something’” (p. 93). Here, the school thus approximates a public realm as the new generation of students is brought together with the old generation of teachers over something that has been placed in common between them. More specifically, the two generations are brought together as knowledge

and ideas are made public. Knowledge is made public, or profane, when “‘capital’ (knowledge, skills, culture) is expropriated, released as a ‘common good’ for public use” (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 16). For example, knowledge is made public when it is removed from its strict professional usage and is brought to the shared, public table of discussion and deliberation. This invitation also sets a foundation of equality in the public realm: all individuals are equally encouraged to attend to the common concern of knowledge made public. Masschelein and Simons (2013) underscore this process in that “the school and the teacher bring something to the table—something that becomes a ‘public good’ and, consequently, places everyone in an equal initial situation and provides everyone the chance to begin” (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 62). For Masschelein and Simons, the ‘public’ within public education is thus a dual usage of the word; it is both education using knowledge that has been made public as well as education for and by the individuals that constitute the public. This double understanding of the ‘public’ in public education extends into public higher education as well, where the university is both a space made public and a space for ideas to be made public.

A public model of student orientation is a model that honors both of these renderings of ‘public.’ First, a public model of student orientation attends to the knowledge that is made public through higher education. Knowledge is made public when ideas have been freed from the previous generation’s usage and are brought forward as a shared, or common, concern. ‘Freed’ knowledge, in this context, is knowledge that has been detached, disconnected, or separated from preexisting expectations or explanations of knowledge as a given function of the past; freed

knowledge is no longer knowledge that is closed-off information as ‘it has always been’ based on previous generations’ interpretations; instead, freed knowledge is knowledge made public when shared with the new generation as an open-ended departure point for discovery and interpretation. In the standard model of student orientation, knowledge is not freely made a public, common interest; rather, knowledge deemed relevant by orientation professionals is unilaterally imparted from orientation professionals to new students without space for mutual discussion or concern. In the standard model, knowledge remains privatized in the sense that it is created and held by the institution, not open to public concern and input, and simply transferred to the new students arriving on campus.

A public model of student orientation, however, strives to make knowledge public—knowledge that can be taken up, questioned, and examined in dialogue between both the new generation of student arriving on campus and the old generation already there. Through engagement with knowledge made public, the new generation becomes members of the public realm. Masschelein and Simons (2013) explain, “it is precisely these public things—which, being public, are thus available for free and novel use—that provide the young generation with the opportunity to experience themselves as a *new* generation” (p. 38). In the standard model of student orientation, for example, higher education professionals in orientation use resources of existing knowledge like CAS or NODA to formulate the best combination of information to be disseminated to new students. New students, or quite literally the new generation, have little to no input into the content presented or explored at orientation programming outside allotted times for

small group, peer-lead discussion. As the standard model of student orientation introduces knowledge of an institution's old generation, meaning its professionals, to the new students with little opportunity for shared discussion beyond a question and answer session, a public model of student orientation facilitates a public realm where students, as a new generation, can join the table of public concern as a unique group of individuals through interaction with public knowledge. In the end, a public model of student orientation is public in a two-fold sense of the word through both engagement with public knowledge and the development of a public community or world. Indeed, Masschelein and Simons (2013) hold that "the world is made public at school" (p. 91), which provides a second point of consideration for a public model of student orientation.

The World in a Public Orientation

As referenced above, a critical component of the public school, university, and a public model of student orientation is the space and time for encounters between people, people and things, and people and the world. Masschelein and Simons write from an Arendtian frame in their understanding of 'the world.' Arendt (1968) provides an important foundation for her conceptualization of the world noting that the world is "something common to us all" (p. 175) and that "people of all ages are always simultaneously together in the world" (p. 178). While these may seem like simple enough statements, they actually convey a much deeper vision of the world than the place humans live. For Arendt, it is important to highlight that the world is something in common—it is shared. In this sharing, a necessary interaction emerges between those who have already been in the world and those who are new to it. The world is thus a

shared platform of interface between the old and the new. This interconnectedness is what supports the creation of living in relation to others, beyond the day-to-day work of biological survival. Levinson (2010) explains the importance of the world and its role in bringing individuals together:

Without a world, human existence would not have much significance. People would be so caught up in the business of living that there would be little reason, other than expedience and enjoyment, for people to come together. Human lives would be intensely meaningful to the people who live them, but they would have no greater significance. (474)

Echoing Arendt, Levinson holds that the ‘greater significance’ in life comes from people being able to face one another as community members of a shared world. More specifically, Arendt is concerned about those who are new to the world being able to face a world that existed before their arrival as well as those individuals already in the world.

Arendt (1968) places her attention on the status of children as newcomers born into a preexisting world. Levinson (2010) clarifies, “it is important to realize that these newcomers are not simply given ‘life’; they also have to be introduced to ‘a world’” (Levinson, 2010, p. 470). Beyond a strictly biological process of birthing new life, children are also brought into a world in which they live, and this process of renewal is, in turn, the process that supports the world. However, Arendt (1968) is particularly concerned with this dynamic between the old generation already living in the world and the new generating joining it and how the potential for renewal by the new generation is erased by the old generation. Arendt (1968) maintains:

It is in the very nature of the human condition that each new generation grows into an old world, so that to prepare a new generation for a new world can only mean that one wishes to strike from the newcomers' hands their own chance at the new. (p. 174)

Here, Arendt is illuminating the tension of renewing an old world constantly refilled by and shared with newcomers: to preserve the originality, or the natality, of the new generation neither is it enough to impose understandings of the old world as it already is upon the new generation nor is it appropriate to thrust the new generation into creation of a world on their own while ignoring the world that already exists. Rather, the new generation should be intentionally exposed to limited views of the old world that allow the new generation to take up the world in their own, unique ways—thus renewing our shared world. In this Arendtian view, the world is not referring to a geographical body of boundaries and borders but an open space of arrival and inquiry for those new to the world.

Connecting Arendt's notions of the world and newcomers, Masschelein (2011) hold that a public university “turns the world into a common thing” (p. 532). It is important to note that the world as a ‘common thing’ does not signify the idea of a world ‘held’ in common, but, a world that is a commons—a place of encounter between the new, the old, and the world. Echoing Ahmed's (2006) imagery, Masschelein and Simons (2010) speak of the world as a public table where both teacher and students can place “something on the table, as an act of deprivatization” (p. 545). At the table, the world is not simply a biological environment to be consumed by humans as zoological animals, but instead, the world provides the relational environments that supports life as

biographical, individual, new. Masschelein (1998) offers a directive to sustain this opening of the relational, human world stating: “do not forget the encounter, do not forget that life is always the life of someone” (p. 382).

By placing something on the public table, the world unfolds itself through the human world of encounters, encounters that confront us with a responsibility to respond. Masschelein (1998) furthers this point observing that “it is the appearance of someone else that opens the question of meaning for us. The question of meaning of our constructions, or our interpretations, is posed precisely when we ourselves are confronted by someone” (p. 379). With the appearance of an/other, an individual is challenged to reevaluate their position, values, beliefs as a response(ability) of this confrontation. Through confrontation, the common world coheres around a public domain where “the public is always a public of equals” (Simons & Masschelein, 2009a, p. 212). When the worldly table includes an open invitation of confrontation, there is no hierarchy of encounter; each person at the table carries the same impact as both the encountered and encounter-er. Understanding the shared world as the platform supporting encounters between the new and the old, what is the role of the world in a public model of student orientation?

A public model of student orientation is concerned with supporting the renewal of a world in common—a world as a public commons—between the old generation and the new. Indeed, student orientation, as an element of education, “is involved with those shared public processes of creating and sustaining a common world” (Smith in Gordon, 2001, p. 79). To claim a public model of student orientation, there must be a commitment

to renewing the common world through preservation of the natality of the new generation. In the standard model of student orientation, students are asked to orient themselves to the old, old in the sense of the institution as well as in the sense of the world. As these newcomers enter campus, the standard model forecloses on the potential for renewal by emphasizing alignment with the institution, and the world, as they already are. The new generation loses their potential to bring regeneration and restoration as the old is forced upon them through the orientation of the standard model. Arendt (1968) cautions against this foreclosure, warning that:

Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings; but precisely because we can base our hope only on this, we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look. (p. 189)

By dictating that new students orient themselves toward the old generation's conceptualizations of the world and of the individual institutions of higher education, the standard model of student orientation extinguishes the newcomers' potential for revitalizing the shared world. In a public model of new student orientation, the shared world must have an intentional role as keeping open the space of encounter between the old and the new. Rather than a prescription for orienting themselves toward the old world, a public model of student orientation may present the world to new students, without expectation of assimilation, in an open invitation to encounter others and the world as a community. A public model of student orientation supports Masschelein and Simons' (2009) vision of a public of equals where the old is no longer held as privileged above the new.

Scholé in the Public World

Maintaining the importance of the relationship between the individual and the world, education as scholé provides the interconnection between education and the world. Masschelein and Simons (2013) hold that scholé is defined as “free time, rest, delay, study, discussion, class, school, or a school house” (p. 27). Scholé is not to be understood as a time of simple pleasures or recreation. Instead, scholé represents a scholastic time. Time that is suspended, or freed, from the world; it is decoupled from demands of ‘home’ or ‘work’ to focus on study. Drawing from ancient Greek roots, Masschelein and Simons (2013) present a view of schools as scholé: “a time and space that was in a sense detached from the time and space of both society (Greek: polis) and the household (Greek: oikos)” (p. 28). Scholé, or the scholastic, is not synonymous with institutions or schools but it also does not ignore the role institutions play. Rather, scholé develops “education as a form of suspension...not destroying or denying anything, e.g. the past or the institutions, but is disorientating the institutions, interrupting the past” (Masschelein, 2011, p. 531). Not only interrupting the past, scholé also interrupts the future by suspending education that has specific, particular aims, like future employment.

By delinking education with future outcomes, scholé allows study for study’s sake. Masschelein (2011) is direct in holding that scholé “is the time without destination and without aim or end” (p. 530). In addition to time freed from demands of both the past and future, scholé also suspends knowledge from its everyday use, which makes knowledge public, or profane. Masschelein and Simons (2013) explain that profane things are “something that is detached from regular use, no longer sacred or occupied by

specific meaning...something that has become public...it is precisely these public things...that provide the young generation with the opportunity to experience themselves as a new generation” (p. 38). Through profanation, knowledge is not presented as fixed information ready for consumption but instead allows student to take up things as new beginnings or possibilities. Masschelein and Simons (2010) related profanation with “setting free, to dis-appropriation, de-privatization, and to common things, that is, things free from regular, ‘adult’ use and thus free for use” (p. 538). In the model of *scholé*, profane knowledge leads us out into encountering the world.

What might the conceptualization of *scholé* reveal about higher education and student orientation? The ideal of *scholé* sounds strikingly similar to the quintessential narrative of the residential college: graduating high school, leaving home, living away from the day-to-day demands of family or social life, and entering into an environment separate from the past demands of home or future demands of work to pursue learning for learning sake. Despite this idyllic potential, the standard model of student orientation actually works against the development of *scholé*. First, the standard model does not suspend the past demands of a student’s home life as parents and families are increasingly included in not just initial orientation programs, but also, through dedicated staff for parent and family programming throughout the year. Additionally, the standard model of student orientation is grounded in retaining student through graduation in preparation for future employment, which places future demands of public life on new students further eroding the potential for *scholé*. Finally, *scholé* requires ‘freed’ time—freed not only from the demands of home or of public life—but time literally freed for

study and learning. In the standard model of student orientation, the program schedule is filled from start to finish each day with events, activities, panels, sessions, and expos. There is little to no freed time for students to make their own discoveries about campus, even if these discoveries are profane, or removed from traditional, common usage.

On the other hand, a public model of student orientation requires an intentional commitment to fostering scholé. In this commitment, the critical phrase is ‘fostering’ in the sense of developing, promoting, and encouraging not necessarily prescribing, dictating, or enforcing it. Since any model of student orientation is not responsible for the entirety of the environment in higher education alone, a public model of student orientation cannot ensure the formation of scholé, but it can attend to and create conditions that may allow the scholastic to arise. A public model of orientation can support an ethos of scholé through a few deliberate changes. Foremost, a public model of orientation must incorporate space for ‘freed’ time. While impossible for student orientation to single-handedly suspend the pressures of home in our current national system of higher education, a public model of orientation can work to suspend the burdens of the future, public life by reestablishing higher education as scholastic time.

A public model of orientation would remove the emphasis on academic success and retention in preparation for future employment, and instead, it would highlight higher education as a time for ‘profane’ knowledge, for scholastic study removed from the constraints of a future profession, and for playful discussion about ideas. A public model of student orientation can also attend to ‘freed’ time by opening space in programming for students to literally have free time rather than packing students’ days with preplanned

events and activities for the entirety of their orientation experience. As a point of clarification, I am not suggesting throwing students into the wilderness of campus without any assistance, guidance, or connection; again, this would be akin to taking a compass from a hiker stranded in the woods. Instead, I am suggesting that orientation professionals—both full-time staff and undergraduate peers—might envision themselves as uncovering campus together with new students during unprogrammed moments. If staff are not running around intently focused on preparing for the next five events on the schedule, they, too, are freed to be in discovery with new students rather than simply providing a menu of entertainment options *for* new students. Freed programmatic time would encourage both students and staff to make sense of this ‘freed-dom’ together. In this way, campus might be opened up for students to explore, discover, and uncover the institution along multiple lines of encounter rather than a singular direction dictated by the standard model of orientation. A public model of student orientation encourages the potential for the emergence of *scholé* through the freeing of time for the scholastic, the suspension of both academic material as well as campus itself such that students might be lead out into an encounter with the shared world.

Scholé and E-ducere

Seeking to enable the new generation to lead themselves out into the world without mandates from the old generation, the ‘leading out’ process of *scholé* is a process of *e-ducere*. *E-ducere*’s “aim is not the production of knowledge or the acquisition of competencies, but the offering of opportunities to become attentive to what is going on today” (Simons & Masschelein, 2009b, p. 15). *E-ducere* leverages attention and curiosity

to be present with the world. Masschelein (2010) highlights the centrality of attention in that “attention is the state of mind in which the subject and the object are brought into play. It is a state of mind which opens up to the world in such a way that the world can present itself to me” (p. 44). Through this directed attention, one becomes present with the present in such a way that the present is open to direct and displace one’s own view. Masschelein (2010) offers the example of going on walk, not with a destination or purpose of arrival, but a walk which focuses on seeing the world, to illustrate the attention to and command of the present. For Masschelein (2010), *e-ducere* “offers means for getting out of position, so that the soul (the self) can be commanded by the road” (p. 50). Through *e-ducere*, walking becomes a wandering in which the individual’s inquisitiveness is brought to full attention with the present world rather than a lockstep march toward a fixed, final location. It is in this wandering that the world itself, or the road in the walking example, is able to interrupt and (re)direct an individual’s attention.

A public model of student orientation embraces the uncertainty and possibility of *e-ducere* by allowing the individual student to bring their present attention to campus such that the campus itself may speak back to and lead the individual into the world. In adopting *e-ducere* as a mode of encounter, how might a public model of orientation make time and space for students to encounter the world? To be present with the present? To answer these questions, I believe continuing the illustration of walking is apropos. In the standard model of student orientation, students do a lot of walking: walking from event to event, walking as part of a campus tour, walking from one building to the next. Does this mean that the standard model of orientation already includes *e-ducere*? The answer is a

resounding 'no.' In e-ducere, the emphasis is on being attentive to the world in the present moment by suspending the importance of predetermined endpoints so that our attention may bring us into encounter with the world.

Taking a deeper look at the role of walking in the standard model, the focus is always on arrival at a set time and place dictated by a program schedule. While there may be lots of walking, the standard model forecloses on the potential to be present by placing walking simply as the means to a future end: getting to the right place, staying on schedule, or learning the layout of campus. A public model of student orientation resists the impulse to focus on demands of the future including scheduled arrivals at prearranged locations by recentering the model's emphasis on the present. For example, a public model of student orientation may allot time for students to explore, adventure, and dare I say, orienteer around campus on their own. A public model might designate a point of convergence for this wandering time where, taking a page from the model of a Friends (Quaker) style of meeting, students can share, as they are so moved, what has been brought to their present attention during their wanderings.

These personal revelations can then be shared as a common, public points of interest and discussion between both new students and existing generations on campus. Instead of a rigid and fixed itinerary of topics and sessions, a public model of student orientation holds space for students to not just walk from here to there, but to wander without aim, without an agenda so that students may remain in the present. By allow students' attention to remain in the present, a public orientation that embraces e-ducere creates space for a circular, looping encounter between the individual and the world. In

the end, e-ducere directs students' attention to the present such that the world can present itself and (re)direct the individual.

Ultimately, a public model of student orientation provides a flexible, malleable alternative to the rigidity of the standard model. More specifically, a public model of student orientation focuses on opening spaces for encounter between the new generation of students arriving on campus and the existing institution and world such that the new generation may generate novel insights and interpretations of ideas, the institution, and the world itself. By suspending the language of higher education as preparation for future employment and by freeing time for students to discover the world, a public model of student orientation encourages an environment of *scholé* where students are 'freed' to study and explore for discovery's sake. Further, the freeing of students from demands of the past and future as a commitment to *scholé* allows student to be present in the world in a way that the student can be lead out into encounter with the world through their own curiosity and attention, which is the heart of e-ducere. While the standard model relies on an imposed series of programs planned by an old generation, a public model of student orientation strives to preserve the originality that new students bring to campus through a spirit of *scholé* supported by the process of e-ducere with the hope of renewal of a shared, public world.

Possibility and Implications for Practice

Having established an alternative interpretation and 'orientation' for a public model of student orientation(s), I now offer thoughts on whether or not this alternative is possible to realize. I use the 2006 film *Accepted* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink) as an

example of how a public model of student orientation may be able to develop. Although the shift to a public model of student orientation would be dramatic, I hold that it is possible given a pervasive commitment to accept and support the uncertainty of the university as a public commons opened to the natality of the new generation. Drawing from these conclusions, I explore implications for both orientation professionals, specifically, as well as student affairs professionals generally.

Possibility

While dwelling on alternatives is simple enough in abstraction, there must also be a consideration of the plausibility of such alternatives. How might we come to evaluate the potential of a public model of student orientation being put into practice? Here, I return to my dis/orientation archives for an unlikely source. While watching the film *Accepted* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006) for its depictions of student dis/orientation, I was surprised at how the film captured many components of a public model of student orientation. Given how absurd the fluidity of a public model sounds in contrast to the organization of the standard model, I thought it fitting that a fictional college comedy provide a template for how this alternative of student orientation might occur. The premise of the film is that after being rejected from every college to which he applied, the main character, Bartleby creates a fake college with some of his friends. Before launching full-force into analysis of the film's depiction of a public model of student orientation, it is important to note that at its core, this film is still a raunchy teen dramedy. Tellingly, the name of their newly created faux college is the *South Harmon Institute of Technology*, or *S.H.I.T.*, and their mascot is the *Shithead* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink,

2006), which could be a study unto itself about discursive acts and popular depictions of higher education. While the movie was undeniably not created to be the instantiation of a critical revisioning of higher education, the critical potential is still there—hidden just below the layers of otherwise conventional, crass popular humor.

The success of the film's capacity to illustrate a public model of student orientation rests in the contrast between the newly created campus of *South Harmon* and the longstanding elite campus of *Harmon College*. In this way, the movie serves as a sharp contrast between the standard model of student orientation represented by *Harmon College* and the public orientation of *South Harmon*. The first way in which *South Harmon* represents a public orientation is by its literal position toward the public in contrast to the exclusiveness of *Harmon College*. *Harmon College* is portrayed as an elite institution painted by a brief portrait given by Dean Van Horne, "do you know what makes Harmon a great college? Rejection. The exclusivity of any university is judged primarily by the amount of students it rejects" (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). In sharp contrast to this attitude, every student who applies through the (unintentionally functional) admission page for *South Harmon* is admitted. From the outset, *South Harmon* creates a public space by inviting all members of the community into discussion about a common interest in higher education.

Not only does *South Harmon* demonstrate the formation of a public space, it also makes knowledge public by suspending it from the standard model's reliance on appropriate academic disciplines and majors of study. Speaking about an upcoming campus renovation project, Dean Van Horne says the purpose of the project is to "to keep

knowledge in, and ignorance out” (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). In this statement, Dean Van Horne is implying that knowledge is only knowledge within the confines of the college’s infrastructure and that anything that lays outside the college exists in a state of ignorance. Here, knowledge is not made public but kept within the confines of the old generation’s understanding of knowledge and ignorance. On the other hand, Bartleby uses a different method to approach knowledge and its presentation at *South Harmon*—he asks the other students what they want to study and co-create the curriculum to be offered at *South Harmon*. While rife with absurdities expected in a college comedy, the public collectively creates the vision for the knowledge that will be studied at *South Harmon* based on the collected, common interests of the student body. Bartleby is emphatic about this decision exclaiming, “all our lives we’ve been told what to learn. Well, today, the tide is gonna turn, my friends. Because today, we’re going to ask...” (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). In this way, knowledge is made public at *South Harmon* as it is brought forth to the table of shared, public interest. In advance of an accreditation hearing (that is completely unrealistic in comparison with the real process, but let us indulge a willing suspension of disbelief for the sake of this thought experiment) for the college, Bartleby makes the public orientation of *South Harmon* even more transparent when asking himself, “the state defines a college as a body of people with a shared common purpose of a higher education. Well, that’s us, isn’t it?” (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). For Bartleby, the purpose of *South Harmon* is not to develop the most prestigious, elite college, like *Harmon College*; the purpose is to create a public space where a shared interest in higher education can be questioned, explored, and examined.

Building on the public nature of *South Harmon* and its demonstration of a public model of student orientation, the world as the shared platform for human encounter is an additional focal point of the college. In the standard model of student orientation, the world is closed off from encounter as the old generation casts their old world onto a new generation. This is vividly illustrated in *Accepted* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006) through the secondary character, Schrader, who is accepted to attend *Harmon College* like his father and the three generations of family before him. Throughout the film, Schrader is portrayed pursuing the *Harmon College* experience in line with his father's own experience including participation in fraternity recruitment despite the hazing and humiliation of the process. In this way, Schrader cannot confront the world as the place of encounter between the new and old because he is pursuing the world as presented by his father. On the other hand, *South Harmon* maintains a space for the world as the space of encounter between the old and the new generation.

In perhaps my favorite line of the movie, Dean Lewis is shown with the second class of *South Harmon* students after receiving a probationary accreditation; Dean Lewis's monologue welcoming students to the institution begins with him bellowing "this is not your orientation. This is your disorientation. You have been orientated for years!" (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). Dean Lewis goes on to warn students not ask him what they are supposed to do or how things are supposed to be on campus but challenges students to work through it on their own and as a community. In this way, Dean Lewis is offering an invitation for these new students to join him, as a representation of the old generation, in navigating the world as shared.

Finally, *South Harmon* demonstrates an atmosphere of scholé with freed time to engage in e-ducere. Although not naming it as such, Bartleby gives an impassioned speech on behalf of *South Harmon* during their accreditation hearing that speaks toward their support of education in the model of scholé. Posing a question to the parents in the audience, Bartleby asks, “did the system really work out for you? Did it teach you to follow your heart, or to just play it safe, roll over?” and further that *Harmon College* “can have [their] grades, and [their] rules, and [their] structure and [their] ivory towers, and then we’ll do things our way” (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). Implicitly, Bartleby is critiquing higher education that is simply seen as checkbox of achievement along the pathway to adulthood—higher education that ‘plays it safe’ with rules, structure, and ivory towers—while offering a vision of higher education in line with the passion, freedom, and curiosity of scholé. Indeed, it is this spirit of scholé that results in *South Harmon’s* probationary accreditation as Chairman Alexander states “the true purpose of education is to stimulate the creativity and the passions of the study body” as rationale for their conditional accreditation (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006). While the movie absolutely includes outlandish depictions of certain parts of higher education—like the accreditation process—a willingness to look beneath the superficial elements of the film *Accepted* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006) provides a surprisingly refreshing portrayal of higher education that aligns with a public model of student orientation.

Implications for Practice

While *Accepted* (Shadyac, Bostick, & Pink, 2006) is obviously a work of fiction through film, it still holds important implications for student affairs practice, both for

those who work in orientation specifically and those who work in field at large. Even though student affairs professionals do not have the unfettered latitude that Bartleby and his team have in creating *South Harmon*, we can still take inspiration from their approach in order to make changes that preserve the potential for renewal by new generations of students as well as changes that construct spaces that support the emergence of ‘freed,’ scholastic time.

Orientation Professionals. Orientation professionals do not singlehandedly direct the full ‘orientation’ of the standard model; however, their position as gatekeepers of the schedule and process of orientation programming means they are in a strategic place to effect transformation from the standard model of student orientation toward a public model of student orientation. As outlined in Chapter Two, the standard model of orientation is concerned with providing students with the appropriate information needed for them to acclimate and assimilate successfully to campus. Underlying this model is the professional preoccupation with ‘giving’ students information that is deemed necessary by trained practitioners. Taken from a vantage of phenomenological practice, the standard model of orientation involves the old generation dictating information to the new generation. Like *Harmon College* and its interest in keeping ignorance ‘out,’ the standard model forecloses on the potential of a shared world in favor of mandated assimilation to the old; in this way, the old generation, represented by orientation professionals, undercuts the new generation of incoming students.

Instead, orientation professionals might take a cue from Dean Lewis and rather than preemptively prescribing information for students, extend an invitation for students

to bring their shared concerns to a public table of discovery. Practically, perhaps this looks like ‘freeing’ the time of orientation schedules such that students might encounter the world of campus on their own through moments of e-ducere. By freeing time, students’ concerns may arise naturally as they are confronted and directed by campus in the present moment of their arrival. Students can then bring their interests together as a public in a shared world where the old and new interface as equals. For orientation professionals, a public model of student orientation offers opportunities to reimagine the standard model’s tendency to dictate knowledge that orientation professionals ascribe on new students by allowing for student discovery of concerns, needs, and issues that can then be addressed collaboratively among a community of equal participants.

Student Affairs. In addition to the specific implications a public model of student orientation offers for orientation professionals, there are also key considerations for all practitioners within student affairs. Within the field, there has been an ongoing conversation about articulating and justifying our impact on campus, especially to our counterparts within the academic side of the house. While there has been no single method for successfully bridging this divide, a public mode of student orientation may help through opportunities to support and foster the scholastic in promotion of scholé. While orientation professionals may engage in the freeing of time from a programmatic perspective, student affairs practitioners at large can be engaged in freeing knowledge into public concerns. Across campuses, there is increasing pressure to link student development and engagement with concerns for future participation in a democratic citizenry. While this language sounds attractive, it is a form of placing the future

demands of public life on education and placing knowledge only within its future use as a professional in a given field of study; thus, knowledge is no longer freed, or public.

Student affairs professionals can work to resist framing knowledge and learning as solely linked to purposes of future employment and civic participation. Instead, student affairs professionals can work to foster a suspension of knowledge that encourages scholastic activity rather than anchoring all learning in its future application. In this way, profane and public knowledge is removed from professional preparation for shared analysis and inquiry between the new and old generations on campus. For student affairs professionals, adopting a stance of *scholé* may then provide a language with which to articulate our work to colleagues on the academic side of the university who may already identify their work as a scholastic endeavor.

Personal Conclusions and Invitations for Future Inquiry

With an exploration of possibility and its implications, I conclude this chapter, and the overall study, by offering my own personal conclusions and insights from the work as well as outlining additional considerations for future inquiries regarding student orientation(s) and the broader field of student affairs.

Personal Conclusions

First, I can conclude without hesitation that this work has met my aspiration to develop a piece that would push me to and past my own conceptual limits. In building this study, I hoped to craft something creative, personal, and unique that would encourage me to really work beyond the disciplinary boundaries of both educational philosophy and student affairs. Throughout the writing process, this study demanded my own willingness

to question and challenge a field that is my professional foundation. Prior to embarking on this project, I felt comfortable questioning small components of student affairs practice, like assessing student leader trainings for areas of improvement, but the idea of examining the entire function of ‘orientation’ itself was daunting at best. Particularly, my choice to take up student orientation felt a bit like prodding a golden calf given that I completed my graduate coursework in student affairs with one of the most prominent scholars of orientation, Dr. Richard Mullendore. This study challenged me to let go of my vision of student affairs as I had known it in my master-level graduate work and to step outside the professional training I had received at UGA. By lacing together my own experiences, graduate program and doctoral work, I believe I have successfully traveled back and forth over the boundaries between my doctoral passion of educational philosophy and the applied practice of student affairs presented in my graduate preparation program.

Additionally, this work illustrates that even within a field that focuses primarily on applied practice, like the field of student affairs, philosophical attention can highlight previously covered-up assumptions, tensions, and limitations. Traditionally, student affairs has been a field primarily concerned with applied practice given that there really are students on campuses with needs and concerns and student affairs has been the area responsible for addressing them. This prioritization of the practical, functional, and pragmatic makes sense—especially when working as a student affairs professionals. In my time as a Coordinator for Residence Life, there was little time for philosophy when there were 350 students living in my building all with their own questions, problems, and

concerns for which I was ultimately responsible for addressing. It is easy to get lost in the hustle and bustle of campus life when your days are back-to-back student meetings, administrative responsibilities, and crisis response. However, as our field continues to evolve, it is critical that we develop a stance of professional reflexivity and philosophical contemplation about what our work is doing on campus and for whom. If we are to ensure that our practice is, indeed, holistic and intentional for our students, we ourselves must make space to wrestle with philosophy as professionals.

Finally, I hold that if the field of student affairs is serious about serving students through caring, just, and equitable higher education experiences, then student affairs must also take seriously the challenge of philosophical contemplation. I completed my graduate program in student affairs at one of the top programs in the field; however, we did not ever broach issues of educational philosophy aside from a passing mention of the influence of John Dewey. Does this mean student affairs has no philosophical grounding? No philosophical commitments towards its definitions of education, learning, and student development? Hardly. Failing to include the philosophical does not mean philosophy is not present in the field; instead, it means that our profession will continue to uphold assumptions and beliefs that we may not intend, such as the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of student orientation. Further, we run the risk that these unchecked assumptions support oppressive campus environments and social systems, like the standard model of student orientation’s implication of asking all NCSU students, especially new students of color, to orient themselves toward/around institutions rooted in whiteness and white supremacy by signing about the ‘winds of Dixie’ at Convocation. This implication stands

in stark contrast to the espoused values of our field including caring, benefice, and doing no harm (CAS, 2009). Indeed, if student affairs continues to ignore the philosophical elements present in our work, we gamble with remaining a closed loop, participating in the very systems of oppression we espouse to challenge that might be overlooked without insight or input derived from philosophical contemplation.

Future Inquiry

Taking this study as a model for departure, there are an innumerable number of pathways future inquiry may travel with regard to higher education and student affairs; however, I will highlight the potential for future study regarding: the field at large, student affairs preparation programs, and trends in higher education. First, this study focused on one functional area within the larger field of student affairs, but future analyses may expand this specialized focus to the work of student affairs as a larger profession. Particularly drawing from Ahmed (2012), future inquiries might ask ‘what does student affairs work *do*?’ Like the way Ahmed (2012) follows diversity work within higher education to reveal the ways in which institutions invoke diversity without committing to action or change, how might tracing student affairs as phenomenological work expose similar disconnections or sources of tension? Perhaps, another direction for future work is to ask what is a ‘student’ affair? What emerges if we follow the ‘student’ in student affairs? What spaces arise on campus as spaces ‘for’ these student affairs? Which are not? What is the significance of having professionals that direct, manage, and otherwise oversee ‘student’ affairs?

Utilizing an Ahmed-inspired approach of hermeneutic phenomenology, there is ample potential for upcoming investigations to consider the field of student affairs at large. In addition to future study of student affairs as a larger profession, this study also provides insight for future inquiry regarding student affairs preparation graduate programs. Throughout my analysis, I focused on the ‘orientation’ of the standard model of orientation, and in Chapter Two, I provided the professional context from which orientation emerged as well as the ways in which orientation professionals plan and implement orientation programming. While I focused on the implications of orientation for and on students, future studies might ask, what is the ‘orientation’ of orientation professionals? Given that a graduate degree is becoming a required credential for higher education administration professional, like orientation staff, how are future orientation professionals ‘oriented’ by student affairs preparation programs? Who may be disoriented?

The use conceptual archiving is an appropriate method to support these types of emerging inquiries—particularly as these archives might include professional preparation sources like course syllabi, required readings, or competency standards set by the field’s national, professional associations. What materials reappear in syllabi across multiple preparation programs? Through implementation of conceptual archiving, how might a dis/orientation archive help illuminate the orientation devices of student affairs preparation programs? The exploration of student affairs preparation programs as phenomenological practice may yield significant implications for higher education program faculty members, such as choices regarding curriculum development. Like the

role of graduate-level preparation programs in student affairs, there are additional layers of inquiry that my study did not take up and, thus, provide routes for further analysis. Finally, this study also highlights how a public university orientation can be leveraged to develop novel interpretations of prominent trends in higher education that may otherwise be dismissed with singular explanations.

For example in this work, I sought to uncover the ‘orientation’ of student orientation, which had previously been explained only through a focus on imparting knowledge to students to assist them in appropriately adapting to the college campus. This singular rationale within the standard model of student orientation obscured the ‘orientation’ of the model itself—the specific institution—and why this model fails to cohere for some students. Similarly, additional studies can leverage a public orientation to develop additional explanations for other trends and practices on campus with solitary justifications. Aligning with the prominence of the rhetoric of belonging and engagement, many campuses are developing and hosting large-scale social events, like campus-wide concerts. The point of view supporting the creation and implementation of such events is that big events can generate mass appeal and result in widespread campus involvement.

However, a public orientation might cast a different light on these ‘social’ events as instances of consumerism. Levinson (2010) addresses the impact of consumer culture on the world arguing that “consumer society actually fosters an astonishing passivity in relation to the world...mostly because consumerism accustoms us to thinking about the world as something to be used rather than collectively shaped” (p. 478). From the point of view of a public orientation, how are campus events forms of consumer society? How

might these events foster a 'passivity' to the shared world of campus? What might stand in the place of large scale-social events? For future research, a public orientation in higher education illustrates the spaces in which student affairs may hide multiple meanings of trends, events, and programs that are traditionally supported through a single explanation within the field. Ultimately, it is my hope that this work serves as a source of inspiration for student affairs practitioners and scholars to invite the philosophical into our practice.

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- Whedon, J. (Writer) & Whedon, J. (Director). (1999). The freshman [Television series episode]. In J. Whedon (Producer), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Los Angeles, CA: Mutant Enemy Productions.
- Wilder, C. S. (2013). *Ebony and Ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. NY: Bloomsbury Press.
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- Yang, A. (Writer) & Holofcener, N. (Director). (2013). The Pawnee-Eagleton tip-off classic [Television series episode]. In M. Sackett & A. Poehler (Producer), *Parks and Recreation*. Los Angeles, CA: Deedle-Dee Productions.

APPENDIX A

COMPREHENSIVE REFERENCE LIST OF ALL TV SERIES AND MOVIES
INCLUDED IN THE DIS/ORIENTATION ARCHIVES

- Abrams, J. J. (Writer) & Reeves, M. (Director). (1998). Pilot [Television series episode]. In J. J. Abrams & M. Reeves (Producer), *Felicity*. Burbank, CA: Touchstone Television.
- Apatow, J. (Writer) & Kasdan, J. (Director). (2001). Prototype [Television series episode]. In J. Apatow (Producer), *Undeclared*. Los Angeles, CA: Apatow Productions.
- Aronson, E. (Writer) & Higuera, M., & Melman, J. (Director). (1993). Pilot [Television series episode]. P. Engel (Producer), *Saved by the Bell: The College Years*. Universal City, CA: Peter Engle Productions & NBC Productions.
- Bernard, S., D'Amico, K., Spillman, D., & Zahavi, N. (Producer), & Glazer, H. (Director). (2009). *Van Wilder: Freshman Year* [motion picture]. United States: Paramount Famous Productions.
- Brooks, P., Handelman, M., & Banks, E. (Producer), & Moore, J. (Director). (2012). *Pitch Perfect* [motion picture]. United States: Universal Pictures.
- Cannon, N. (Producer), & Woodruff, B. (Director). (201). *Drum Line: A New Beat* [motion picture]. United States: Fox Television Studios.
- Davis, J., Karz, M., & Godfrey, W. (Producer), & Whitaker, F. (Director). (2004). *First Daughter* [motion picture]. United States: 20th Century Fox.
- Falconer, E. (Writer), & Robbins, B. (Director). (2010). It's called hazing, look it up [Television series episode]. In E. Falconer & C. Ramano (Producer), *Blue Mountain State*. Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate.
- Gamble, S., McNamara, J. (Writers), & Cahill, M. (Director). (2015). Unauthorized magic [Television series episode]. In M. Engle (Producer), *The Magicians*. Los Angeles: McNamara Moving Company.
- Halsed, D., Merjos, S., & Nazarian (Producer), & Shiraki, R. (Director). (2004). *Freshman Orientation* [motion picture]. United States: Element Films.

- Harmon, D. (Writer) & Russo, A., & Russo, J (Directors). (2009). Pilot [Television series episode]. In Foster, G. (Producer), *Community*. Los Angeles, CA: Krasnoff/Foster Entertainment.
- Johanson, F. (Producer), & Newell, M. (Director). (2003). *Mona Lisa Smile* [motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures.
- Kohan, D., & Mutchnick, M (Writers) & Widdoes, J. (Director). (1996). Pilot [Television series episode]. D. Kohan & M. Mutchnick (Producers), *Boston Common*. Los Angeles, CA: KoMut Entertainment, Castle Rock Entertainment, & Columbia TriStar Television.
- Lee, S. (Producer), & Lee, S. (Director). (1988). *School Daze* [motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures.
- Levin, L., & Mumford, T. (Writers) & Falcon, E. (Director). (1987). Reconcilable differences [Television series episode]. In M. Carsey & T. Werner (Producers), *A Different World*. Encino, CA: Carsey-Werner Productions.
- Menell, J. (Writer) & Russ, W. (Director). (1998). Ain't college great [Television series episode]. In M. Jacobs (Producer), *Boy Meets World*. Studio City, CA: Michael Jacobs Productions.
- Murphy, R., Falchuk, B., & Brennen, I. (Writers) & Murphy, R. (Director). (2015). Pilot [Television series episode]. In B. M. Berg & R. M. Williams, Jr., (Producers), *Scream Queens*. Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Television, Inc.
- Nowalk, P. (Writer) & Offer, M. (Director). (2014). Pilot [Television series episode]. In S. Rhimes (Producer), *How to Get Away with Murder*. Los Angeles, CA: ShondaLand.
- Palladino, D. (Writer) & Long, C. (Director). (2003). The Lorelais' first day at Yale [Television series episode]. In A. Sherman-Palladino (Producer), *Gilmore Girls*. Los Angeles, CA: Dorothy Parker Drank Here Productions.
- Platt, M., & Kidney, R. (Producer), & Luketic, R. (Director). (2001). *Legally blonde* [motion picture]. United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- Rae, K. (Producer), & Scanlon, D. (Director). (2013). *Monsters University* [motion picture]. United States: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Reitman, I., & Simmons, M. (Producer), & Landis, J. (Director). (1978). *National Lampoon's Animal House* [motion picture]. United States: Universal Pictures.

- Rudin, S., Brunetti, D., De Luca, M., & Chaffin, C. (Producer), & Sorkin, A. (Director). (2010). *The Social Network* [motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures.
- Shadyac, T., & Bostick, M. (Producer), & Pink, S. (Director). (2006). *Accepted* [motion picture]. United States: Universal Pictures.
- Singleton, J., & Hall, P. (Producer), & Singleton, J. (Director). (1995). *Higher Learning* [motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures.
- Smith, P. S. (Writer) & Junger, G. (Director). (2007). Pilot [Television series episode]. In L. Segan & S. Piller (Producer), *Greek*. Los Angeles, CA: Piller/Segan Company.
- Thomas, R. (Writer) & Kretchmer, J. (Director). (2006). Welcome wagon [Television series episode]. In R. Thomas (Producer), *Veronica Mars*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Television.
- Weiss, L. (Writer) & Miner, S. (Director). (2015). And it cannot be changed [Television series episode]. In W. H. Brown & S. Whilt (Producer), *Switched at Birth*. Los Angeles, CA: Pirates' Cove Entertainment.
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- Yang, A. (Writer) & Holofcener, N. (Director). (2013). The Pawnee-Eagleton tip-off classic [Television series episode]. In M. Sackett & A. Poehler (Producer), *Parks and Recreation*. Los Angeles, CA: Deedle-Dee Productions.