

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

EXAMINING THE CURRICULAR APPROACH IN STUDENT AFFAIRS
AS A TOOL FOR CRITICAL PRAXIS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Norman, Oklahoma
2023

EXAMINING THE CURRICULAR APPROACH IN STUDENT AFFAIRS
AS A TOOL FOR CRITICAL PRAXIS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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DEDICATION

In memory of my grandfathers.

In honor of my grandmothers.

Dedicated to the Wild Rumpus:

Theo, Leo, Maxwell, Aiden, Olivia, Rowan, Maxton, Brinley, Oscar, Barrett, and Bennett.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have such gratitude for the life that has surrounded me on this journey full of starts and stops...and starts again. I have been surrounded by love, care, and patience at every turn. This is not *my* work, but the work of the communities who have raised me.

First, my unending thanks to my colleagues in Student Affairs at the University of Oklahoma. I have grown up with you, learned from you, struggled and grieved with you, and rejoiced and celebrated with you. I know that who I am as a practitioner, and certainly what I understand as important in our field, is due to your intentionality and care in this work. Thank you to the staff of the Gender + Equality Center (Crissy, Amber, Liv, Jerry, Quan, and Ann) for encouraging me and forever asking me if they can block my calendar for me. To Kristen Partridge, thank you for being the most unwavering source of support, encouragement, and the greatest paper products on the market. Your kindness knows no bounds and I am a grateful recipient.

My gratitude to the committee members who engaged in this work with me. To Dr. Siduri Haslerig, my thanks for taking the reins. Thank you to Dr. Michele Eodice who has supported my writing for years, but who has supported me as a person for much longer. Thank you to Dr. Junghee Choi for agreeing to join this circle at the 11th hour and helped me to cross the finish line. Finally, thank you to Dr. David Surratt who has engaged in double duty as both committee member and Vice President—your reflective care, support, and unending enthusiasm for our shared work are a source of inspiration. Additional thanks to Dr. Sara Grummert whose help was an actual saving grace.

I am so grateful for the thinking partners that also serve as the greatest friends and family. Thank you to my colleagues at the Institute for the Curricular Approach who inspire me

regularly. Moira Ozias and Z Nicolazzo, your unwavering support for me as a practitioner-scholar but more importantly as a friend and person is such a gift to treasure. My love to Jenny Sperling, who I am so grateful found a home here in Oklahoma. My gratitude to Ann Schafer, a fierce scholar and friend who shows up in the best ways. And to Quan Phan, my greatest thinking partner in all things curriculum, the designer of most of my thoughts and all of my slides, all of the *feelings*.

To my family of origin who have lifted me out of every slump and reminded me at every turn that I am their favorite, the words “thank you” feel insufficient. This achievement would not be possible without Wild Rumpuses with Theo, Leo, Maxwell, Aiden, Olivia, Rowan, Maxton, Brinley, Oscar, Barrett, and Bennett. No matter any other title I’ll earn here—Aunt Erin will always be my favorite. My siblings, Andrea, Sam, Adam, John, and Kristan, have cheered me on at every turn. My parents’ unending faith in my ability is a humbling gift that I will continue to endeavor to be worthy of. To my mother Ann and my stepdad Steve, thank you for an early understanding of community care that has translated into how I live my life. To my dad, John Paul, thank you for showing me what selfless service to family and community can be.

Finally, to my platonic life partners, the truest loves of my life, and most constant examples of endless support, care, and love—Abby, Amanda, Christina, Jenn, and Lauren— who have shown up at every twist and turn in the past two decades of our lives to encourage me and remind me I am deeply loved: your constant encouragement and insistence that this was possible have paid off. There aren’t enough words...but thank you forever.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative content analysis examines the integration of theoretical frameworks and critical praxis in the curricular approach within student affairs. Data from three departmental curricula at a single institution were analyzed to explore the elements of curriculum design that reflect critical praxis and how theoretical models and frameworks are implemented. The research questions guiding this study focused on identifying the impact of theoretical frameworks on curriculum design and the role of critical praxis for student affairs practitioners.

Despite the lack of explicit guidance on theory selection and integration in curriculum design spaces and the limited attention given to theory application within the curricular approach in higher education literature, this study underscores that the selection of an inherently critical theoretical framework has a significant influence on staff engagement in critical praxis. The findings underscore the importance of grounding curriculum in a critical framework that addresses power dynamics across learning goals and outcomes, advocating for a move towards collective action.

The profession of student affairs has increasingly emphasized justice-oriented practice and challenging the status quo. However, there is a need for practitioners to bridge the gap between individual-level student development and the larger sociocultural contexts in which they operate. The study suggests that to answer this call, theories that engage criticality and foster collective action and reflection must be utilized in curriculum design.

The study also highlights the role of student affairs organizations in shaping practitioners' ability to engage in critical praxis. It identifies the tension between the espoused values of the field and individual practitioners' enactment of those values. While professional associations and graduate preparation programs emphasize social justice and inclusion as competency areas, there

is a danger of perceiving expertise in critical work as a static goal, hindering ongoing critical reflection. The findings emphasize the need for practitioners to continuously reflect on their practice and engage with theoretical frameworks to inform curriculum development and learning goals.

Based on the study's findings, three implications for practice are presented. First, theoretical frameworks must move towards collective action to align with the field's goals, moving beyond the sole focus on individual student development. Second, scholars and practitioners should collaborate to produce research on critical praxis in student affairs, with practitioners uniquely positioned to contribute insights from their day-to-day experiences. Third, practitioners need to deeply engage with theoretical frameworks to design curriculum and inform learning goals and strategies, recognizing the transformative power of critical theories on individuals, institutions, and policies.

The study concludes by emphasizing the need for future research to explore the execution of curricula and assess whether learning goals and outcomes are met. It calls for a focus on practitioners' role in shaping student experiences and the complexities they face in navigating student needs, institutional policies, and external pressures while promoting critical practices. Additionally, the study highlights the necessity of developing assessment practices grounded in reflexivity and centered on equity, challenging the neoliberal tendencies in the field. Ultimately, this research aims to inspire conversations and advancements in enacting critical praxis in conjunction with the curricular approach within student affairs, for the benefit of current and future students, as well as practitioners in the field.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I was sitting in an uncomfortable metal chair in a freezing cold Marriott ballroom in South Carolina. My work best friend, LaVonya, sat next to me, neither of us speaking. She was coloring in a doodle we had created nervously over breakfast. We sat taking in the mass of housing and residence life folks around us—many of whom seemed to know each other—at our first Residential Curriculum Institute. “Have you attended this before?” and “Do you know anything about this? My director sent me...” were common refrains among our new table acquaintances. The first presenters rose to speak, to kick off our time at the institute with a plenary about the overall approach. Keith Edwards, one of the presenters, said we as an audience would find this approach “simple, but revolutionary” (Edwards & Gardner, 2013). He cautioned the audience that in his experience, practitioners with more experience found shifting to this approach more challenging, while early career professionals were more willing to modify their practice. I remember turning to LaVonya and whispering, “that’s not us—this is going to be great.” By the end of the morning, I was panicking—how could we possibly change everything about what we do and shift to some learning-centered practice when that had never been our focus? Would staff even do that? Would students show up? How does this actually work and where is the fun? LV calmly listened to me ramble and finally interrupted and said, “remember when he said it would be harder if you’re old?” I burst into uncomfortable laughter and promised to listen for the rest of the Institute.

Introduction

Kathleen Kerr and James Tweedy originated the curricular approach in their residence life work at the University of Delaware because “the challenge to hold [themselves] accountable

for intentional, planned, and structured learning experiences moved [them] from an exposure to a learning paradigm” (Kerr & Tweedy, 2006, p. 11). Kerr, Tweedy, Edwards, and Kimmel (2017) followed up on their *About Campus* article a decade later, further refining the notion of a residential curriculum and expanding its applicability as a curricular approach to all student affairs work. Later, Kerr, Edwards, Tweedy, Lichterman, and Knerr offered a useful definition of the approach:

A curricular approach aligns the mission, goals, outcomes, and practices of a student affairs division, department, or other units that work to educate students beyond the classroom with those of the institution and organizes intentional and developmental sequenced strategies to facilitate student learning. (2020, p. 12)

Originally focused solely on departments of housing and residence life, this approach led to the establishment of the ACPA College Student Educators International’s Residential Curriculum Institute (RCI) in 2007 (Brown, n.d.). This has since expanded to entire divisions of student affairs and their related departments, resulting in a renaming of the Institute to the Institute on the Curricular Approach, also known as ICA (E. Simpson, personal communication, February 22, 2018). Since then, the curricular approach has become increasingly common and popular at institutions of higher education (Lichterman, 2015; Kerr et al., 2020). The curricular approach is the next evolution in a field that has long contributed to the academic mission of the institution.

The History of Student Affairs as a Field

Every profession has a history and an origin story—student affairs is no different. The origin story of student affairs is steeped in the western, white, male context of the colonial college era. American higher education was different from its worldwide counterparts from the

beginning; it focused on the character development of students in addition to scholarship (Komives & Woodard, 2003). Colonial colleges operated under the doctrine of *in loco parentis* (literally “in place of the parent”) and created strict guidelines to manage students closely (Long, 2012). By the 1900s, faculty engagement in student life had significantly diminished. Elizabeth Nuss (2003) states that “the paternalism associated with colonial colleges ... had given way to almost complete indifference” (p. 5).

Therefore, the origin of the student affairs field might best be dated to the hiring of administrators who were primarily responsible for the welfare and behavior of students. While many may credit LeBaron Russell Briggs, who served as dean “for students” at all-male Harvard from 1890 to 1930 (Schwartz, 2010) as the first student affairs administrator, it was likely Marianne Dascombe, who became principal of Oberlin College’s Female Department in 1834 (Bashaw, 1999). The position of the dean of men seems to have largely resulted because of the success of the deans of women (Herdlein, 2005; Schwartz, 2010). These positions—deans of women and deans of men—are the direct ancestors of the modern student affairs educator (Hevel, 2016).

Many of what we understand as traditional functions of the student affairs profession emerged in the early 20th century (Long, 2012). Brubacher and Rudy (1976) observed that “in the years following World War I, the student personnel movement gained national recognition and professional stature. It was becoming self-conscious, confident, and widely influential” (p. 336). In 1937, the American Council on Education published *The Student Personnel Point of View: A Report of a Conference on the Philosophy and Development of Student Personnel Work in College and University*. This landmark report emphasized the education of the whole student—intellect, spirit, and personality—and insisted that attention must be paid to the

individual needs of each student (ACE, 1937). The report was revised in 1949 and proposed a comprehensive suite of student services representing thirty-three functional areas (ACE, 1949). The guidelines proposed from the Student Personnel Point of View provided the philosophical and organizational foundations for the student affairs profession today (Nuss, 2003).

History of Student Development Theory

The field's professionalization was asserted in 1937 with the *Student Personnel Point of View* urging the field to move toward student development. The 1950s saw a call for theory (Rhoades & Black, 1995). As described by Widick, Knefelkamp, and Parker (1980): "We [student personnel professionals] did not have theoretical models that could effectively describe college students and provide us with a coherent picture of individual development—a theory on which we could base our practice" (p. 75). The end of the "in loco parentis" era of higher education in the 1960's signaled a need to reframe student affairs work. In 2016, scholars Susan Jones and D-L Stewart conceptualized the evolution of student development theory as a series of waves (Humm, 1995), a metaphor borrowed from feminist scholars. Jones and Stewart (2016) posit that the "first wave" is foundational, oriented around psychological and developmental theory. The "second wave" is a more contemporary understanding of diverse populations, social identities, and holistic views (Jones & Stewart, 2016). This gives way to the "third wave" that applies critical and poststructural perspectives to an understanding of student development (Jones & Stewart, 2016).

The 1937, *Student Personnel Point of View* framed the profession and importantly emphasized the development of the whole student as a central goal of higher education (Evans et al., 2010). Early theorists in the emerging field of student development framed a series of

questions that would construct the knowledge base of the field (Knefelkamp, et al., 1978). The questions included:

1. Who is the college student in developmental terms? What changes occur and what do those changes look like?
2. How does development occur? What are the psychological and social processes that cause development?
3. How can the college environment influence student development? What factors in the particular environment of a college/university can either encourage or inhibit growth?
4. Toward what end should development in college be directed? (Knefelkamp et al., 1978, p. x)

The 1960s and 70s saw a rise in student development theory that served as the first wave of theorizing (Jones, 2019). The work, as advanced by theorists such as Chickering (1969), Erickson (1968), Kohlberg (1981), Perry (1968), and Sanford (1962) focused on human development and influenced the nature and goals of student affairs. Later, the work of Astin (1984) and Tinto (1987) encouraged practitioners to think about campus involvement as a measure of academic performance and retention. These foundational developmental theories can be organized into “families” of theory (Jones & Stewart, 2016). These families included frames such as psychosocial (for example Erikson, 1959; Chickering, 1969), cognitive-structural (Piaget, 1952; Perry, 1968; Kohlberg, 1981), and person-environment (Sanford, 1962; Astin 1984).

This era of student development theory can also be characterized by its focus on white men as the subject of research and scholarship that was then often assumed to be generalizable to

all college-going students. The first wave's enduring contribution to theory is the assumption that college students should grow and develop because of their experiences (Jones, 2019).

According to Jones (2019), the second wave of theorizing focused intentionally on social identities and the experiences of students from historically and currently marginalized populations. The work of the 1970s and 1980s brought forward analyses of identities and voices that were neglected in the first wave of theory (Torres et al., 2009). To be more inclusive, this wave also drew upon traditions of other disciplines such as Black studies and women's studies (Jones et al., 2016). Many of the theories advanced in this wave investigated identities as discrete entities, an examination that also foregrounded the need to interrogate the effects of campus environments and climates on marginalized populations (Hurtado et al., 1997; Hurtado et al., 1999).

The focus on identity also elicited an emphasis on power, privilege, and oppression (Jones, 2019). Social identity theory centers on group memberships and the sense of belonging gained from group membership as important influences on the sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Criticism of this wave highlights that developmental models imply an end to development—a goal reached, as it were (Jones, 2019).

The third wave of theory demands a significant evolution of student development theory. This wave centers on critical theory, or perspectives informed by an explicit acknowledgment and foregrounding of hegemonic norms (that is, those norms and values that reflect dominant groups in the United States) through analyses of the impacts of structural and systemic oppression and privilege on individuals and their learning and development. (Jones & Stewart, 2016, p. 21)

Critical theorists in the third wave are taking up questions of the value of identity development versus articulation (Butler, 2004; Hesse, 2007) and how rigid identity classifications may reify inequitable relationships between dominant and marginalized groups (Hesse, 2007). This wave of theory also introduces new types of knowledge: the role of context, intersectionality as a frame, and an emphasis on individual agency (Jones & Stewart, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Hope is not a strategy. For years, despite the best efforts of higher education assessment experts, the field of student affairs has relied on both theoretical frames and hope for their success. The canonical literature of our field has outlined student experience, student success, and student development often without providing serious attention to the work of the student affairs practitioner. For many, graduate preparation programs focus on theory while jobs in the field focus on the day-to-day minutiae of campus operations, wellness and safety, campus programming, care teams, and an infinite amount of “stuff” that our theoretical training did not prepare us for. Several strategies have been recommended across higher education for infusing critical praxis in the work of student affairs: counter-storytelling (Croom & Marsh, 2016), counter-narratives (Davis & Harrison, 2013), examples of theory to practice in graduate preparation programs (Gaston-Gayles & Kelly, 2007), and infusing justice throughout graduate program curriculum rather than as a stand-alone competency (Bondi, 2012). However, the literature regarding practical implementations of critical theory is scant (Marine & Gilbert, 2022; Osei-Kofi et al., 2010). The curricular approach in student affairs can answer the call for critical praxis.

Learning has long been conceptualized as something that happens in formal classroom settings—and formal classroom settings alone. Higher education’s focus on degree attainment, a proxy measure for the academic mission of the institution, is often framed as the most significant marker of success (Tinto, 1987; Pascarella, 1980). However, institutions rely on out-of-classroom experiences to create the growth and development necessary for learning across disciplines (Porterfield et al., 2011). As early as 1961, scholar-practitioners were articulating the distinction in learning spheres: "we differ from teachers in our educational role; we deal with students as individuals and groups of individuals who are concerned with many aspects of their own development. In a sense, this is the curriculum of student personnel work - the student's own full development" (Williamson, 1961, p. 19). In 2010, Undersecretary of Education Martha Kanter challenged student affairs to assume a leadership role in preparing students for the 21st century in a way that honors the breadth and complexity of student affairs work (Newman et. al., 2010).

The most enduringly urgent questions about higher education in our current climate focus on accountability: how does the work of the institution, inclusive of student affairs, impact student learning (Porterfield et al., 2011)? A 2010 Joint Task Force on the Future of Student Affairs between ACPA and NASPA, the leading student affairs associations, put it bluntly:

At no other time in history has the incentive for real change been more powerful or the consequences for not changing more significant. The field’s ability to survive and thrive rests on our willingness to look at our work in a new light and to play a meaningful role in ensuring the success of our institutions and our students in these times of unprecedented turbulence. (Task Force, 2010, p. 7)

In the intervening years since that report was published, the climate for higher education has only increased in its demand for change and accountability.

This study takes up the problem outlined by the Joint Task Force by examining how a curricular approach to student affairs can bring together innovation and the theoretical basis of our field in service of student learning. A curricular approach is an innovative and systemic way to be more purposeful and strategic about how educators who work with students beyond the classroom can best facilitate student learning as an outcome of the student experience (Kerr et al., 2020). The approach puts theory and practice in context-specific conversation while requiring an assessment of the overall effort.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify how theoretical models and frameworks are taken up in the curricular approach and to analyze their contribution to critical praxis. The following sub-questions will guide this study:

1. What elements of curriculum design reflect critical praxis?
2. How are theoretical models and frameworks implemented in a curricular approach?

Significance of the Study

There are very few empirical pieces discussing the curricular approach (Lichterman, 2016; Sanders, 2018; Kropf, 2020; Pernotto, 2021; Scheibler, 2021). While some literature advocates for this approach across the field (Kerr et al., 2020) there seems to be a total lack of empirical research examining the curricular approach in contexts outside of residence life units. Additionally, the literature referencing critical praxis in strategic, implementable ways for

student affairs practitioners is limited (Osei-Kofi et al., 2010). This study speaks to that void and takes up that work. Through a critical praxis model, this study will examine the curricular approach across three different functional units: a gender center, a scholars program, and a comprehensive student activities unit.

Chapter II: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was to identify how theoretical models and frameworks are taken up in the curricular approach and to analyze their contribution to critical praxis. The following sub-questions guided this study:

1. What elements of curriculum design reflect critical praxis?
2. How are theoretical models and frameworks implemented in a curricular approach?

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights the learning imperatives placed on the field of student affairs, the development of a curricular approach in higher education, and the scant empirical research that has focused on residential curriculum models specifically. This chapter lays the groundwork for the study by providing historical context and illuminating the direct thread between the calls for centering learning in the cocurricular context and how the curricular approach was developed. The final section of the chapter identifies the theoretical framework that guides the study.

Literature Review

A Call to Center Learning

The American Council on Education (ACE) published *The Student Personnel Point of View* in 1937 (ACE, 1937). This report was recognized as "the first articulation of philosophy, purpose, and methods of practice that clearly created the groundwork for the field's future growth and placed students at the center" (p. 43). In 1949, ACE amended the declaration to emphasize the significance of education in a democratic society, the need for expanded knowledge to ameliorate social issues, and the publication of educational materials (Rentz, 1996). Both editions of *The Student Personnel Point of View* (ACE, 1937 & 1949) emphasized the

significance of exposing students to learning and development-enhancing experiences both within and outside the classroom.

In 1972, Brown's publication, "Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education - A Return to the Academy," called on college administrators and student affairs professionals to examine the discrepancies between the goals of higher education and the actual experiences of students. This led to the American College Personnel Association's "Tomorrow's Higher Education Project (T.H.E)," which investigated Brown's perspective on student development as a philosophy of the profession (Evans et al., 1998). The T.H.E. project emphasized the importance of prioritizing student development in the academic setting, improving teaching and learning experiences, reorganizing student affairs offices, conducting outcomes assessments, and developing new competencies for student affairs educators. Garland and Grace (1993) wrote how the T.H.E. project examined the student affairs profession's, "commitment to student development-the theories of human development applied to the postsecondary education setting – as a guiding theory, and the continued attempt to ensure that the development of the whole student was an institutional priority" (p. 6).

In 1994, a group of scholars and practitioners in ACPA published *The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs*, which addressed the changing landscape of higher education. The document urged student affairs practitioners to create programs and services that would enhance student learning and development, while also supporting the academic mission of higher education (ACPA, 1994). *The Student Learning Imperative* emphasized that student learning and development take place not only in the classroom, but also beyond it, and that physical, psychological, and interpersonal factors all impact a student's ability to learn and develop (ACPA, 1994). *The Student Learning Imperative* served as a call to action for

practitioners to prioritize the holistic development of students and to create environments that support and enhance both their academic and personal growth.

In 2004, scholars and practitioners from ACPA and NASPA produced *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling, 2004). *Learning Reconsidered* (Keeling, 2004) defined learning as a comprehensive, holistic, and transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development. The document emphasized the need to prioritize transformative learning and to place students at the center of experiences rather than just conducting transactions with them. The authors highlighted the idea that student learning occurs both within and beyond traditional classrooms, rejecting the notion of bifurcated spaces on campuses. The document also outlined seven broad, desired learning outcomes for transformative liberal education, including cognitive complexity, knowledge acquisition, integration, and application, humanitarianism, civic engagement, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, practical competence, and persistence and academic achievement (Keeling, 2004). In 2006, *Learning Reconsidered II: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling, 2006) was released, providing practical tools and insights from multiple institutions on developing and accessing learning outcomes. Ultimately, both documents support the overarching claims of a curricular approach: that valuable learning happens outside of the classroom and institutions must pay heed to this (Edwards & Gardner, 2015; Kennedy, 2013; Kerr & Tweedy, 2006; Shushok et al., 2013).

The Curricular Approach in Student Affairs

The curricular approach describes the “intentionally specifically structured way of promoting learning in college and university student affairs programs” (Brown, 2019, p. 9). The

curricular approach enhances the overall learning of the student (Kerr et al., 2017). This approach is becoming increasingly popular within divisions of Student Affairs. Annually since 2007, the American College Personnel Association (College Student Educators International) has hosted a conference called “Institute on Curricular Approach” (ICA) [formerly, known as the Residential Curriculum Institute (RCI)]. The institute is attended by professionals interested in learning more about the curricular approach in hopes of creating one on their home campus and also includes representatives from schools already advancing their curricula. This institute is led by a group of volunteer scholar-practitioners who serve as faculty for the institute. The 2022 iteration of ICA hosted 393 participants from 95 institutions across the United States, Canada, and Japan (E. Simpson, personal communication, November 7, 2022).

The Curricular Approach Versus the Traditional Approach

Traditional student affairs work has focused on four paradigms for practitioners: student learning, student development, student services, and student administration (Blimling, 2001). However, the breakthrough text, *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006), argues that higher education’s views on learning are entrenched in a positivist epistemology; effectively ignoring personal experience, questions of meaning, or involvement in learning. The work of *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* defines learning as “a complex, holistic, multicentric activity that occurs throughout and across the college experience” (American College Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2004, p. 5). This more nuanced understanding of a student’s experience of learning calls for a blending of two paradigms: student learning (academics) and student development (personal growth). These paradigms are not bifurcated but are part of a singular

learning experience (Kerr et al., 2020). This singular learning approach can be the goal of any curriculum in student affairs. The authors of *The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs* (Kerr et al., 2020) codified the differences between the traditional approach to Student Affairs and the curricular approach in the following chart (p. 4):

<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Curricular</i>
Identifies list of general topics or categories to which students could be exposed	Clearly defined and more narrowly focused learning aims are tied to institutional mission
Often based on reaction to recent needs displayed by students	Based on scholarly literature, national trends, campus data, and assessment of student educational needs
Student leaders or student staff determine the content within the categories and the pedagogy	Clearly defined learning goals and delivery strategies are written by those with educational expertise
Determining effective pedagogy is often the responsibility of student leaders or student staff members	Lesson plans or facilitation guides developed by educators with necessary expertise provide structure to guide facilitation of educational strategies
Focuses on who will show up to publicized programs	Utilizes a variety of strategies to reach each student
Evaluated based on how many students attend	Assesses student learning outcomes and effectiveness of delivery strategies
Sessions stand alone, disconnected from what has come before or what will come after, and vary by each student's leader or staff member	Content and pedagogy are developmentally sequenced to best serve leaders
Often in competition with other campus units for students' time and attention	Campus and community partners are integrated into the strategies; content and pedagogy are subject to review (internal and external)

Traditional programming is a common approach to providing opportunities for students to engage with topics or activities on college campuses. In this approach, a list of general topics

or categories is identified based on past student interests or current needs. These topics can include areas such as diversity and inclusion, leadership development, career exploration, wellness, and more. Once the categories are determined, student leaders or staff members are tasked with creating and implementing programming within each category. They have the flexibility to choose the specific content, format, and structure of the program. This approach provides opportunities for student leaders to exercise their creativity and leadership skills.

One challenge of traditional programming is determining the most effective pedagogy or facilitation method for each program. Student leaders or staff members are often responsible for determining what approach will be most engaging and impactful for their peers. This can be a valuable learning experience for the students leading the programs but may not always result in the most effective learning experience for program attendees.

Another aspect of traditional programming is the focus on attendance. The success of a program is often evaluated based on how many students attend. This can create pressure for student leaders to prioritize marketing and promotion of their programs to attract as many students as possible.

Traditional programming is often seen as a series of standalone events, disconnected from what has come before or what will come after. The quality and relevance of programs can vary widely depending on the student leader or staff member in charge of it. This can create an inconsistent experience for students who may not know what to expect from each program within a category.

Finally, traditional programming may face competition with other campus units for students' time and attention. With so many events and activities available to students, it can be

challenging to attract a critical mass of attendees to each program. This can make it difficult to create sustained interest in any given topic or category.

In contrast, the curricular approach is more closely tied to the institutional mission of a college or university. The learning aims are more clearly defined and focused and are based on scholarly literature, national trends, campus data, and assessment of student educational needs. This approach ensures that the learning opportunities are tailored to the specific needs of the student population and are aligned with the broader goals of the institution.

The curricular approach is developed by educators with the necessary expertise in the subject matter. They create clearly defined learning goals and delivery strategies that are designed to be developmentally sequenced to best serve students. Lesson plans or facilitation guides are provided to guide the facilitation of educational strategies. This approach ensures that the learning experience is consistent across different programs and that the content and delivery methods are based on sound educational principles.

A variety of strategies are utilized in the curricular approach to reach each student. These strategies can include experiential learning, case studies, group discussions, guest speakers, and more. This approach ensures that different learning styles and preferences are accommodated and that the content is engaging and relevant to a wide range of students.

Assessment of student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of delivery strategies are essential components of the curricular approach. This ensures that the learning opportunities are achieving their intended goals and that any necessary adjustments are made to improve the learning experience.

Campus and community partners are integrated into the approach to provide students with opportunities to connect their learning to real-world experiences. Content and pedagogy are

subject to review by both internal and external stakeholders to ensure that the programming remains relevant, effective, and aligned with institutional goals.

Overall, the curricular approach is a more structured and intentional plan for student learning. It ensures that the programming is designed to meet the specific needs of the student population, is aligned with the broader goals of the institution, and is based on sound educational principles.

Ten Essential Elements of a Curricular Approach

The Faculty of ICA developed a list of the 10 essential elements (10EE) of a curricular model for learning beyond the classroom in 2009 (K. Edwards, personal communication, 2022). The list was updated and codified in Kerr, Edwards, Tweedy, Lichterman, and Knerr's 2020 book, *The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs*. Kerr et al. (2020) asserted: "We see each aspect as important and have seen many approaches weakened when components or elements are omitted" (p. 25). The 10 essential elements listed here (Kerr et al., 2020) are widely understood as promising practices of curriculum building:

1. The curricular approach is directly connected to the institution's mission, context, and student population served.
2. The learning aims, including educational priority, learning goals, and learning outcomes are derived from the institutional context.
3. Learning aims and strategies are rooted in scholarship.
4. Learning outcomes drive the development of educational strategies.
5. The curricular approach utilizes a variety of educational strategies to facilitate student learning.

6. Educators who have the expertise, in terms of both content and pedagogy, are utilized to design and implement the desired learning.
7. The curricular approach developmentally sequences learning.
8. Campus and community partners are identified and integrated into plans.
9. A curricular approach is developed through a review process.
10. A curricular approach includes a cycle of assessment to improve student learning.

Stemming from the Ten Essential Elements, curriculum models structurally consist of two segments: learning aims and educational plans. The educational priority, learning goals, and learning outcomes form the learning aims, while the educational plans encompass strategies, developmental sequencing, strategy-level learning outcomes, and facilitation guides. The educational priority, rooted in the institution's mission, focuses on student achievement and encompasses multiple learning concepts. Learning goals are broad and generalized, reflecting areas of student growth, while learning outcomes are specific, measurable statements of student learning. Rubrics are utilized to assess mastery of learning outcomes. Educational strategies, tailored to effective pedagogy and student needs, facilitate student engagement and learning. Developmental sequencing ensures progression from basic to advanced learning. Facilitation guides provide detailed plans for strategy implementation, including time allocation, pedagogy, and assessment methods.

Residential Curriculum Research

The curricular approach to Student Affairs originated with scholar-practitioners in a residence life unit at the University of Delaware (Kerr et al., 2020). The work was first described by Kathleen Kerr and Jim Tweedy in the 2006 *About Campus* article *Beyond Seat Time and Student Satisfaction: A Curricular Approach to Residential Education*: “The challenge to hold

ourselves accountable for intentional, planned, and structured learning experiences moved us from an exposure to a learning paradigm” (p. 11). The work that Kerr and Tweedy were doing in residential spaces led to the approach being called a “residential curriculum” until 2018 when Institute co-chairs and faculty formally shifted the name of the Institute to reflect a widened scope of practice (E. Simpson, personal communication, February 22, 2018). Accordingly, the majority of early research on this approach has focused on residential contexts. Research has included examinations of organizational culture shifts required by the approach (Lichterman, 2016; Kropf, 2020), the impact of curricular efforts on staff members (Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019; Pernotto, 2021) and students (Sanders, 2018; Scheibler, 2021) and their experience of the curriculum. Further targeted research was conducted on how curricular efforts can support under-represented student populations (Williams et al., 2021).

Lichterman (2016) researched a department’s experience with adopting a residential curricular approach aligned with the essential elements, utilizing Bolman and Deal’s four frames as a theoretical framework. Lichterman’s (2016) study allowed participants to share their experiences with adopting a curricular model and found that there were challenges and gains associated with adopting the curricular approach as well as a reframing of how they viewed residential education (Lichterman, 2016; Lichterman & Bloom, 2019). Staff perceived the gains in the shift would be positive (i.e., better for students) and felt that they had a voice in outcomes; however, they also perceived challenges in that one approach may not meet the needs of student demographics and space limitations (Lichterman, 2015; Lichterman & Bloom, 2019).

Sanders’s (2018) research utilized Astin’s Input–Environment–Outcome model to measure how the inputs of students through a residential curricular model influenced living on campus through the residential curricular survey. Sanders (2018) found that residential students

overall had positive relationships when interacting with each other, and housing staff had positive gains in their personal and cultural development.

Research on the student and staff experiences with the residential curricular model increased as the model began to focus less on programming and more on student learning. Kropf (2020) investigated five residence life curricular model organizations to identify common best practices and strategies that can be replicated to support student learning. The findings outline a new model (curricular integration model) and eight critical components in the organizational structure and culture to operationalize the curricular approach; the model can be utilized and adapted for many organizations to support a thriving curricular model (Kropf, 2020).

Pernotto (2021) researched the role of housing and residence life staff in a curricular model using Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) Learning Partnerships Model as a theoretical framework. Pernotto (2021) investigated how live-in staff embraced the role of an educator and how they were supported in that role. Findings indicated that participants benefitted from an internal passion and were supported through resources, partnerships, and empowering relationships with supervisors and peers (Pernotto, 2021).

Scheibler (2021) used a phenomenological case study to examine the experiences of students living on campuses utilizing a residential curriculum. This study took place during the COVID-19 global pandemic and addressed experiences and perceptions of undergraduate students living on campus in intentionally designed residential curricular environments relative to the intended outcomes of that residential community (Scheibler, 2021). Scheibler (2021) uncovered four major findings: students were ambivalent and inarticulate about what the overall college experience is; students did experience growth as a result of the curriculum, irrespective

of their connection to the curriculum; external learning partnerships played a pivotal role in participant success; and students were impacted in multiple ways by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lichterman and Bloom's (2019) qualitative descriptive case study in the *College Student Affairs Journal* aimed to explore the perceptions of one senior administrator in academic affairs, housing employees, and student leaders at an institution where a curricular approach was adopted. To gather data, the research methods included semi-structured interviews, document analysis, focus groups, and photo elicitation (Lichterman, et.al., 2019).

The findings from this study indicated that the student affairs staff participants perceived several benefits of adopting a curricular approach (Lichterman & Bloom, 2019). One of the main benefits was improved clarity on the department's direction, which helped to align goals and objectives. The participants also perceived that the curricular approach provided better strategic standards and structures for staff, which helped to create a more consistent and cohesive approach to programming. Additionally, some staff members felt that the curricular approach provided an enhanced sense of voice and autonomy in their work (Lichterman & Bloom, 2019).

However, the study also identified several limitations of adopting a curricular approach. Participants noted that not all student populations benefitted equally from a one-size-fits-all approach, which meant that some students may have been left out or underserved (Lichterman & Bloom, 2019). Physical space limitations were also identified as a challenge, as some departments may not have had enough space to implement the curricular approach effectively. Finally, some participants noted that there was a lack of communication and clarity about the language used in the curricular approach, which created confusion and misunderstandings (Lichterman and Bloom, 2019).

Overall, this study suggests that while a curricular approach can provide many benefits, it is not without its challenges (Lichterman and Bloom, 2019). It is important for institutions to carefully consider the unique needs of their student population and to communicate clearly with all stakeholders to ensure that the curricular approach is implemented effectively.

Stauffer and Kimmel (2019) offered a review of the University of Delaware's comprehensive professional development series to address staffing preparation to implement a residential curriculum. The series aimed to provide housing and residence life staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to design and implement educational strategies within a residential curriculum model (Stauffer and Kimmel, 2019). The article offers four steps that HRL trainers can take to develop professional staff competence in this area.

For Stauffer and Kimmel (2019), the first is to establish a shared understanding of the curricular approach and its relevance to the professional setting. This involved training sessions, discussions, and readings to ensure that all staff members were oriented to the approach. The second step is to provide opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge and skills in educational theory and practice (Stauffer and Kimmel, 2019). This can be done through workshops, webinars, or individual mentoring and coaching. The third step is to offer guidance and support to staff as they design and implement educational strategies within the residential curriculum model (Stauffer and Kimmel, 2019). This can include providing resources, templates, and opportunities for peer review and feedback. The final step is to assess the effectiveness of the professional development series and the impact of the residential curriculum model on student learning outcomes (Stauffer and Kimmel, 2019). This can involve gathering feedback from staff and students, conducting assessments, and adjusting as needed. This research highlights the importance of providing staff with the resources and support they need to design

and implement effective educational strategies within a residential curriculum model (Stauffer and Kimmel, 2019). By following the four steps outlined above, training teams can help their staff to develop the competence and confidence they need to support student learning and success (Stauffer and Kimmel, 2019).

More recently, Williams, Johnson, Kolek, Hornak, Ampaw, and Gardner (2021) utilized a qualitative case study to examine the role of inclusion assistants in a redesigned residential life curriculum at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the Midwest. The goal of the inclusion assistant program was to increase support for students with underrepresented identities, such as students of color and queer students, in the residence halls (William et al., 2021). Inclusion assistants worked alongside traditional resident assistants to provide positive support to students with underrepresented identities as well as to students in the majority.

The study identifies the challenges faced by the inclusion assistants in their role and provides recommendations for improving the inclusion assistant program and other similar programs (Williams et al., 2021). The findings suggest that inclusion assistants faced challenges related to their training, communication with other staff members, and workload management (Williams et al., 2021). The recommendations include increasing training and professional development opportunities for inclusion assistants, improving communication between inclusion assistants and other staff members, and establishing clear expectations and boundaries for their workload (Williams et al., 2021). The study highlights the importance of providing support and resources for students with underrepresented identities in residential life and the role that inclusion assistants can play in this effort. Results also point to the need for ongoing evaluation and improvement of programs designed to promote inclusion and equity in higher education (Williams et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study utilized a conceptual model of critical praxis (Marine & Gilbert, 2022) to ground the work of curriculum review in critical theory and practice. A theoretical perspective is “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the [research] process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The critical praxis model informs the methodology in coding choices, as well as the analysis of the data. In addition to the critical praxis model, this study will identify theoretical frameworks used to build each curriculum. The following prominent approaches, 1) the learning partnerships model (Baxter Magolda, 2004); 2) ACPA’s (2019) Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization; and 3) Linder’s (2019) power-conscious approach will inform the analysis of data. Discussions of those frameworks and their impact on the respective curricula is expounded upon in chapter four.

Critical praxis has its roots in critical theory, a term that did not become widely used in academia until Horkheimer’s (1937) essay, *Traditional and Critical Theory*. The framework for critical theory emerged from the “Frankfurt School,” a group of philosophers associated with the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany (Berendzen, 2022). The decades between World War I and World War II were largely responsible for developing the epistemological and methodological orientation of Frankfurt School critical theory (Levinson et al., 2015) which had an enduring impact on critical theory’s later practitioners (Berendzen, 2022). Critical theory calls for “a radical restructuring [of] society toward the ends of reclaiming historic cultural legacies, social justice, the redistribution of power and the achievement of truly democratic societies” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000, p. 1056). Critical theorists hold that society in its current form is

oppressive and that research methods cannot help but perpetuate those oppressions (Broido & Manning, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The focus of critical theory is emancipation (Freire, 1970); the researcher is obligated to ask:

Whose interest does the research serve? What societal assumptions are unexamined?

How is power represented in the research site and methodology? How are respondents represented? Who decides whose voices and interpretations are included? Are

participants treated as equal partners in the research decisions? Who decides how and where the research is used? (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 438)

Critical theory does not utilize a particular methodology (Broido & Manning, 2002) and includes critical feminist theories, critical discourse analysis, critical race theories, and other theories of power and oppression.

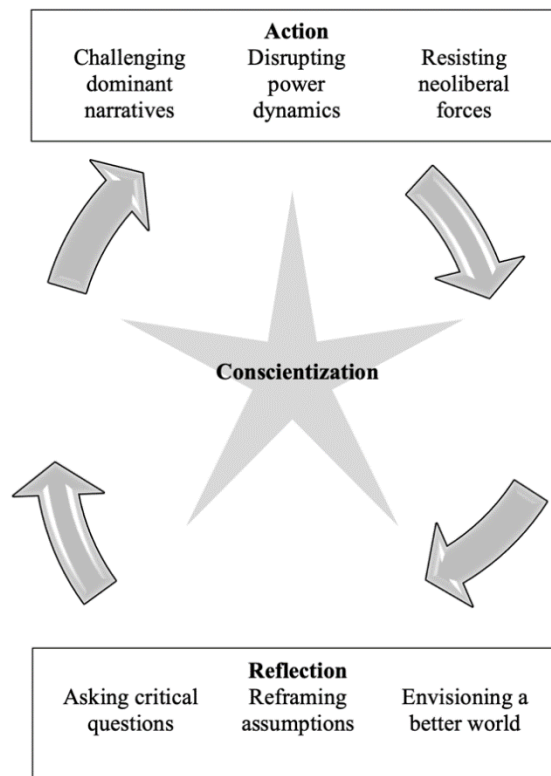
Student affairs practices in higher education have the potential to be a powerful agent of change (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Freire (1998) wrote, “Critical consciousness is brought about not through an intellectual effort alone, but through praxis—through the authentic union of action and reflection” (p. 517). In their 2022 book, *Critical Praxis in Student Affairs: Social Justice in Action* editors Marine and Gilbert make the case for a model for critical praxis based on the insights presented in each chapter of their edited volume. The model they developed provides a conceptual framework with which to examine the curricular approach.

Their critical praxis model was developed utilizing Freire’s (1970) definition of praxis as “the action and reflection of [people] upon their world in order to transform it” (p. 79). The center of the model is *conscientization*, or an awareness of one’s own power and positionality (Freire, 1970) to represent its iterative relationship with reflection and action (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Within the model, action and reflection are represented as constant processes and are each

operationalized by three further behaviors. Marine and Gilbert (2022) explain that there is no pre-determined set of actions that will ensure critical praxis; this model is designed to normalize criticality in practice. Figure 2.1 represents the themes of the model (Marine & Gilbert, 2022, p. 189):

Figure 2.1

A model for critical praxis in higher education and student affairs



Marine and Gilbert (2022) proposed three pathways to conscientization: life experiences, formal learning partnerships, and relationships. Life experiences refer to the early, formative experiences that may include obstacles, hardships, consciousness-raising events, etc. that form our sense of commitment to others (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Marine and Gilbert (2022) identified formal learning as gleaning insights from pivotal texts, developing a commitment to

critical pedagogy, utilizing formal education as a tool of disruption, and other methods that refer to the work that happens in the classroom or other formal training environments. Finally, relationships, specifically those with attention to shared accountability and dynamic synergy, were identified as a pathway to conscientization (Marine & Gilbert, 2022).

Reflection is an integral tenet of the critical student affairs praxis model. Freire (1970) names reflection as “essential to action” (p. 53). The model identifies three major components of reflection: asking critical questions, reframing assumptions, and envisioning a better world. Marine and Gilbert (2022) offer critical questions, such as “questions that trouble the status quo and unravel hegemonic inequities” (p. 191). The practice of asking questions, and carefully considering the multiple possible answers, can serve as a powerful change engine. Institutions are built on long-standing assumptions and policies—indeed they are recreated regularly (Harro, 2000). By reframing assumptions or examining the long-held belief structures that underly action and policy, we can better imagine the environments we hope to create through praxis (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Imagining a better world is the final integral piece of the act of reflection. Grappling with critical hope (Grain, 2022) allows student affairs practitioners to imagine a liberatory future. “What type of community might be possible if student affairs practitioners were to expand their understanding of dreaming...[to] a collaborative, collective experience that invites complexity and possibilities?” (Marine & Gilbert, 2022, p. 193). The ongoing, iterative reflection described by asking critical questions, reframing assumptions, and envisioning a better world, leads to action in service of humanity (Freire, 1970).

“Critical praxis, at its core, involves intentional actions that, when taken together, transform systems” (Marine & Gilbert, 2022, p. 193). While actions range from micro (interpersonal) to macro (systemic), they share features of challenging dominant narratives,

disrupting power dynamics, and resisting neoliberal forces (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Actions toward liberation and justice inherently challenge the dominant narratives that are reproduced throughout higher education (ACPA, 2019). They argue these actions offer a different or newly realized way of being to expose and challenge dominant narratives. Often, this leads to disrupting power dynamics in service of pushing against the institutional status quo (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Lange, Bravo, Krestakos, and Sylvester (2022) offer that “without identifying your contribution to systems of oppression, your justice work is superficial” (p. 113). Finally, in a system of commodification and scarcity, resisting neoliberal forces in higher education is a dominant act (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Student affairs practitioners make constant choices about time, energy, and resources that can either center marginalized communities or reinforce neoliberal ideas in the academy. Critical praxis takes place when these facets of action align with the resistance and resilience of practitioners (Marine & Gilbert, 2022).

Knowing how the residential curriculum approach evolved in higher education, and seeing how this approach impacts the practices of student affairs professionals, is the starting point of this research. The models and frameworks that have emerged require study. To contribute to the literature, this study will seek to identify how these models and frameworks are taken up and to analyze their contribution to critical praxis. The method for doing so aggregates the products of curriculum development in order to learn how professionals are integrating models and frameworks to inform their own critical praxis. The artifacts can tell us about the assumptions and valued practices inherent in student affairs and reveal how student affairs professionals integrate these assumptions and valued practices into a curriculum.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY & METHODS

The purpose of this study was to identify how theoretical models and frameworks are taken up in the curricular approach and to analyze their contribution to critical praxis. As the curricular approach becomes more widely utilized in Student Affairs settings (Lichterman, 2016, Kerr et al., 2020) it is incumbent on practitioners to understand how student development theory and equity lenses impact curriculum design and contribute to critical praxis.

This study utilized a critical theoretical framework and an interpretive content analysis method to examine three curricula developed simultaneously at one institution in the summer of 2020. These three units, a scholar's program, a gender center, and a student activities center, created departmental curricula utilizing three separate theoretical frameworks, overarching educational goals, and distinct strategies and approaches.

The selected methodology reflects a research approach that values exploration and relies on qualitative evidence. This chapter includes the design of the study, the methods and tools used in data collection and analysis, and a rationale for the study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify how theoretical models and frameworks are taken up in the curricular approach and to analyze their contribution to critical praxis. The following sub-questions will guide this study:

1. What elements of curriculum design reflect critical praxis?
3. How are theoretical models and frameworks implemented in a curricular approach?

Research Design

The selection of a qualitative paradigm, and content analysis in particular, was rooted in the purpose of this study, which was to explore the process of what informs student affairs educators as they develop a curriculum. In this section, I outline the epistemological paradigm and theoretical lens framing of this study and explain the rationale for selecting content analysis as my method.

Constructivist Paradigm

I utilized a constructivist paradigm in this qualitative study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) articulated a paradigm as a set of assumptions and beliefs that organizes and guides one's behaviors and practices. In turn, the constructivist theory is a worldview in which people socially construct knowledge to make meaning of their experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Therefore, a constructivist paradigm asks research participants to share their meanings of reality and their experiences related to the phenomenon of interest (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). In the constructivist paradigm, "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Characteristics of a constructivist paradigm include:

1. The researcher–the respondent relationship is subjective, interactive, and interdependent.
2. Reality is multiple, complex, and not easily quantifiable.
3. The values of the researcher, respondents, research site, and underlying theory cannot help but undergird all aspects of the research.
4. The research product (e.g., interpretations) is context specific. (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 436)

I chose a constructivist paradigm for this content analysis because the curricula are contextual to the institutions where they were created; that context is socially created and reinforced within the institutional culture and context.

Critical Praxis

Critical theory is utilized in qualitative inquiry to “operationalize qualitative methodologies and congruent methods that directly reflect an emancipatory approach to research” (Pasque et al., 2012, p. 3). Martínez-Alemán, Pusser, and Bensimon (2015) assert that research in higher education shapes social action as a matter of epistemological translation. “It is therefore not surprising that higher education researchers interested in identifying and correcting sociocultural inequities would utilize social science research methods produced by an ‘emancipatory’ epistemology whose principal aim is to foster greater social freedom” (Martínez-Alemán et al., 2015, p. 2). Student affairs work in higher education has a huge potential to affect change.

Increasingly, in order to affect the positive change our roles demand, student affairs practitioners have been called upon to challenge the status quo and work to change higher education as a whole so that it lives up to the democratic, inclusive ideals it espouses (Giroux, 2020). Leveraging the opportunity inherent in student affairs work to promote the justice-oriented practice has becoming an increasingly urgent goal of the profession (Moody & Wall, 2020; Pitcher, 2015; ACPA, 2018) but the effectiveness of the strategies employed remain in question. As a response to this growing need, the field’s associations have responded with formal guidance, such as ACPA’s (2019) Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization, or the ACPA and NASPA revised competencies, shifted toward social justice and inclusion rather

than equity, diversity, and inclusion. These shifting signposts are important indicators that many practitioners are enacting social change strategies in their daily practice. Marine and Gilbert (2022) make a case for documenting critical praxis in student affairs in order to envision more liberatory policies and practices for higher education as a whole—to scale these practices across our field and exert a normalizing influence to make critical practice more manageable for every practitioner.

Data Collection and Analysis

Context

I facilitated the creation of three curricula with trusted colleagues at a large, public, R1 institution located in a politically conservative state in the mid-south. In the summer of 2020, as we all worked from home during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial reckoning across our country following the murder of George Floyd, these three units met on zoom daily to interrogate their work, independently of one another. As a facilitator, it was my role to impart the structure of the curricular approach and ask probing and salient questions regarding the units' progress. In hindsight, I realized the work of these sessions, as well as the artifacts they produced, could serve as data for a study examining the curricular approach.

Each department was truly unique in its functional area and composition. The Gender Center (GC) served the campus as both the violence prevention education center and LGBTQ+ resource center, as well as some programming that can be found in more traditional women's centers. The GC staff was also responsible for mandatory training experiences for first year students as well as large scale training for external faculty and staff. GC's staff was comprised of

six full time staff members and one graduate student. Two staff members had experience building curriculum in higher education, but the others were new to the concept.

By contrast, the Student Activities (SA) department crossed multiple functional areas: campus activities programming, fraternity and sorority student life, and multicultural student life. The unit focuses on creating campus experiences for multiple student populations that cultivate a sense of belonging and place at their institution. SA was also the home of campus traditions and the more prominent student organizations across campus. Of the sixteen SA staff members, none had curriculum development experience in higher education.

Finally, the Scholars Program (SP) focused on creating a cohort experience for 30 new undergraduate scholars each year, with 120 scholars in the program overall. Scholars were chosen pre-arrival at the institution for their commitment to service, their cultural competency, and their dedication to building equitable communities. This program was named for a civil rights icon of this institution and is committed to upholding their legacy to the fullest. While the Scholars Program was growing, at the time of their curriculum development it was a staff of one with administrative support from the Vice President's Office. The director of SP had previous experience in developing curriculum in higher education.

Content Analysis

Qualitative research approaches can be inductive in nature and use research questions to guide data gathering while leaving room for potential themes and other questions to arise from a careful reading of the data (White and Marsh, 2006). Qualitative research seeks to examine a phenomenon in its depth and complexity and interpret its meaning (Jones et al., 2014). I selected qualitative methods to answer the research questions by engaging in a deep grounding and

interpretation of the data to “support interpretations by weaving quotes from the analyzed texts and literature about their contexts of those texts into their conclusions” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 88).

Content analysis, as a method, has its roots in mass communications studies beginning in the 1950s (Krippendorff, 2004). The purpose of qualitative content analysis is “to capture meanings, emphasis, and themes of messages and to understand the organization and process of how they are presented” (Altheide, 1996, p. 33). For the purpose of this study, I utilized Krippendorff’s (2004) definition of “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p. 18). The goal of this research is not necessarily replication but hopes to contribute an interpretation. Content analysis helped to reveal the assumptions made about student development and equity work within the texts of the three curricula examined.

Data

I utilized content analysis across the texts of three curricula to explore the design of the curricula, especially to identify what assumptions were made about student development and about equity work in Student Affairs. The texts include published educational priority statements, learning goals and outcomes, educational plan documents, and process notes archived from the development of the curricula. Each curriculum utilized a distinct theoretical framework of its own, which will not be used as textual data but will help guide deductive and inductive coding.

The field notes include three separate Trello boards. Trello is a web-based, kanban-style, list-making application. Kanban boards visually depict work at various stages of a process using cards to represent work items and columns to represent each stage of the process (Junior & Filho,

2010). Trello allowed remote users to engage in thoughtful dialogue, small group breakout sessions, and idea generation in authentic ways. The purpose of including this data is to examine the progression of curriculum development and the textual choices made to communicate the educational priority, learning goals, narratives, and learning outcomes. An example of the Trello board data is represented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

An example of a departmental Trello board.



The data set also includes three departmental educational priority statements and three sets of learning goals. The priority statement is a critical component of the curricular approach and functions in tandem with a mission statement (Kerr et al., 2020). The departmental learning goals flow from the educational priority and guide the areas of educational emphasis for each

department. One department also created narratives explaining their learning goals as well as broad learning outcomes stemming from the goals. The purpose of this data is to uncover what each department has prioritized in order to examine assumptions about student development theory, equity and inclusion work, and describe the overall curriculum design.

Data Analysis

I used Dedoose™ to assist with coding the data. Dedoose™ is a qualitative data analysis application. Dedoose’s™ ability to process large volumes of data reliably improves the reliability of the coding (Krippendorff, 2004). The following codebook was developed as a guide for the initial round of deductive coding.

Table 3.1

Descriptions of the codes used in analysis

Category	Codes	Description
Application of Student Development Theory	Power Conscious Framework	The theoretical framework used by one of the departments in the study; these codes describe Chris Linder’s Power Conscious Approach to gender-based violence awareness, prevention, and response.
	Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization	The theoretical framework used by one the departments in the study; these codes describe ACPA’s Strategic Imperative.
	Learning Partnerships	The theoretical framework used by one the departments in the study; these codes describe Marcia Baxter Magolda’s Learning Partnerships Model.
Equity Centered Language	Identity, Community, Transformative, Equity, Equitable, Social Justice, Care	These words are often used in higher education to imply critical work or thinking.

Application of Critical Praxis Model	Relationships, Formal Learning, Life Experiences	These codes describe the pathways to conscientization in the critical praxis model.
	Asking Critical Questions, Reframing Assumptions, Envisioning a Better World	These behaviors operationalize the iterative act of reflection in the critical praxis model.
	Challenging Dominant Narratives, Disrupting Power Balance, Resisting Neoliberal Forces	These codes operationalize the iterative actions in the critical praxis model.
Department Codes	Student Activities Gender Center Scholars Program	These codes are used to tag each department's work within the study to differentiate units of analysis. These are pseudonyms.

The codes outlined in *Table 1* were developed from the theory, literature, and methodology. I coded for instances of critical praxis, particularly the three operational phases: Conscientization, Action, and Reflection, in order to document instances of praxis in the design of the curriculum. The departments each utilized a separate theoretical framework to orient their curriculum. I coded for theory application to find the alignment of stated theoretical framework within the curriculum design. Finally, given the context of the institution that houses these departments, I coded for equity centered language that may not be as explicitly liberatory as the literature describing the work of praxis. I was looking for examples of practitioners signaling justice work within their contexts.

Researcher Positionality

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is also an instrument of data collection and analysis (Jones et al., 2014). Throughout this process, I played a central role in selecting the texts that will

be used for analysis, theming and coding the emergent data, and serving as the data analyst. In addition to these roles, I was involved in the creation of these curricula at their inception. My responsibility in the process requires me to be transparent and reflective about the experiences I bring to this study. In addition to the experiences with the selected data, I have assisted in the creation of over twenty-five curricula at colleges and universities across the country. I often serve as a consultant for curriculum design and am considered an expert in my field.

My assumptions and worldview are first situated in my social identities. I am aware that these assumptions are both consciously developed through reflection and training, and unconsciously through biased lenses I may not be aware of. Who I am as a person, how I have engaged as a practitioner in student affairs, and my educational experiences have all shaped how I engaged with this research.

I came to the curricular approach in 2013 with six years of experience as a student affairs practitioner. I was skeptical—even though I have a degree in elementary education that should have foreshadowed for me the importance of sequenced and scaffolded learning. I attended what was then known as the Residential Curriculum Institute in Columbia, South Carolina, and was immediately struck by what I considered to be both revolutionary and simple. I became a curriculum devotee, rigid in my adherence to what I considered to be the “rules” of developing a curriculum. Now, with the benefit of ten years of experience and education, I can see how curriculum work that decentered student voices in favor of “expertise” contributed to the dehumanization of students. This has caused an internal struggle as I examine where my practices need to be updated and how my insistence on structure shows up in curricula I have helped to create and maintain.

My social identities impacted this study, as well as all other work. I am a white¹, non-trans², upper-middle-class woman. I am queer, spiritual, fat, and live with a chronic auto-immune disorder. I live and learn on the traditional lands of the “Hasinai” Caddo Nation and “Kitikiti’sh” Wichita & Affiliated Tribes, land that also served as a hunting ground, trade exchange point, and migration route for the Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, and Osage nations. My understanding (and misunderstanding) of community and place was formed by growing up and residing in Oklahoma, a place where now 39 tribal nations make their home as a result of settler colonial policies that were designed to assimilate Native people.

My white identity significantly impacts my assumptions and biases; even with a commitment to reflexivity, whiteness is hegemonic and pervasive (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). I engage with research questions about student development as well as equity and inclusion work in my profession to contribute to liberatory and just educational praxis. I take critical race feminists (Wing, 2003) and indigenous scholars’ (Smith, 2012) call to praxis – to ‘usefulness’ – seriously. While I recognize that the very project I engage with here, the dissertation itself, is a product that ultimately benefits me personally, I hope that I can contribute to a larger body of work that practitioners, specifically, can access as they strive every day to show up on behalf of the students they serve.

¹ I do not capitalize the word “white” when used to describe people’s racial identity. While I am aware that the American Psychological Association style guide recommends doing so, I follow Kimberle Crenshaw’s (1991) lead in capitalizing terms that denote people of particular cultural groups (e.g., Black students), but do not capitalize “white” or “people of color,” since they do not refer to a particular cultural group.

² The history of the term cisgender begins with trans activism. I take Enke’s point that “the compulsion to identify and even to posit a cis/trans binary in which people are either cis or trans is an effect of neoliberal politics in which identity categories are crafted to to maximize a share of normative privilege” (Enke, 2012, p. 70). I intentionally position myself as a non-trans person to center the experience of trans people rather than normalize the binary of cis/trans.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are present in all forms of research. This content analysis drew upon existing texts and was therefore exempt from formal review by the Institutional Review Board. A pre-determination worksheet was completed for the Institutional Review Board. While original contributors to the curricula may not have known their contributions would be analyzed in this way, the data was anonymized and reviewed for ethical considerations.

Another ethical consideration that arose in this process was the extent of my involvement in the creation of the curricula examined. I facilitated the learning sessions to teach each unit about the ten essential elements and the structure of a curriculum. I was aware of each curriculum's content before this study, even though I had not engaged in any empirical analysis of it at that point. At the time of this study, each department had moved on from these initial curricula toward a unifying divisional curriculum at their institution.

Limitations

While content analysis allowed for a robust analysis of curricular texts, there were limitations to this study. As Patton (2002) asserts, "There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs" (p. 223). This study utilized non-residential curricula from one institution. There are likely other curriculum designs employed at other institutions that would have informed this study. While I was specific in selecting curricula from departments outside of housing and residence life units, the single institutional understanding of the curricular approach should not be generalized to all institutions utilizing a curricular approach in student affairs.

The purpose of content analysis is to examine textual evidence, specifically. What can be understood as *text* is varied (Krippendorff, 2004) but the evidence is static. A limitation of this

choice is that the study does not reflect how the curriculum was enacted or if implementation of the curriculum resulted in critical praxis within these units. This study is reflective of the aggregate of their curriculum design work but does not take up the actual implementation of the curriculum they designed.

Conclusion

If student affairs is committed to the liberatory practices that our field espouses, and that our Associations have gone as far as to codify (ACPA, 2019), we must examine methods of critical praxis in student affairs. The curricular approach can be a tool for critical praxis if practitioners commit to the theoretical foundations grounding their approach. This study aims to provide practitioners with an understanding of the critical praxis model and how developing curriculum can reflect and advance emancipatory practices (Freire, 1970).

Chapter IV: Findings

This study explored curriculum design in higher education and aimed to identify how theoretical models and frameworks are taken up in the curricular approach. Elements of these theoretical models and frameworks were analyzed to determine their contribution to critical praxis. The following sub-questions guided this study:

4. What elements of curriculum design reflect critical praxis?
5. How are theoretical models and frameworks implemented in a curricular approach?

To that end, I analyzed nineteen documents created by three departments in a singular student affairs division throughout their individual departmental curriculum creation. The data set included field notes from the development sessions, educational priority statements, learning goals and outcomes, and engagement strategies.

First, I developed code book based on the theoretical frameworks used by each department, equity-centered language, and the phases of the critical praxis model. These codes were created based on the stated research questions—I was, in particular, coding for the operational phases of the critical praxis model and evidence of the theoretical framework that the department selected. In addition to the underlying theory, I was coding for language that may signal equity-centered work without using explicitly justice-oriented language. This round of deductive coding resulted in 395 applications of the codes.

The second round of coding was inductive in nature. The first round of coding made the theoretical frameworks and use of equity-centered language clear, but there remained elements of the curricula that needed further explanation. Building on the work of the first round, another set of codes emerged that focused on skill development for students. These codes, focused on transferable skills for students, are more closely aligned professional development for students. I

coded for this because it was an emergent category within the data, but it is not the focus of this study.

These codes, taken together, enabled me to see the themes that served as the basis for my analysis. Table 2 describes the categories, codes, and descriptions that emerged in the analysis.

Table 4.2

Descriptions of the codes used in analysis

Category	Codes	Code Count	Description
Application of Student Development Theory	Power Conscious Framework	51	The theoretical framework used by one of the departments in the study; these codes describe Chris Linder’s Power Conscious Approach to gender-based violence awareness, prevention, and response.
	Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization	54	The theoretical framework used by one the departments in the study; these codes describe ACPA’s Strategic Imperative.
	Learning Partnerships	31	The theoretical framework used by one the departments in the study; these codes describe Marcia Baxter Magolda’s Learning Partnerships Model.
Equity Centered Language	Identity, Community, Transformative, Equity, Equitable, Social Justice, Care	97	These words are often used in higher education to imply critical work or thinking.
Application of Critical Praxis Model	Relationships, Formal Learning, Life Experiences	70	These codes describe the pathways to conscientization in the critical praxis model.

	Asking Critical Questions, Reframing Assumptions, Envisioning a Better World	69	These behaviors operationalize the iterative act of reflection in the critical praxis model.
	Challenging Dominant Narratives, Disrupting Power Balance, Resisting Neoliberal Forces	46	These codes operationalize the iterative actions in the critical praxis model.
Transferable Skills	Civic Engagement, Time Management, Leadership Skills, Professional Development	39	These codes describe the mission driven work of the institution and are more closely related to professional development for students.

This chapter is organized into two major sections. First, each department is described in some depth, along with the theoretical framework that forms the basis of the curricula. These departmental descriptions include data about the department’s adherence to its theoretical framework and findings about how the critical praxis model was apparent in the curriculum. The second half of the chapter puts these departmental findings in conversation with each other speaking to the research questions in ways that may be applicable beyond this specific context.

Departmental Findings

As detailed in Chapter III, three departmental curriculum designs were analyzed for this study. The departments are unique in their functional areas and scope of responsibilities within their institution. They each selected specific theoretical frameworks on which they based their curriculum. Table 3 presents each department with their functional areas of responsibility, staff size, and theoretical framework.

Table 4.3*Description of departments and theoretical frameworks*

Department	Functional Area	Staff Size	Theoretical Framework
Gender Center (GC)	gender-based violence awareness, prevention, and response; gender identity programming; LGBTQ+ inclusion	7	Linder's Power Conscious Approach
Student Activities (SA)	campus activities and programming; student involvement; fraternity and sorority student life; multicultural student life	14	Baxter Magolda's Learning Partnerships
Scholars Program (SP)	cohort based model, selective scholar process, leadership and academic engagement for scholars	2	ACPA's Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization

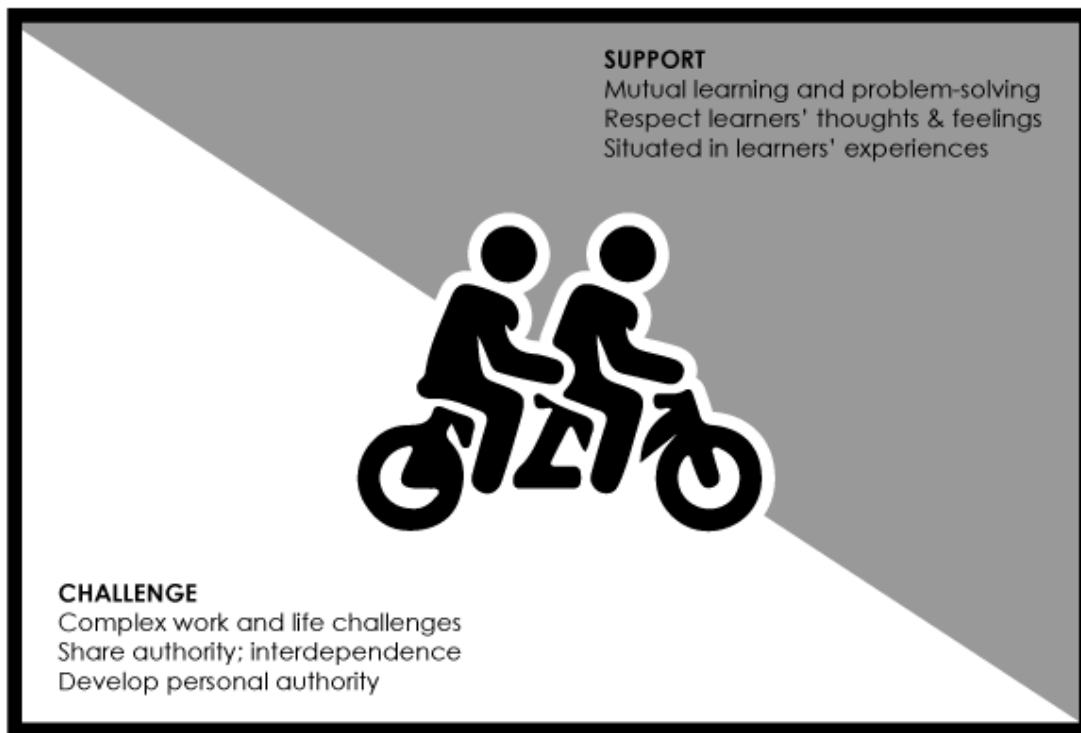
Student Activities

Student Activities is one of the largest departments within the division of student affairs. The 14 staff members in the department engage across multiple functional areas: campus activities and programming, multicultural student life, and fraternity and sorority student life. The Student Activities division houses the largest student-led groups at the institution and the department was designed to create cross-collaboration between these student groups. Student Activities created 99 engagement strategies across three learning aims: effective leadership, personal development, and community advocacy, using Marcia Baxter Magolda's (2004) learning partnerships model as their theoretical framework. The learning partnerships model is a framework that promotes self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001) in student leaders. It calls for a balance of challenge and support (Sanford, 1962) from educators throughout a student's experience in higher education. The result of learning partnerships is to help students develop an

internal belief system, an identity or sense of self, and a capacity for relationship building (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The learning partnerships model gives learners control of and responsibility for their educational journeys. The tandem bicycle metaphor is often used to describe this model; educators take the seat on the back of the bike to provide guidance and support, while the student sits in the front seat to make decisions and guide their own journey. The model is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

The learning partnerships model



The learning partnerships model further concretizes Sanford's (1962) model of challenge and support. Challenge is further defined by three basic assumptions: 1. knowledge is complex

and socially constructed; 2. one’s identity plays a central role in crafting knowledge claims; and 3. knowledge is mutually constructed via the sharing of expertise and authority (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Support is undergirded by three basic principles: 1. validate student leaders capacity to know; 2. situate learning in student leaders’ experiences; and 3. define learning as mutually constructing meaning (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The learning partnerships model is commonly used as a theoretical framework for curriculum design in higher education (Brown, 2019). These principles and assumptions provided the framework on which SA built their curriculum.

Learning Partnerships is not an inherently critical theoretical framework. To be clear, the theory can be used to engage in criticality, but it does not demand attention to power or history. The resulting code count reflects less of an alignment with the framework overall, and less instances of the critical praxis model being actualized.

Table 4.4

Code co-occurrence table for Student Activities department

Data Source	Equity Centered Language	Transferable Skills	Action	Conscientization	Reflection	Learning Partnerships
Learning Goals	13	5	3	8	3	9
Engagement Strategies	10	6	6	7	2	9
Educational Priority	1	1	0	2	1	1
Field Notes	13	3	1	11	5	14
Student Activities Total	37	15	10	31	12	35

Practitioners in Student Activities understood their department and purpose of their work well within the Learning Partnerships Model. Their field notes reflect a strong commitment to the challenge and support model and reflect the mission and goals of SA. Table 4.5 links examples from the field notes from the curriculum design session back to the Learning Partnerships Model as insight into how staff perceived their work in relationship to the theoretical model.

Table 4.5

Examples of SA field notes linked to the Learning Partnerships Model

Learning Partnership Frame	Assumption or Principle	Example from SA Field Notes
	Knowledge is complex and socially constructed	<i>To curate the student experience through collaborative programs and service in an environment that cultivates a sense of collective community student leaders</i>
		<i>Identity and awareness, Identity making</i>
Challenge	One's identity plays a central role in crafting knowledge claims	<i>Functional units can be done independently but we are unique bc ours fosters a sense of students sharing multiple identities</i>
	Knowledge is mutually constructed via the sharing of expertise and authority	<i>Support in development, walking alongside We work with them and grow with them and learn with them</i>

	Validate student leaders' capacity to know	<i>To create an experience where all students feel celebrated for who they are and supported in whom they want to grow to</i>
Support		<i>Students can work across our whole office in different facets of who they are</i>
	Situate learning in student leader experiences	<i>Providing resources that work well with academic curriculum that fosters a sense of belonging</i>
	Define learning as mutually constructing meaning	<i>Founded with collaboration in mind</i>

The connection to the theoretical framework was strongest when focusing on student identity and the role and positioning of the department but was not carried through the operationalization of the curriculum at a high rate. Learning Partnerships Model did not show up in appreciable ways in engagement strategies based on the number of strategies coded. The SA curriculum reflected a deep commitment to student-centered practice that focused on sense of belonging within the institution. This focus, while integral to the student experience, did not create strategies that encouraged interdependence, mutual collaboration, or shared learning. The curriculum, for example, did not reflect strategies across the functional areas of the department or learning beyond

In terms of the critical praxis model, conscientization was the phase most represented in the SA curriculum. Conscientization is comprised of tenets that most closely align with the

Learning Partnerships Model. The following excerpts provide insight into how the department understood life experiences, formal learning, and relationships (conscientization).

Belonging, place making, connectedness (field notes, purpose)

Identity making (field notes, purpose)

To create an experience where all students feel celebrated for who they are and supported in whom they want to grow to (engagement strategies, learning outcomes)

Life-long learners (field notes, purpose)

Authors of self (field notes, purpose)

Self awareness (field notes, purpose)

Identity and esteem (field notes, purpose)

Sense of confidence in themselves as leaders (field notes, purpose)

Self efficacy (field notes, purpose)

Developing a sense of autonomy (engagement strategies, learning outcomes)

Understand duality of identity – through membership organization and individually (engagement strategies, learning outcomes)

Recognizing the appropriate times to take up space (engagement strategies, learning outcomes)

These excerpts provide insight into how SA staff focuses deeply on self-authorship for students.

Learning Partnerships does not explicitly call for action or reflection; without this demand from

the theoretical framework, the curriculum does not force reflexivity for staff. As SA staff are

centering self-authorship for students, they are then not engaging in their own critical praxis. For

example, one of the excerpts from the purpose section of the field notes indicated “we work with

them and grow with them and learn with them.” The SA staff who were “on the back of the bike”

as the Learning Partnerships Model metaphor works, remained focused on the development of

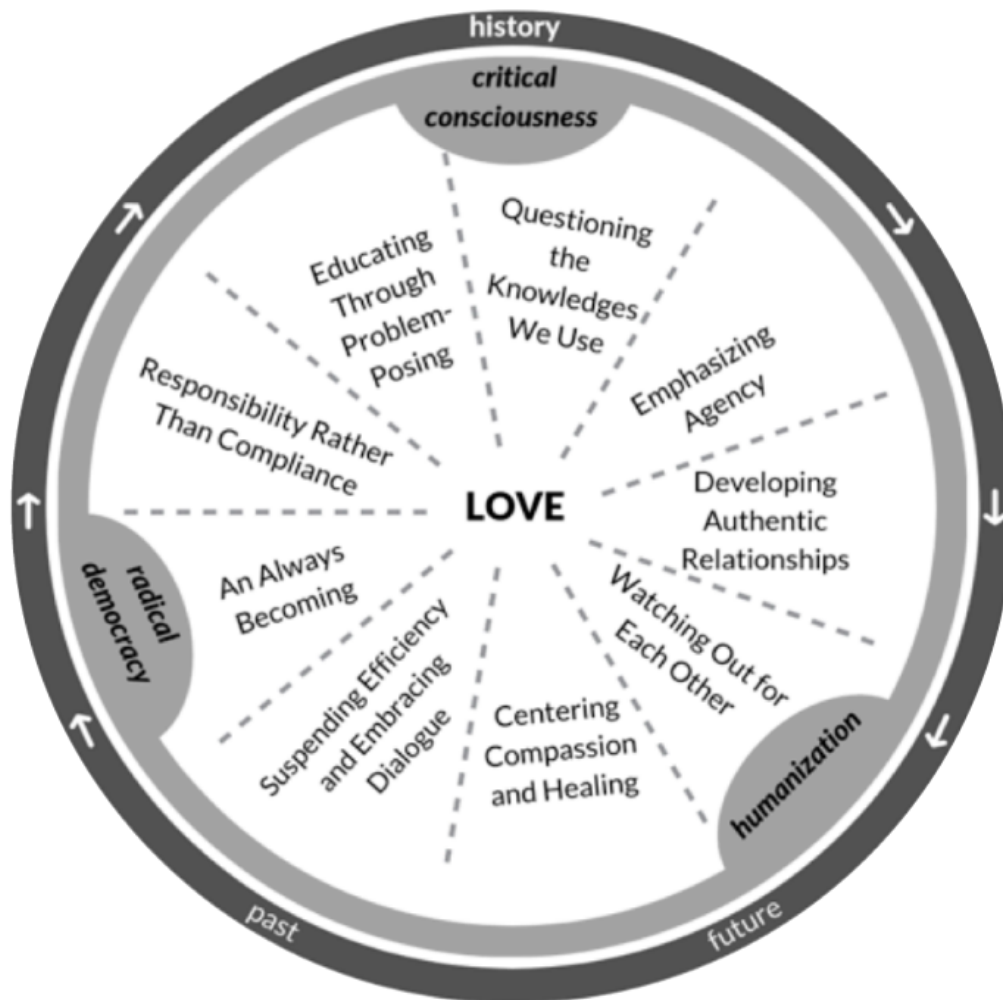
individual students at the expense of collective, systemic reflection and action. In this case, the theoretical framework limited the critical praxis for staff.

Scholars Program

The Scholars Program is one of three major scholarship programs within their division. The SP has the distinction of being named after their institution's most historic civil rights icon, a faculty member who integrated the housing community in the mid-sized city the institution is located. As both the first Black homeowner in a former sundown town and a major champion of marginalized students throughout his storied career, his legacy on campus and within the community is far-reaching. The Scholars Program bears his name, and its principles are rooted in his teachings and philosophy around service to community and society. The SP is a cohort model that accepts 30 students from every entering class who are engaged with the program for the entirety of their undergraduate career; scholars receive a significant scholarship and are required to participate in meetings and events. The SP is managed by two full-time staff members who created 28 engagement strategies across their three learning aims of self-awareness, scholar development, and community care. The Scholar Program grounded its curriculum in ACPA's (2019) Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization. The Imperative (ACPA, 2019) provides a framework for college educators to approach the work of racial justice and decolonization with a mindset rooted in personal agency, humility, curiosity, intellectual transformation, and the joy of considering what can be. Figure 4.3 illustrates the framework.

Figure 4.3

The Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization



The Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization framework is visualized as a circle to honor the practices of many Indigenous cultures, particularly drawing from the medicine wheel. First, on the outer ring of the circle, history is represented as the stream flows around racial justice and decolonization work. “Remembering history can position and reposition student affairs educators as an enormous influence across time and pushes the vanes (principles) forward for action” (ACPA, 2019. p. 11). At the core of the circle is love, as the framers of the Imperative draw on the lineage of student affairs foundational documents that outline the ethic of

care (Gilligan, 1977) the profession is rooted in. The guiding principles form the vanes of the framework: responsibility rather than compliance, responsibility as being, responsibility as action, educating through problem-posing, questioning the knowledge we use, emphasizing agency, developing authentic relationships, watching out for each other, centering compassion and healing, suspending efficiency and embracing dialogue, and finally, an always becoming. These guiding principles are not intended to serve as a checklist but instead continue to inspire possibility models. Finally, the model indicates that embracing the principles of the framework can yield outcomes of critical consciousness, radical democracy, and humanization.

The Scholars Program is the smallest department of the three utilized for this study. The departmental curriculum is, consequently, a smaller sample size. The following code occurrence chart indicates a strong adherence to the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (SIRJD).

Table 4.6

Code co-occurrence table for Scholars Program

Data Source	Equity Centered Language	Transferable Skills	Action	Conscientization	Reflection	SIRJD
Learning Goals	5	4	0	5	8	18
Engagement Strategies	13	4	12	1	7	18
Educational Priority	1	0	1	0	0	1
Field Notes	5	1	1	3	5	13
Scholars Program	26	9	14	9	21	51

The SIRJD is a framework rooted in the agency of student affairs practitioners to affect change (ACPA, 2019). Evidence of SP staff engaging with the framework’s attention to history as the outer stream was easily found in the field notes with practitioners noting “Inspired by the life work of [campus civil rights icon]” and “SP is a tangible reminder of the journey.” From the engagement strategies to the field notes, the SP materials reveal a focus on developing scholars holistically and in the legacy of the campus namesake. The following excerpts are linked back to the vanes of the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization as evidence of the curriculum’s adherence to the framework.

Table 4.7

Evidence of Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization and SP curriculum

Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization vane	Evidence from SP Curriculum
Responsibility rather than compliance	<i>Responsibility – in a greater context as a student, in a community, in this world</i> (field notes, purpose)
Responsibility as being	<i>Discover/acknowledge their personal agency</i> (learning outcome from engagement strategies) <i>Identify ways to practice self-care that is effective for themselves, focusing on growth</i> (learning outcome from engagement strategies)
Responsibility as action	<i>Giving confidence to enter new spaces and create change</i> (field notes, purpose)
Questioning the knowledge we use	<i>Learn how to be an Ally and continue the process of learning/unlearning.</i> (learning outcome from engagement strategies)
Emphasizing agency	<i>Scholar discovery of self and ability to understand themselves in relation to the knowledge/experiences of others</i> (field notes,

	purpose)
Developing authentic relationships	<i>Learn communication methods that consider others and respect difference</i> (learning outcome from engagement strategies)
Watching out for each other	<i>mentorship roles – mentor and mentee</i> (field notes, purpose)
	<i>Community care</i> (field notes, purpose)
	<i>Re-imagining how we could be in community</i> (field notes, purpose)
Centering compassion and healing	<i>Exercising the highest level of cultural competence and compassionate care through service and advocacy</i> (educational priority statement)
Suspending efficiency and embracing dialogue	<i>Space where students can have tough conversations</i> (field notes, purpose)
	<i>Embracing dialogue</i> (field notes, purpose)
An always becoming	<i>Reflection and growth create opportunities for life-long service and learning</i> (field notes, purpose)

These examples from the field notes and educational strategies, specifically, display an alignment with the theoretical framework. For example, “discover/acknowledge their personal agency” is a learning outcomes from the SP Scholars’ Retreat engagement strategy that closely aligns with responsibility as being, a vane in the SIRJD that calls for seeing self as able to disrupt and transform spaces—linking personal agency to transformative power is one of the ways the SP staff envisions the theoretical framework in action.

The SP curriculum also displayed evidence of the critical praxis model in action for staff. The reflection phase of the critical praxis model was particularly evident in engagement strategies, which aligns with the SP’s mission of service. The following table displays the links between the SP’s curriculum design and the critical praxis model—particularly between the field notes from the facilitated sessions and engagement strategies.

Table 4.8

Table displaying evidence of the critical praxis model and the SP curriculum

Critical Praxis Model Stage	Operational Tenet of CPM	Evidence from SP
Action	Challenging dominant narratives	<i>Empowering their communities through service and engagement.</i> <i>Learn communication methods that consider others and respect difference</i>
	Disrupting power dynamics	<i>Learn effective collaboration and Intersectional Leadership</i> <i>Learn how to an Ally and continue the process of learning/unlearning.</i>
	Resisting neoliberal forces	<i>Learning as an act of service</i> <i>Sharing knowledge beyond the University</i>
	Life Experiences	<i>Experiences that challenge and test</i> <i>Discover/acknowledge their personal agency</i> <i>Help students be comfortable to articulate their stories</i> <i>let them be their teachers – about their own lived experience</i>
Conscientization	Formal Learning	<i>Sense of community within larger OU community</i> <i>cultural competencies</i>
	Relationships	<i>Scholar discovery of self and ability to understand themselves in relation to the knowledge/experiences of others</i> <i>mentorship roles – mentor and mentee</i> <i>Sense of belonging</i>
Reflection	Asking critical questions	<i>Space where students can have tough conversations</i>

Learn/understand the impact of bias, privilege, and systems of oppression

Be Questioning

critical thinking skills

Embracing dialogue

Reflection and growth

Reframing
assumptions

Identify ways to practice self-care that is effective for themselves. Focusing on growth

Responsibility – in a greater context as a student, in a community, in this world

Giving confidence to enter new spaces and create change

create opportunities for life-long service and learning.

Envisioning a better
world

Discover resources that promote personal growth and an awareness of the collective

Re-imagining how we could be in community

Through scholars understanding their own moral responsibility and agency re-imagining the way, things could be.

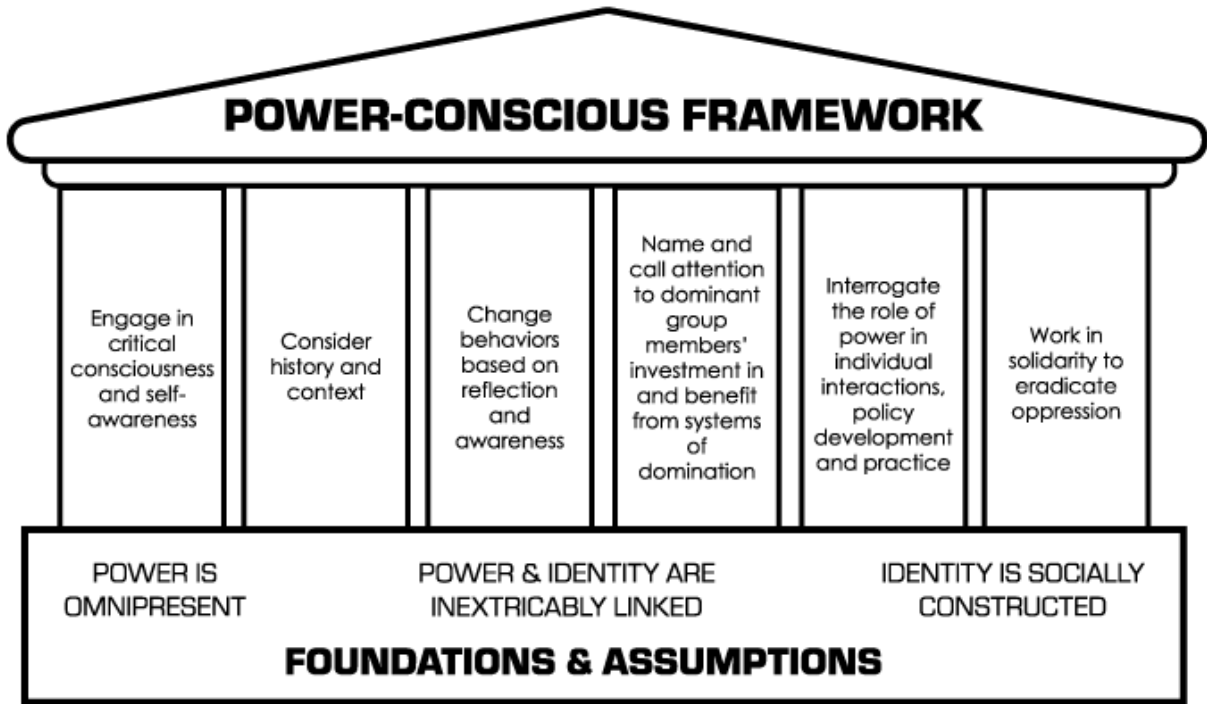
The Scholars Program’s service-centered mission is made clear in the curriculum. The educational priority, *Scholars Program will cultivate a community of scholars who are committed to empowering their communities through service and engagement*, provides a deep focus on envisioning a better world (reflection phase) and building relationships (conscientization phase).

Gender Center

The Gender Center occupies a liminal space on campus—at many institutions, its functions would be distributed across several offices. The GC serves as a gender-based violence prevention education center, maintains a victim advocacy helpline, creates space for gender identity programming on campus, and is the LGBTQ+ resource center for the institution. The seven staff members created 41 engagement strategies that spanned three departmental learning goals: socially just leadership, advocacy, and personal awareness. The GC utilized Linder’s (2019) power-conscious approach as its theoretical framework. A power-conscious framework asks practitioners, activists, and scholars to address both the symptoms and roots of oppression rather than attending to only the impacts of oppression (Linder, 2019). The approach is illustrated in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

Image depicting the power-conscious approach



The assumptions that undergird the approach include 1] power is omnipresent in every interaction; 2] power and social identities are inextricably linked, and 3] the historical context of identity and oppression cannot be ignored (Linder, 2018). These assumptions uphold the tenets of the power-conscious approach. The first tenet, *develop a critical consciousness and engage in self-reflective behaviors*, requires people (particularly those with dominant identities) to be aware of who they are and how they take up space. The next tenet, *consider history and context when examining issues of oppression*, challenges the ahistoricism woven into policies, practices, and strategies for addressing oppression. The third tenet, *change behaviors based on reflection and awareness*, demands that people who have engaged in developing a critical consciousness and examining the history and context of oppression move beyond awareness into individual-led change in behavior. The next tenet, *name and call attention to dominant group members' investment in, and benefit from, systems of domination*, encourages individuals to move past their

own actions and begin to work toward addressing systems of oppression, including their own complicity in those systems. Once people have progressed from individual change to systemic change, we must also pay attention to the ways power manifests. The fifth tenet, *interrogate the role of power in individual interactions, policy development, and implementation of practice*, leads to a deeper awareness of the role of power in well-intended practices. The final tenet, *work in solidarity to address oppression*, requires individuals who have engaged in the work of the first five tenets to work together to address systemic oppression in multiple forms. These underlying assumptions and six tenets provided the framework that Gender Center used to create its curriculum.

The Gender Center utilized an explicitly critical theoretical framework. The application of theory in its curriculum was most evident in engagement strategies, with 70% of strategies showing evidence of a power-conscious framework. Table 9 provides an overview of how theory was embedded in the GC curriculum design.

Table 4.9

Chart with instances of code occurrence for Gender Center

Data Source	Equity Centered Language	Transferable Skills	Action	Conscientization	Reflection	Power Conscious Approach
Learning Goals	15	5	4	5	2	8
Engagement Strategies	16	7	11	22	28	32
Educational Priority	1	0	1	0	1	2
Field Notes	2	3	6	3	5	10
Gender Center Total	34	15	22	30	36	52

Engagement strategies are the operationalization of the curriculum; they serve as the educational opportunities and interventions to enact the goals of the curriculum. Theory, in this case the power-conscious approach, was most evident in the engagement strategies and their associated learning outcomes. The following excerpted learning outcomes were tied to overarching engagement strategies. When connected to a tenet of the power-conscious approach, theory deeply impacted curriculum in the many ways that it was embedded in the learning outcomes and engagement strategies developed by the GC staff.

Table 4.10

Table displaying the connection between power-conscious approach and excerpts from the GC curriculum

Tenets of a Power-Conscious Approach	Examples of Power-Conscious Approach in Engagement Strategies and Learning Outcomes
Develop a critical consciousness and engage in self-reflective behaviors	<i>Articulate their identities.</i> <i>Describe the impact of their voting/civic engagement on others</i>
Consider history and context when examining issues of oppression	<i>Articulate the progress we have made in the past</i> <i>Identify issues facing the LGBTQ+ communities in the upcoming elections.</i>
Change behaviors based on reflection and awareness	<i>Identify skills for building and maintaining healthy relationships.</i> <i>Describe how they can contribute to making positive change.</i>

Name and call attention to dominant group members' investment in, and benefit from, systems of domination	<p><i>Identify issues facing the LGBTQ+ communities in the upcoming elections.</i></p> <p><i>Recognize red flags for unhealthy and abusive relationships.</i></p>
Interrogate the role of power in individual interactions, policy development, and implementation of practice	<p><i>Describe the impact of their voting/civic engagement on others</i></p> <p><i>Identify issues facing the LGBTQ+ communities in the upcoming elections</i></p> <p><i>Identify skills for building and maintaining healthy relationships.</i></p>
Work in solidarity to address oppression	<p><i>Foster communities of well-being.</i></p> <p><i>Learn how to help a friend who is experiencing dating violence.</i></p> <p><i>Learn how to step in as an active bystander to prevent sexual violence.</i></p>

These excerpted learning outcomes associated with GC's engagement strategies provide the most evidence of theory driving the work of the department. The alignment between the work of the center and the theory it claims is made clear by the focus on each tenet of the power-conscious approach. For example, "describe the impact of their voting/civic engagement on others" was a learning outcome associated with a program named Pride and Politics where students engage with a panel of local activists and civic leaders to focus on the impact of local politics on the LGBTQ+ community. The program engaged with the power dynamic between individual voters and local systems entrenched in the community. This program from the GC is a clear link to their theory, particularly the tenet calling to interrogate the role of power in individual interactions,

policy development, and implementation of practice. Another example, “learn how to step in as an active bystander to prevent sexual violence” is a learning outcomes pulled from the GC’s consent education engagement strategy and call back to the power-conscious approach tenet of working in solidarity to address oppression. Finally, an engagement strategy for LGBTQ+ history month was associated with the learning outcome *articulate the progress we have made in the past*, which invited students to consider history and context when examining issues of oppression in a really local and place-based way.

The GC used strategies that engaged, explicitly, with power dynamics rather than relying on skill building alone. This attention to the underlying assumptions of the power-conscious approach created a strong adherence to the framework throughout the curriculum.

Critical praxis was evident throughout the GC’s curriculum, from the field notes to the engagement strategies. The following excerpts from the field notes that focused on purpose and function of the GC are linked to the operational phase of the critical praxis model. These excerpts provide evidence that practitioners were engaging in these phases, via written text, even if unaware of the critical praxis model at the time.

Table 4.11

Table displaying examples of critical praxis model within GC curriculum

Critical Praxis Model Stage	Operational Tenet of CPM	Examples from GC Curriculum
Action	Challenging dominant narratives	<i>This shit matters</i> (field notes, purpose) <i>Hold institution accountable</i> (field notes, purpose)
	Disrupting power dynamics	<i>We know people are not heard, we want them to be heard</i> (field notes, purpose) <i>Make active change in society</i> (field notes, purpose)

		<i>“insisting” on accountability (field notes, purpose)</i>
	Resisting neoliberal forces	<i>The physical acknowledgement that institutions were created for certain types of people—we are a site of disruption for people who exist outside of that identity. (field notes, purpose)</i> <i>empower community members to create affirming, violence-free communities and actively work toward a just and equitable society. (educational priority statement)</i>
	Life Experiences	<i>Personal & self-awareness matter (field notes, purpose)</i> <i>Identify strategies to navigate the coming-home process (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i> <i>Identify resources to support their well-being (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i>
Conscientization	Formal Learning	<i>We’ve become a place of expertise and knowledge (field notes, purpose)</i> <i>Educate to know about self and others (field notes, purpose)</i>
	Relationships	<i>Create a safe and inclusive environment where people can thrive (field notes, purpose)</i> <i>Articulate their own personal boundaries (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i> <i>Identify healthy characteristics of mentorship relationship (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i>
Reflection	Asking critical questions	<i>Describe how they can contribute to making positive change. (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i> <i>Ability to evaluate impact (awareness of impact) (field notes, purpose)</i>

Reframing assumptions	<p><i>Discuss multiple examples of both verbal and non-verbal consent. (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i></p> <p><i>Define consent and examine how it is communicated. (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i></p>
<hr/>	
Envisioning a better world	<p><i>Ultimate goal is education (field notes, purpose)</i></p> <p><i>View society holistically (field notes, purpose)</i></p> <p><i>Describe the impact of their voting/civic engagement on others. (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i></p> <p><i>Describe how they can contribute to making positive change. (engagement strategy learning outcome)</i></p>

Overall, the GC displayed evidence of theory alignment as well as critical praxis in their curriculum design process. The attention to collective and social action, as required by both the power-conscious approach and the critical praxis model, is clear in the field notes as well as the engagement strategies. The learning goals of the GC—socially just leadership, advocacy, and personal awareness—only tacitly imply collective action (particularly advocacy) but the field notes and engagement strategies reveal, more explicitly, an adherence to the implementation of the theoretical model and the critical praxis model.

The field notes from the curriculum design workshops reveal that practitioners themselves were engaging in the phases of the critical praxis model. For example, the data on the Trello board regarding the purpose and function of the GC, staff listed “hold institution accountable” and “[we are] the physical acknowledgement that institutions were created for certain types of people—we are a site of disruption for people who exist outside of that identity.”

These clear links to the action phase, particularly challenging dominant narratives and resisting neoliberal forces, show that critical praxis was happening in the curriculum development phase for the staff designing the curriculum. This is reified by examples from the conscientization phase (“we’ve become a place of expertise and knowledge”) and the reflection phase (“View society holistically”) indicating that staff were able to move through the critical praxis model while designing a curriculum for students that also adhered to both their theoretical framework and the critical praxis model.

Findings Across Department Curricula

The findings within each department provided additional context to a set of findings that occurred across the curricula.

Equity-centered language provides subversive version of criticality in spaces where emancipatory language is limited

In chapter three, I referenced the context around the development of these curricula in the summer of 2020 in a politically conservative state. Today, in 2023, I have analyzed this data in the context of a full attack on critical theory across the United States. At the time of this dissertation, state legislatures across the country (including the state where these departments are located) are engaged in a full-throated attack on critical race theory—lawmakers introduced 563 measures against critical race theory in 2021 and 2022 (Alexander et al., 2023). A vast majority of these bills target K-12 public education, but at least 10% target higher education as well (Alexander et al., 2023). It is with this context in mind that equity-centered language in the curricula must be examined. Table 4.12 describes the code co-occurrence between each department and instances of equity-centered language within their curriculum.

Table 4.12

Code co-occurrence chart for equity-centered language by department

	Student Activities	Scholars Program	Gender Center
Equity-Centered Language	37	26	34

The example excerpts from each department provide insight into how each department considers equity in its work. The SA staff focused on “identity and awareness” and “effective allyship” as recurring examples within the field notes from their curriculum design sessions. A learning outcome associated with several different engagement strategies referenced “engage in intentional cross-cultural collaborations,” identifying difference as a positive attribute. In the Scholars Program, the equity-centered language was more explicitly focused on issues of power: “learn/understand the impact of bias, privilege, and systems of oppression” was a re-occurring learning outcome. Finally, the Gender Center focused on “safe and affirming spaces” and named “a just and equitable society” in their educational priority as the overarching point of their curriculum.

Equity-centered language was used in each curriculum as a sort of proxy for more explicitly liberatory or emancipatory language. The field notes, serving as a conversational text piece of staff throughout their curriculum development, reflect a deep commitment to justice-oriented work while the public-facing documents of each curriculum soften that criticality to more publicly palatable language.

Selection of critical theory leads to more critical praxis

The data reflected a higher level of adherence to the critical praxis model for staff when an inherently critical theoretical framework that moves into collective action was selected for students. Stated differently, when a theoretical framework was selected that was limited to individual student development, the critical praxis for staff was structurally inhibited.

The code occurrence chart between theoretical framework and the phases of the critical praxis model revealed a high level of conscientization co-occurring with the Learning Partnerships Model, but far less reflection and action, the operationalization of the model.

Table 4.13

Code co-occurrence chart for theoretical framework and phases of critical praxis model

Theoretical Framework	Action	Conscientization	Reflection
Learning Partnerships Model	10	31	12
Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization	14	9	21
Power-Conscious Approach	22	30	36

Conscientization, characterized by life experiences, formal learning, and relationships, had a high overlap with the Learning Partnerships Model, which is characterized by engaging in self work, such as developing personal authority and learning to be interdependent. However, the Learning Partnerships Model never moves into collective action, a requirement for the critical praxis model. This is reflected in the relatively low co-occurrence of Learning Partnerships Model with the Action and Reflection stages of the critical praxis model.

In contrast, the other two theoretical frameworks analyzed in this data, Power-Conscious Approaches and the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization had relatively higher instances of both action and reflection. The tenets and phases of these frameworks require

movement past working on the self or situating only in one's own knowledge or lived experience. The theories' push toward collective action results in more evidence of the critical praxis model in motion. For example, the vanes of the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization focus on all three phases; *educating through problem posing* and *suspending efficiency and embracing dialogue* are clear examples of the reflection phase of the critical praxis model. *Emphasizing agency* and *centering compassion and healing* reflect the action phase, while *developing authentic relationships* and *an always becoming* showcase conscientization. The power-conscious approach, similarly, reflects all three phases of the critical praxis model. The reflection phase is characterized in the power-conscious approach with the *engage in critical consciousness and self-awareness* and *interrogate the role of power in individual interactions, policy development, and practice* tenets. The power-conscious approach is explicitly focused on action, *change behaviors based on reflection and awareness* and *work in solidarity to eradicate oppression* clearly naming action-oriented movement. The focus on history and context, as well as how identity is socially constructed reflects conscientization.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings within the three departmental curricula as well as across all the curricula that was analyzed. The departmental contexts provided rich context for understanding how the critical praxis model can be driven by curriculum as well as how the selection of theoretical frameworks impacts curriculum development. The next chapter discusses the findings of this chapter as well as implications for student affairs practitioners.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Throughout this qualitative content analysis, I explored how theoretical frameworks are taken up and contribute to critical praxis in a curricular approach in student affairs. Three departmental curricula from one institution provided the data for this study. The research questions guiding this study included: What elements of curriculum design reflect critical praxis? How are theoretical models and frameworks implemented in a curricular approach? Departmental curriculum documents provided the texts for the content analysis of this study.

The current and historical literature of the field of student affairs generally agrees that the common objective of promoting constructive transformation in college students is to facilitate personal growth, enhance cognitive complexity, foster the development of values, and facilitate overall wellness (Marine & Gilbert, 2022). This is often achieved with a heavy focus on the individual student—the first and second wave of student development theory (Jones & Stewart, 2016) are characterized by developmental understandings of the experiences of college students and an explicit attention to one’s social identity (Jones, 2019). Jones (2019) cautions that we should not frame the waves as chronologically sequential, saying

In other words, third-wave theoretical advances may become ‘foundational,’ and more recent theory development may also be more characteristic of first-wave theorizing than third. In this way, I also want to suggest that it is possible to hold two waves together (to extend the metaphor) in that we may see both developmental trajectories and attention to larger structures of inequality as central to what we call *student development*. (p.8)

Much of the work of work of student affairs centers second-wave identity-focused theory and first-wave environment-focused theory (Harper et al. 2009; Jones & Stewart, 2016).

Increasingly, in today’s climate, that work has called for practitioners to engage in challenging

the status quo—to pay explicit attention to the systemic ways that structures of inequality are reinforced in higher education (Marine & Gilbert, 2022; Jones, 2019). The work of student affairs today asks practitioners to bridge the individual development experience with the sociocultural contexts in which all individuals move—a particular characteristic of critical theorizing (Jones, 2019).

The departmental curricula examined in this study provided evidence of critical praxis for student affairs staff as well as how theoretical frameworks impact curriculum design. I utilized field notes from curriculum development sessions, published educational priority statements, learning goals, engagement strategies, and learning outcomes. The following section provide my interpretation of these findings.

Impact of Theoretical Framework on Curriculum

The data reflected a higher level of adherence to the critical praxis model for staff when an inherently critical theoretical framework that moves into collective action was selected for students. The selection of a theoretical framework is not often discussed in curriculum design spaces such as the Institute for the Curricular Approach. The session descriptions available from the 2022 Institute (ACPA, 2022) do not include description of how to select a theory or how to integrate theory and scholarship into the curriculum design. The existing literature about residential curriculums (Lichterman, 2016; Sanders, 2018; Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019; Kropf, 2020; Pernotto, 2021; Scheibler, 2021; Williams et al., 2021) does not spend significant time on the theory application within the curricular approach. This implies that for many doing the work of the curricular approach in higher education, theory selection may be an afterthought.

In their 2020 work, *The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs*, Kerr, Edwards, Tweedy, Lichterman, and Knerr offer

If the learning goals focus on identity development, scholarship in this area will require significant exploration and expert consultation. If learning goals are specified in self-advocacy or self-efficacy, the relevant literature must be mined to identify the right content and develop effective techniques intended to stimulate student learning. (p. 27)

While utilizing scholarship by specific topic is certainly necessary to deeply engage in the phenomenon this suggestion leaves room for a “hit and miss” theoretical framework approach. In contrast, my findings suggest that the overall curriculum is impacted by the theoretical traditions used; as such I am advocating that curriculum be rooted in a critical framework that addresses issues of power across learning goals and outcomes.

Leveraging the natural possibilities with the student affairs practitioner role to promote justice-oriented practice has increasingly become a priority for the profession (Moody & Wall, 2020; Pitcher 2015; ACPA, 2018). The foundational theoretical literature of the field—outlined in Chapter I in this study—is characterized by moving towards equity, justice, and criticality in practice. Increasingly, practitioners are being called to challenge the status quo (Giroux, 2002). The findings in this study suggest that in order for the field to answer this call, we must utilize theories that engage criticality and move toward collective action and reflection. In a 2016 *New Directions for Student Services* volume, Elisa Abes suggested “Theorists are not fully embracing the possibilities of critical and poststructural scholarship to re-envision student development theory, often centering the dominant while critiquing it” (p. 14).

“Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end” (hooks, 1994, p. 61). In

Teaching to Transgress, bell hooks (1994) called on educators to transform what we expect of theories to include critical goals of social transformation. First wave theorist William Perry (1968) pointed out that no one theory could ever capture the complexity of the whole student. The findings of this study suggest that we, must, as a field answer Abes, Jones, and Stewart's (2019) call to "rethink student development in ways that acknowledge, critique, and reconstruct core theoretical constructs" (p. ix).

Critical Praxis for Student Affairs Practitioners

The central role of any profession can be found in interrogating the statements that speak on behalf of the profession's values and goals. As outlined in Chapter II, student affairs has produced multiple documents that call for the holistic support of students (ACE, 1937; ACE, 1949; NASPA, 1997; ACPA, 2004) over the course of the field's history. In the original 1937 version of the Student Personnel Point of View (ACE), practitioners were made invisible; the document only referred to the work of the field and not the actual workers. By 1949 the updated Student Personnel Point of View (ACE) called for the nurturing of the professional development of these student personnel workers. Today student affairs staff are asked to demonstrate a wide range of competencies related to presumed best practices in the field (ACPA, 2015).

The design of student affairs organizations impacts practitioners' ability to engage in critical praxis. Kuh (2003) pointed out the difference between organizational structures and organizational behaviors—the latter reflects how individuals within the overall organization actually bring to life the culture, values, and shared identity within the organization. Therefore, it follows, that student affairs organizations can espouse values that individual staff members do not enact. Student affairs practitioners have long advocated for marginalized experiences and

voices across the higher education context (Jones & Stewart, 2016; Dugan 2011) but there is some danger in the role of being the “justice arbiter” on college campuses. Dugan (2011) questions “Does perceived expertise effectively let student affairs professionals off the hook for their own learning?” (p. 400).

The inference of expertise in a topic that requires lifelong learning and unlearning as well as critical reflection can be attributed to both the demands on student affairs organizations as well as professional socialization from graduate preparation programs and professional organizations alike (Dugan, 2011; Marine & Gilbert, 2022). Dugan (2011) posited that the graduate programs in student affairs offer course work that center development theory and the facilitation of student learning but then do not train new professionals to do this work personally. The leading professional associations of the field offer “Social Justice and Inclusion” as a competency area for practitioners—stating “social justice is defined as both a process and a goal that includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to address issues of oppression, privilege, and power” (ACPA, 2015, p. 30). The implication remains that critical, justice-oriented work is a static goal that can be ‘reached.’ In contrast, my findings suggest that ongoing critical reflection of practitioners is central to the effective development of critical curriculum.

Implications for Practice

Given the findings of this study about the theoretical frameworks and curriculum design and critical praxis in student affairs, I offer three major implications for practitioners to consider:

1. The theoretical frameworks utilized by student affairs practitioners must move toward collective action to reach the stated and espoused goals of the field. The findings of

this study suggest that the sole focus on individual student development is at the cost of not only transformative practices, but practitioners' ability to engage in their own critical praxis.

2. Scholars and practitioners must work together to offer more research on critical praxis in student affairs. There is a long legacy of critical scholarship in higher education (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Jones & Stewart, 2016; Abes et al., 2019) but student affairs work needs research that focuses on both criticality *and* praxis. Practitioners are most closely aligned with the day-to-day realities and challenges of enacting critical work, and therefore uniquely situated to contribute to this literature in meaningful ways.
3. Practitioners must deeply engage with theoretical frameworks to both design their curriculum and inform learning goals and engagement strategies. The literature of student affairs has the power to transform individuals, but also institutional practices and policies. If the goal of our work is to “make it possible to think differently and thus open to the possibility for acting differently” (Gannon & Davis, 2007, p. 78) then utilizing (specifically) critical theories to frame the development of curriculum is imperative.

Implications for Future Research

I completed this study focusing on the design of three curricula in higher education. This study specifically engaged in *text* of the curriculum. The texts used in this study included the design process and engagement strategies for a planned curriculum. It follows, that future research would focus on the execution of the curriculum and any assessment and evaluation data

that may exist to parse out if the learning goals and outcomes are being met. This work is partially taken up in Scheibler's (2021) work regarding residential curriculum from students' perspectives, however further exploration of the experience of practitioners and students is warranted.

Future research must take up the essential role that practitioners play in shaping student experiences, and the complexity of their work in navigating student needs, institutional policies, and external pressures while creating critical practices. By focusing on critical practitioners, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of student affairs work, including the unique challenges and opportunities that arise in this field. Moreover, practitioner-focused research can also provide insights into the professional development and support needs of those working in student affairs. This research can inform the development of critical training and professional development programs that are tailored to the specific needs of practitioners, ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills required to promote positive student outcomes.

Finally, while there is an emergence of literature surrounding equity-centered assessment (Henning & Lundquist, 2022; Gardner, 2021; Lundquist & Henning, 2020) there is a need to develop assessment practices that are based in individual and collective reflexivity to better understand the efficacy of critical practices. These practices will likely not follow the field's most trusted forms of assessment (survey design, etc.) or data collection. Further research is needed to engage with how the field's neoliberal tendencies surrounding assessment (Marine & Gilbert, 2022) can transform, as "the goal is to make as livable of an experience as possible for the people who are the most impacted by multiple intersections of oppression, rather than quantifying change as a measurement of accomplishment" (Marine & Gilbert, 2022, p. 198).

Conclusion

As I engaged in this study centering the curricular approach and critical praxis in student affairs, I experienced shifts in my own thinking and belief structures about the work I have dedicated my professional career to. The departments represented as data in this study are populated by thoughtful and imaginative practitioners who show up on behalf of students every day. Their work, oriented around the curriculums they built and the capacity they have to enact change, is so impactful on every student they come into contact with. Our ability, as a field, to *do better* is often mitigated by organizational structures beyond our control. However, the framework of critical praxis a compelling response to the gaps created by in our ability to achieve liberatory education. I have a new vision for my own practice, for the way I lead, and for the way I teach—rooted in the notion that critical praxis can occur anywhere within my practice and the curriculum I operate within. My hope is that this study provides a jumping off point for further conversations about enacting critical praxis in conjunction with the curricular approach within student affairs. Generations of future students deserve this from us; and perhaps just as importantly, so do our future colleagues and practitioners.

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