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Improving Perceptions of On-Campus Activism: Preparing Student Affairs Professionals to Support Student Activists

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Preparing Student Affairs Professionals to Support Student Activists

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the Black Student Liberatory Coalition at Bryn Mawr College. Your vision and determination continue to inspire me and my approach to this work.

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As with any endeavor, this milestone culminating my graduate program was not accomplished alone. So many students, staff and faculty contributed to this work from brief conversations to assigning a particularly thought-provoking reading and I am grateful for every interaction. Here, I will take the time to pay particular thanks to those who have made this all possible.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the perception of student activism at institutions of higher education and proposes a starting point to begin to change it. Increasing numbers of students are involved in on-campus activism but the typical perception remains negative despite its benefits. Using a transformative philosophy of education as a framework, I argue that activism is an undervalued form of student leadership and activists' desire to push for change is integral to both their development and that of the institution where they attend. Through reviewing historical literature of past campus movements, the roles of student affairs professionals, and the dynamics at the intersection of power and identity, this work explores how student affairs professionals can work as *tempered radicals* to support student activists.

Centering the core tenets of critical action research, student activists are integral to the formation and implementation of the proposed program. The aim is to educate and inspire student affairs professionals to work within their roles to support student activists as leaders on campus through a series of workshops and the creation of a network to support each other in this work. I provide a program timeline, workshop outlines, budgetary considerations and methods of evaluation to assess how to program works to shift campus perspectives of activism over time. Student activism is a beneficial form of leadership and civic engagement and this work aims to demonstrate this in the hopes of increasing institutional support and resources for student activism in the future.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Being part of the Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs (HEPSA) program at West Chester University has been a two-fold educational experience. Firstly, I have learned more about the profession I have been working in for over four years, but it was also my first experience of being educated as a student in the United States (U.S.). Attending university in the United Kingdom (UK), where I grew up, and not participating in the U.S. higher education system until I was in my early thirties, has given me a different perspective of the current higher education landscape in the U.S. As someone who believes everyone should have the right to an educative, meaningful, transformative higher education experience, no matter your background or economic status, the fact that not everyone receives this is extremely problematic.

Rocky Foundations

Higher education in the United States lacks the support and resources minoritised students need to succeed and these students are forced to try and create them themselves (Lantz et al., 2016; Linder et al., 2019). I use the term 'minoritized' groups or students throughout this thesis, in which 'minoritized' "refer[s] to the process [action vs. noun] of student minoritization" (Benitez, 2010, as cited in Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016, p. 278). This term more fully encapsulates the systemic exclusion minoritised students have experienced in higher education historically and how that exclusion has been institutionalised.

Students also might feel that their personal measures of success and cultural wealth do not fit with the ideals of their institution further cultivating a lack of belonging (Chang et al., 2019; Linder et al., 2019). This lack of belonging and support means minoritised students have less access to meaningful, educative and transformative experiences at university as they are just trying to survive (Byrd et al., 2021; Linder et al., 2019). This mis-match of values and

expectations between minoritized students and predominantly white institutions can in turn lead to students engaging in activism.

My Thematic Concern

Student affairs professionals should provide support for students during their time in higher education but when it comes to activism, they are often ill-prepared to navigate their roles as part of the institution (Griffin et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2022). Nearly one in ten incoming first-year students plan on engaging in activism on campus, with Black students being twice as likely to engage as white students (Eagan et al., 2015, as cited in Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016). With institutions of higher education being microcosms of the larger society, many of the most impactful national movements in history have been played out on campus (Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016; Jason, 2018; Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). Given this reality, it is inevitable that student affairs professionals will experience student activism in their roles and their current lack of preparedness will be problematic for students, professionals and institutions alike.

Making Change

During the Fall of 2020, I was working at Bryn Mawr College (BMC), a predominantly white institution originally designed for wealthy, upper class, cis-gendered women. While working there, the undergraduate students, led by the Bryn Mawr Strike Collective now called the Black Student Liberatory Coalition, went on strike. This strike originated in response to an incendiary email sent to Haverford College students from their president to discourage them from protesting the death of Walter Wallace, a 27-year-old man shot in Philadelphia by two police officers (Rushing et al., 2020). As Haverford College and BMC have a close connection both geographically and institutionally, BMC students stood in support of their peers to protest this institutional response. This initial action towards Haverford College evolved into a larger

protest against the lack of visible action towards the demands posed to BMC administration in the Summer of 2020 and an updated list of demands was issued.

These demands were centered around the inequities of the existing structure and culture of BMC, the lack of transparency on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and the lack of inclusive resources that cultivate a sense of belonging for minoritised students (Bryn Mawr Strike Collective, 2020). All issues centered around the mis-match of values and expectations between minoritised students and institutions. Similar demands had arisen at many other prestigious, primarily white institutions as the national consciousness was raised once again around the inherent white-centric structures of the United States and how this impacts minoritised groups after the police brutality publically witnessed in early 2020 was followed by uprisings across the world in response (Weissman, 2020).

In this particular moment of student activism on campus, I noticed several factors that hindered resolutions and forward progress. Lack of communication during the early part of the semester between the senior administration and the students led the students to believe that no work was being done despite 'behind the scenes' discussions and action planning taking place. This lack of communication was exacerbated during the strike as there were no established forms of dialogue between these two groups, leading to further divides and mis-interpretations. Secondly, the issues addressed in the demands are considered life or death for the impacted students (Logan et al., 2017, as cited in Wheatle & Commodore, 2019) but the urgency behind the response to find solutions by BMC did not reflect an understanding or appreciation of this sentiment. The time spent engaging in activism was seen as a loss of education, as opposed to the opportunity for experiential learning and engagement in a non-traditional setting. Student affairs professionals who did not hold senior administration positions were largely absent from this

action on both sides. They were not the subject of the demands from students nor were they able to reach the activists to support them in their work. It seemed students did not see the value in using the expertise and positionality of those in student affairs and the staff were unsure of how best to navigate their roles in the situation. While there had been previous activism on Bryn Mawr's campus, it seemed that there had been no additional preparation for a future scenario and so it was not able to be supported any more effectively.

Institutional Impact

As mentioned previously, student activism is a common response to injustices on campus or in the broader society. When talking about injustice or inequity on campus, often these injustices are counter to the mission statements of the institutions and can negate the actions of the students (Anderson, 2019; Byrd et al., 2021; Torres-Harding et al., 2015). Hoffman & Mitchell (2016) also note that institutional responses tend to use institutionalised diversity language that "can be used to reassert a commitment that is not backed up by action" (p. 280) which can result in the responsibility for change put back on the shoulders of the minoritised communities raising the issues. The institutionalisation of diversity and inclusion allows these values to be connected to institutions through the simple addition of language, and often only in ways that align with existing institutional values such as "engagement" and "commitment to excellence" (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016, p. 280). Ahmed (2012) suggested this additional language is not always accompanied by the necessary underlying shifts in institutional actions or culture and therefore describes this language as "non-performative" in that it does not deliver what it states (as cited in Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016, p. 280).

Institutional response does not always bring change, enforce action or reparations and can often exacerbate an institution's relationship with its students. Putting the onus on the

administration alone can often lead to lackluster and unsatisfying responses that recentre majority culture. As Hoffman and Mitchell (2016) and Jacoby (2017) point out, associating student activism with institutional administration means it is no longer seen as dissent because it has become systematic and institutionalised. For example, several committees were created in the aftermath of the strike at BMC to address many of the demands made by the Bryn Mawr Strike Collective. However, through trying to find consensus and absorbing this important work it into the institutional structure, much of the momentum gained in the strike was lost, eliminating the urgency felt by the students. Research has shown that students often see administrators as gatekeepers as opposed to collaborators and wish that they had more access to interact with them (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). It is therefore more crucial for institutions, and student affairs professionals in particular, to foster a culture of activism and create spaces where activists can express themselves and engage in critical reflection and dialogue with faculty and staff, in turn is also important for overall growth of the campus culture (Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Jacoby, 2017).

Importance of Activism

The world and the student population are constantly changing, yet institutions of higher education are not. Admissions offices are happy to put the changing faces and demographics on their marketing materials but this is not reflected in the support, resources and spaces provided once a student is past the door, further commodifying their humanity (Bryn Mawr Strike Collective, 2020). I have seen suggestions and solutions brought forth, acknowledged, and often swept aside, opting for the status quo and hoping the student(s) will soon graduate or forget. It took weeks of prolonged, intense student activism to make change at BMC at the expense of those students fighting and the recorded documentation that senior leadership will resign if no

progress is made. Almost the exact same demands that were put forth over ten years previous but no action was taken. In 2010, Black students on Bryn Mawr's campus made a list of demands that circulated again during the strike in 2020. Many of the items on the list were eerily similar to those proposed again in 2020, showing the lack of commitment or perhaps even ability of the institution to change. For example, there had been requests for more staff in the Black cultural centre on campus and the multicultural office in 2010 that still had not been realised, causing this to be a significant part of the demands issued in 2020. There needs to be better channels of communication and student engagement should be valued, not shied away from. If students are fighting to belong and to make change then they care, and institutions should encourage and make space for this kind of engagement.

Activism has been and continues to be a necessary part of life and is often considered a way to "revitalize our democracy… often referred to as civic renewal" (Jacoby, 2017, p. 6). It can be a significant way to institute change and combat neoliberalist policies. Smele et al. (2017) found the current neoliberal mindset made students less interested in exploring topics for knowledge and understanding in the classroom and more concerned with just doing or saying the 'right' thing to get the 'right grade'. They found it also made it harder to challenge students' assumptions because the students-as-consumers mentality meant they felt they should be keeping students happy rather than encouraging them to think critically. This context for an educational institution is harmful for the students and educators alike and is what drives many educators to work for change as tempered radicals within their institutions (Kezar, 2010; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Richter et al., 2020). Students need to be heard and supported in order to feel a sense of belonging at their chosen institution (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Providing students with the space to pursue meaning and significance in their lives gives them the opportunity to spend time

exploring themselves and student affairs professionals play a vital role in facilitating this exploration. I believe educational institutions should be places where students feel that they belong as part of the community and campus culture, where they are engaged and valued for their engagement. This is why I feel giving a platform for activism and creating a culture of transformation can create more meaningful and educative experiences for students, staff and faculty.

Preview of Thesis

Throughout this thesis I will be exploring the value of activism and campus culture to create meaningful, transformative, educational experiences for students and the ways it is imperative that student affairs professionals are better prepared to support student activists. Chapter two will outline my philosophy of education, including my definitions of student success and the value of academic and co-curricular experiences. This chapter will also discuss the structure of critical action research, the methodology of my work, and its importance in higher education and student affairs practice. Following these theoretical frameworks, I will present a literature review in chapter three. I will discuss the historical context of student activism using two case studies and the historical role of student affairs professionals. A review of current higher education and student affairs literature will discuss the relevant factors of identity, power, and perceptions of leadership impacting activism and student affairs professional's positionality before reviewing the contemporary roles of student affairs professionals in supporting activism. This chapter will also review pedagogical practices for social justice teaching to inform my intervention with best practice literature. In chapter four I will present my intervention for student affairs professionals to be better prepared to navigate their roles and support students engaging in activism on campus. I will include its foundation in the literature and strategies for

implementation. Finally, in chapter five, I will discuss potential assessment models to evaluate the program, address limitations of my intervention and look ahead at possible next steps.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks

A philosophy of education forms the foundation to support all that is built upon it. It is essential in informing the actions and pedagogies used to create experiences that individuals can, and will, learn from effectively. Traditionally this might have been seen to be useful only in the academic framework of the university, in learning spaces such as classrooms, lectures and academic workshops, but as the role of student affairs has become more prominent, it can be argued that it is just as important in this field. In the following pages, I will discuss my interpretation of the purpose of education, my philosophy on student success, the importance of cohesion between academic and co-curricular experiences and the role of student affairs professionals. I will also discuss critical action research, its origins, the role it plays in student affairs research and specifically in my intervention.

Philosophy of Education

In the context of the current crises in which we find ourselves, I cannot talk about the purpose of education without centering the precarious future of the planet on which we reside. Not only are we in the midst of a climate crisis but also a global health pandemic, both highlighting the severe systemic inequities at work not only in the United States but across the world. We must look at our current practices to see to what extent we as people, institutions and as a country are perpetuating these injustices. Institutions of education have a responsibility to those who attend, and those whose lives will be impacted by those who were educated within their walls. In the words of bell hooks (1994),

> all of us in the academy and in the culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions – and society – so that the way we live, teach,

> and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice and our love of freedom. (p. 34)

We must take action through education to inspire collective action and movement for a more just and sustainable future for all who inhabit the earth. It is through this lens of addressing systemic injustice, finding passion, and pursuing meaning that I approach my view of education.

As reflected in the quote from hooks (1994), I believe that one of the key aims of education is to be transformative. If students leave their time in an institution unchanged from when they arrived, then the university has failed in its purpose to transform students through education. Likewise, if the university is unchanged when the student leaves then the university has also failed to transform itself in the process of educating those who reside within it. Dewey (1938) speaks to this transformation in terms of the principle of continuity, that education is a lifelong process and therefore it is essential to continue to transform and grow as new knowledge and experience is acquired. "[T]he principle of the continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which comes after" (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). Thus, demonstrating that the educational experience itself is transformed in the process of transforming students. Students and institutions alike should be using the transformative function of education to "facilitate change towards a better and loveable world [with] socio-ecological wellbeing for all" (Sterling, 2021).

Purpose of Higher Education

This transformation for the student should be both personal and academic, cultivating new ideas and ways of creating knowledge leading them to think critically. Freire (1970) suggests that the prevalent teaching method referred to in his work as the "banking" concept of education, in which students are turned into "containers" or "receptacles" to be filled with

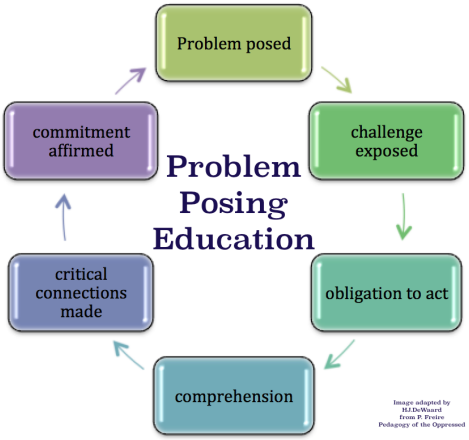
knowledge decided on by the teacher, is mis-education and counter to transformational education (p. 72). In this hierarchy, the teacher considers themselves to be knowledgeable, while presuming the students to be entirely ignorant. This leaves the role of the student to merely receiving and storing the knowledge bestowed upon them. Freire reveals that the more students focus on storing information, "the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (Freire, 1970, p. 73). He goes on to say that in this model of education, "a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others" (Freire, 1970, p. 75) confirming that this method also does not foster collaboration or interaction within the university or to the world beyond, limiting a student's connection with and ability to build community. Building connections beyond the walls of the university are important for issues of social justice and sustainability because a university cannot operate without impacting the world outside its walls, from the students who pass through their doors, to the staff, products and energy employed.

The critical consciousness and reflection essential for a transformative educational experience can be achieved through Freire's (1970) problem-posing concept of education (see Figure 1), where students and educators alike are considered co-investigators in dialogue with each other, both learning, growing and transforming together in the process. Problem-posing reframes the lens of education to one of exploration as opposed to ownership of knowledge. It promotes the valuable concept of 'lifelong learning' as it is an ongoing cycle of discovery, interrogation, action and reflection as demonstrated in Figure 1. This cycle mirrors a cycle of transformation, moving through awareness and expression to compassion and forgiveness before new behaviour emerges as the cycle begins again. This leads to learners to become re-creators and challenge old structures and ideas, encouraging the wider society and the university itself to

transform. These transformations occurring in tandem and of consequence to each other are instrumental in liberating knowledge and truth and, through that, liberation of students themselves and the society in which they live for a more just and sustainable future.

Figure 1

Visual Representation of Freire's Problem Posing Model of Education



Note. Image by HJ. DeeWard (2015).

The university should function in such a way that it is receptive to these transformational experiences both of the student and of itself (Freire, 1970). It should be a place free of bias and prejudice where scholars, faculty, staff, and students, work cooperatively in the pursuit of learning (Kelley, 2016; Oakeshott, 2003). A place of freedom, where nothing is without question or exploration and where students, upon leaving, "will have learned something to help [them] lead a more significant life" (Oakeshott, 2003, p. 29). Specific structures and pathways need to be available to students to guide them and more importantly, encourage them to participate in the transformation of themselves, the institution and the wider community. The university should celebrate students' wholehearted pursuit of a life of meaning. This purpose of higher education leads me to a reconceptualisation of traditional student success. If education is about

transformation and educating students to lead a more significant life, what then does a successful student look like?

Redefining Student Success

A university should not be in the business of training students in specific fields in order to hone them for a particular profession, but this appears to be a growing trend and expectation of a university degree. A degree is now often seen as a ticket to gain entry to the job market rather than a marker of reaching a particular stage in your development as a human being and critical thinker. Dewey (1938) argues that education within the university must not have limited application, and therefore should not be the remit of a university to educate in such a way. However, the reality is that more institutions are viewing students as customers or consumers of education, interested in getting value for money and return on investment rather than an opportunity to expand their minds and hearts. This transactional way of thinking also impacts the way student success is defined and measured. According to Huisman & Mampaey (2018) "...easily quantifiable metrics too frequently take precedence in shaping what counts as student success" (as cited in Chang et al., 2019, p. 482). College rankings, state policy, and state and federal funding streams are significant drivers for universities in looking to define the success of their students, but too often these fail to encompass the humanity and lived experience of those represented.

Through in-depth interviews with staff and faculty implementing student success evaluations at their institutions, Chang et al. (2019) found that students felt consistently boxed in by the metrics used to evaluate their experiences. They especially felt that most traditional measures of success, such as time-to degree, starting salary, and graduation rates, were inappropriate to assess the experience of minoritised and nontraditional students. They

discovered that themes around social justice, civic engagement and overall student well-being were seen as "valuable dimensions of student success" (p. 481). These themes speak to the need for a more holistic approach to student success, with perhaps less easily quantifiable metrics and more focus on what a student's view of success and fulfillment is for their educational journey in higher education and beyond. It is also important to centre students' social and cultural contexts, thinking of themselves and their futures as part of a collective and not in isolation. Educators must work with students and learn together to nurture hope and agency so that the student can define success and work to transform themselves and the systems around them (Wanko, 2018). This approach once again centres the problem-posing concept of education (Freire, 1970), creating a values-based critical framework to lead students towards a more meaningful life. The following section will explore how academic and co-curricular experiences can work together to support students in that mission.

Academic and Co-curricular Experiences

Dewey (1938) believed that "all genuine education comes about through experience" but that not "all experiences are genuine or equally educative" (p. 25). This miseducation also categorises "any experience…that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" which goes against the principles of transformation and growth as education (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). Being able to apply what is learned during time at a university into the wider society upon leaving, is an essential part of the transformation and liberation of the student and society as a whole. As hooks (1994) states, "one of the primary reasons we have not experienced a revolution of values is that a culture of domination necessarily promotes addiction to lying and denial" (p. 28). This lying and denial hooks (1994) refers to is the reproduction of the narrative that society has been transformed to be equitable for all, ignoring the racist,

capitalist, and patriarchal structures that still exist. hooks (1994) attributes this to "a lack of meaningful access to truth" (p. 24) and how educational liberation can counteract these societal myths. If ever there was a place to access the truth, the university should be that place.

These meaningful experiences and access to the truth through critical reflection and transformative education happen in both the academic and co-curricular spaces and student affairs professionals are key to supporting students in their experiences. This in turn leads to an increased ability to find meaning and significance within the wider context of society. Being intentional about the experiences offered and how they are curated for students is key to preventing miseducation and unintentionally negatively impacting the way those students develop in the future. It will also impact the transformation potential of the university and society beyond. Through these experiences, I believe that students can begin to transform within and learn to be open and welcoming to the new inventions of themselves. Modelling transformation through learning and support, the university itself can normalise growth and change, encouraging the students to be empowered to own that in themselves and be welcome to their transformation in pursuit of a meaningful life.

Oftentimes, miseducation or lack of institutional support for these experiences and transformations can lead students to engage in on-campus activism. While student affairs professionals aim to support students during their time at an institution, during times of activism they are in a difficult position of being seen as part of the institution and are typically not prepared to balance their position and their personal values in this situation (Griffin et al., 2019). If they do not step up for students in these times, that inflicts a breach of trust, damaging future relationships between student affairs professionals and students, and distorting students' further educational experiences (Liu & Shen, 2020; Torres-Harding et al., 2015). With research by

Eagan et al. (2015, as cited in Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016) indicating that nearly one in ten incoming first-years plan on getting involved with activism and that Black students are twice as likely to get involved than white students, it is imperative that campus leaders, including student affairs professionals, begin a culture of accepting activism as soon as incoming students enter the institution in order to avoid miseducation and promote valuable transformational educational experiences.

Action Research

Action research is an investigative approach that is designed to give practical solutions to a problem or issue identified within a community. This approach is collaborative, democratic, grounded in qualitative research and designed to work for justice and social change within, and as part of, a community (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Stringer, 2014; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Action research "as a whole, embodies a broad and diverse movement within which there are many similarities in values, approaches to the empirical field, and commitment to mutual learning between problem owners and researchers" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 14). To explore more thoroughly the core principles and perspectives of action research, it is important to first review its roots.

History of Action Research

There is no common origin point for the development of action research and, therefore, it has a complex history (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Greenwood and Levin (2007) suggest that it is better to imagine it as "a field in which there are many competing strands of thinking that historically have been developed quite independently" (p. 34). Separately, evolving "out of the conditions created by some of the most undemocratic situations humans have ever created" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 29), southern participatory action

research, participatory research and Participatory Community Development are considered the second major strands in action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). These approaches are considered to be political because they are designed to support those suffering from oppression and enact societal change by challenging the current systems and structures of power (Brydon-Miller, 2003; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). The third tradition of human inquiry and cooperative inquiry demonstrates how the action research approach "can support knowledge creation by bringing explicit, tacit and emotional knowledge together to improve organizations and the welfare of individuals" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 34). This tradition embodies the concept of participation, and openness to new ideas and other ways of thinking to expand the knowledge of human inquiry at its core (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

Drawing these strands and traditions together, Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) suggest that at the foundation of action research is "the key question of how we go about generating knowledge that is both valid and vital to the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and for the promotion of larger-scale democratic social change" (p.11). Each tradition speaks to a different way that action research can be impactful. Industrial democracy demonstrates its success in many fields and cultures; southern participatory action research, and connected approaches, speak to its relevance when tackling inequities, oppression and social issues; and human and cooperative inquiry solidifies the importance of participation and evolving knowledge relating to human inquiry (Brydon-Miller, 2008; Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

Principles of Action Research

Action research today is defined as "a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems" (Stringer, 2014, p. 8). Building on this, Coghlan (2011) states that a core principle of action

research is “the powerful notion that human systems could only be understood and changed if one involved the members of the system in the inquiry process itself” (p. 46). Action research cannot be done successfully without the impacted community at its centre. Researchers should act with and for the community as a catalyst, closely collaborating with all stakeholders (Stringer, 2014). This participatory approach to research requires the following practices to take into account the human and social dimensions of the context: building and sustaining successful, positive working relationships; communicating effectively, sincerely and openly; enabling and encouraging high levels of meaningful participation; and inclusion of all relevant groups, stakeholders and concerns in the action research process (Stringer, 2014).

Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) state an additional key value in action research is respecting the knowledge of each participant in the project and “their ability to understand and address the issues confronting them and their communities” (p. 14). Action research allows all stakeholders connected to an issue of inequity or a need for social change to work together as equal and full participants, and form a community in which all will benefit from the outcomes of the research (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Stringer, 2014; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). These practices and values are central to the action research process and emphasise the importance of working closely and respectfully amongst the knowledge community (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Kemmis, 2008; Stringer, 2014). They are also what typically distinguish action research from many other research approaches and perspectives.

Comparison to Postpositive Research

In contrast to action research, the postpositivist approach, or scientific method, begins with a hypothesis that the researcher sets about testing or proving. The research tends to be quantitative, typically involving numeric data, with researchers attempting to maintain

objectivity and distance from the theory being tested and the stakeholders involved. An aim of this type of research is to develop conclusions that are easily and generally applied to many problems, areas and fields to further validate the research that has been done (Carter & Little, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Stringer, 2014).

Objectivity

A marked difference between traditional, positivist or postpositivist research and action research is the rejection of objectivity (Brydon-Miller, 2013). Carter & Little (2007), state that it is "impossible to engage in knowledge creation without at least tacit assumptions about what knowledge is and how it is constructed" (p. 1319). This suggests that it is therefore impossible to be objective as a researcher using any approach to research because your epistemological assumptions impact the way you conduct research and create knowledge. Researchers involved in action research approaches actively seek out involvement in the communities with whom they are conducting the research, concerning themselves more with "relevance, social change and validity tested in action by the most at-risk stakeholders" than objectivity or controls (Brydon Miller et al., 2003, p. 25).

Theory

While theory is often prominent in postpositivist research, Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) argue that in action research, "theory can and should be generated through practice… [and is] only useful insofar as it is put in the service of a practice focused on achieving positive social change" (p. 15). Rather than looking to theory to develop a research question or hypothesis, action researchers look within communities and work collaboratively to frame a particular issue and a vision for future action (Stringer, 2014). This process is designed to find a specific

tailored solution for a particular issue because, as Stringer (2014) identifies, generalised findings or solutions do not always fit a certain context or group.

Methodologies

Postpositive research tends to lend itself to a more quantitative methodology involving methods such as analyses of trends, attitudes and opinions gathered in surveys or testing a specific variable to measure influence of an outcome (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative methods of research lend themselves more to humanistic and socially focused research approaches such as action research. These methods are much more wide-ranging and variable than those of quantitative research and encompass methods such as interviews, focus groups and observation (Stringer, 2014).

Mixed methods strategies of research contain a blend of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to enhance or provide focus to each other. This method can attempt to alleviate potential biases associated with each individual method and can help in the triangulation of data to confirm validity (Creswell, 2009). While qualitative methods are most associated with the action research approach, surveys, questionnaires and analyses of previous records, reports and literature are often key components of the process and therefore a characterisation of a mixed methods approach is often most appropriate. The quantitative data is often used to situate the project and give context, and the qualitative data is most useful when looking to create meanings using rich descriptions and narratives (Koshy, 2005; Sampson et al., 2020).

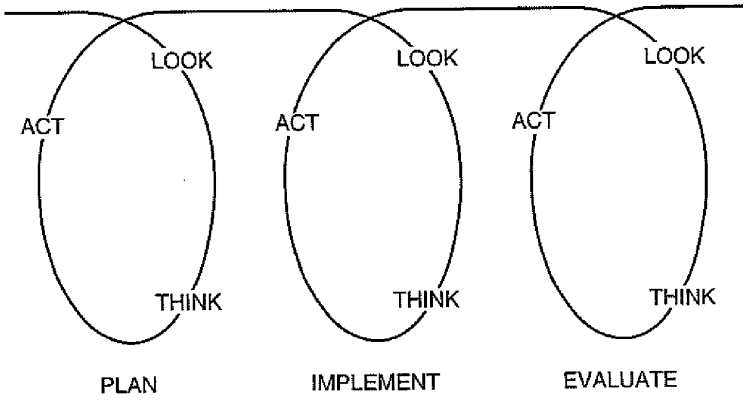
Practice of Action Research

A key facet of the action research approach is the cycle of learning and reflection that occurs throughout the process. Stringer (2014) describes the research process as an interacting spiral, a cycle of a Look, Think, Act routine that requires evaluation, reflection and modification

throughout the research project (see Figure 2 below). The ‘Look’ stage requires data gathering and definition of the situation of the specified issue; the ‘Think’ stage consists of analysis of data, interpretation and theorising; and the ‘Act’ stage involves making an action plan followed by implementation and evaluation (Stringer, 2014). As these stages repeat and interact, action research allows for flexibility and reactivity as research is being carried out and/or while solutions or interventions are being put into place (Peshkin, 1988).

Figure 2

Action Research Interacting Spiral (adopted from Stringer, 2014)



This adaptability during the research process is not a characteristic that is generally found within other research approaches. It allows not only for the research project outcomes to be better suited to their task, but it also allows researchers to examine their own inevitable subjectivity as the process is carried out. Peshkin (1988) argues that research subjectivity should be actively sought out while data is collected to “enable researchers to be aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes” (p. 17). This is key in the action research setting in order for the researcher to be aware when they are shaping the analyses and direction based on their beliefs, which may contradict those held by the community impacted by the outcomes.

Actively seeking out subjectivity can be done through reflective thinking. Dewey (1933) defined reflective thinking as "a number of phases in thinking i.e. a state of doubt, hesitation or mental difficulty in which thinking originates, followed by an act of searching or inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt" (as cited in Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 180). This definition suggests that reflective thinking goes beyond simply identifying where subjectivity might lie, but to also look for ways to solve the 'problem'. This reflective practice meshes with action research due to the shared goals of change and improvement and connects to the problem posing method of education discussed earlier in this chapter (Friere, 1970; Leitch & Day, 2000).

Critical Action Research

Horkheimer (1972) described critical theory as "a form of theorizing motivated by a deep concern to overcome social injustice and the establishment of more just conditions for all people" (as cited in Kemmis, 2008, p. 125). The critique aspect comes from investigating conditions and situations "to find how particular perspectives, social structures or practices may be irrational, unjust, alienating or inhumane… [and] finding how … [these] are interlinked in ways that cause them to produce such consequences" (Kemmis, 2008, p. 125). This focus on social injustice and the investigation of how these injustices came to be, makes the fusion of action research and critical theory a natural choice. Critical action research endeavours to unearth injustices, explore how structures and practices work together to cause these injustices, and work to make significant positive changes for all people (Kemmis, 2008). The action research framework allows for a response to the challenges uncovered, through the lens of critical theory.

An important aspect of the definition of 'critical' as it relates to critical action research is the notion of "acting negatively *against* identified irrationality, injustice and suffering, rather than positively *for* some predetermined view of what is to count as rational or just or good for

humankind" (Kemmis, 2008, pp. 125-6, emphasis in original). This highlights the problem-solving nature of critical action research and the desire to affect significant change on the negative social structures that it has found to exist. Critical action research aims to gain insider and outsider perspectives on both individual participants and the social construction of the issue at hand (Kemmis, 2008). Through the crossing of these boundaries, this research approach opens communication to encourage quality arguments and discussions by all participants which "is what gives life to being 'critical'" (Kemmis, 2008,p.129).

Critical Action Research in Higher Education

Currently, the practice of action research in higher education is not broadly applied or appreciated (Greenwood, 2012). The system of neo-liberalism at work in the university stunts progressive, inclusive practices and encourages institutions to act as businesses, viewing students as clients and constantly assessing outcomes (Greenwood, 2012; Labaree, 2017). Under these conditions, Greenwood (2012) notes that most "local academic departments engage in little to no research and are content to try and reproduce themselves" (p. 119) which puts the practice of action research "directly at odds with the current direction and practices" (p. 121). This oppositional approach makes critical action research ideal for acting *against* the unjust systems of neo-liberalism at work in higher education and is well suited as the tool to explore on-campus activism and encourage transformation.

The continual cycle of the action research process compliments the everchanging community present in a university setting and the cultural and social changes that occur with those cycles. As critical thinkers in training, university students are well positioned to be active collaborators in action research projects and their involvement in such programs increases their on-campus engagement leading to higher rates of student success (Yearwood & Jones, 2012).

University students are also typically identified as a demographic particularly engaged in issues of justice and social change, and critical action research allows them to deepen that engagement and act for change through activism on campus. The cyclic nature of the institutions of higher education, critical action research and transformational education practices make this combination a natural fit for an exploration of supporting on-campus activism.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Student activism on campus is not a new phenomenon. The 1960s were a pivotal decade of nationwide student activism but protests and dissent have been part of the student experience since the colonial era, with each period of structural change throughout history having a parallel story of campus protest (Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016; Jason, 2018; Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). Despite student activism being a part of campus life for decades, it is still something that institutions and student affairs professionals are not well equipped to deal with. Typically, in higher education, activism is not welcomed or seen in a positive light (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Linder, 2019a). "Activism is one of the most transparent forms of humanity and yet, the academy dehumanizes it" (Galvez, 2021). Understanding the historical context of recent student movements and the impact of student affairs professionals demonstrates the need to make progress on how both staff and institutions respond when it comes to activism on campus. I will begin this chapter discussing this context and how the role of student affairs professionals in activist settings has evolved. This will be followed by a section on relevant factors from higher education literature before closing out with a review of the current state of support for student activism.

Historical Context

To discuss the historical context of student movements, I will be focusing primarily on two specific movements, the Kent State University protests in 1970 and Concerned Student 1950 at the University of Missouri in 2015. These movements are from the Neoliberalism I (1970s-2008) and Neoliberalism II (2008-Present) eras, respectively, as defined by Boggs et al. (2019), as neo-liberalism is central to the current state of higher education and my thematic concern. This case study approach will allow for more exploration into the impact these movements had

on students, their institutions and the broader national context of student activism. These issues addressed in these instances of activism are anti-war sentiment and racial injustice, but these issues are not exclusively what student movements encompass. A more detailed history of activism can be found in Altbach & Peterson (1971) and Wheatle & Commodore (2019), which while contributing to my understanding of student activism, will not be outlined in this chapter. In this section, I will also discuss the role of student affairs professionals in activism and how this has developed over time.

Student Movements

Kent State University, May 1-4, 1970

Individual campuses may host protests around specific local events, but it is often national news-making events that bring campuses across the country together in protest and have the biggest impact. In 1970, students at Kent State University in Ohio gathered in early May to protest the Vietnam War, specifically the recent invasion of Cambodia (Mills & Pignolet, 2020). On May 1, protests began on campus and in the town of Kent. The mayor declared a state of emergency and called in police support from surrounding areas. After rumours of threats to several town businesses and campus buildings the following day, the mayor requested National Guard support from the Governor. By the time they arrived that night, the ROTC building on Kent State's campus had been burned down. May 3rd was calm, but 1000 National Guards remained on campus.

On May 4, 1970, a major protest was scheduled for noon. University administration tried to shut down the protest, but crowds continued to gather and approximately 3,000 people were there are the start. While the protest started peacefully, National guardsmen armed with rifles still attempted to disperse the crowd. After verbal requests were not heeded, the guardsmen were

ordered to “lock and load their weapons and fire tear gas into the crowds” (Onion et al., 2021). The guardsmen marched towards the protestors, forcing them over a hill into an enclosed football field. Here they were faced with an angry mob of protestors who shouted and threw rocks at the guardsmen. At this point, the guardsmen retreated back up the hill and at the top, 28 of them turned and fired their weapons into the crowd. 70 shots in 13 seconds resulted in four Kent State students losing their lives and nine others being injured (Onion et al., 2021; Mills & Pignolet, 2020).

This case demonstrates the impact student activism had both on campus and throughout the nation, way beyond the confines of the campus. In the aftermath, the university and many others around the nation shut down. Kent State University did not open again for classes for six weeks. Some political observers feel the events of May 4, 1970 swayed public opinion against the Vietnam War and many believe it “permanently changed the protest movement across the American political spectrum” (Onion et al., 2021). It also highlighted fears over the potential for confrontation with law enforcement for those who engage in or are nearby protests.

This legacy lives on particularly strongly on Kent State’s campus where ongoing activism is encouraged to respect those who lost their lives and futures that day. However, students who feel apprehensive about their safety or increased chance of arrest do not participate in visible action due to the lingering awareness of what occurred on campus, demonstrating the ongoing impact of the student movement of 1970 (Mills & Pignolet, 2020). For a protest on Kent State’s campus in 2018, police in riot gear and snipers on buildings were visible to students engaging in activism. While the institution speaks of the value of this type of engagement, being faced with the stark reality of the potential consequences does not always make that message feel genuine

(Mills & Pignolet, 2020). This disconnect between institutional messaging and the lived realities of students is something that is often present when discussing activism.

Concerned Student 1950, Sept 11-Nov 9, 2015

In the mid-2010's "61 out of 160 incidents [of student activism] at universities nationwide specifically focused on racism and police violence" (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019, p. 17). One particularly influential movement was by the student group named Concerned Student 1950 at the University of Missouri in 2015. Concerned Student 1950 was formed following several on-campus racially charged actions including cotton balls being scattered around the Black Cultural Center on campus and racial slurs being shouted at Black students in the wake of the shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager in Ferguson, Missouri. The response from administration for these incidents was to fine the perpetrators for littering in the first instance, and reportedly laughing and smiling during on campus Black Lives Matter protests in the second. This collective of students issued a list of demands in an attempt to reconcile previous harms and transform the campus climate. These demands included a public apology from the administration for previous responses and lack of accountability, the removal of leadership, and the implementation of a more comprehensive social justice and awareness curriculum overseen by minoritised students and faculty. After meeting with the university President, no consensus could be met. It was not until a hunger strike and a student boycott reached national news that an apology was issued. It then took the Black football players taking a stand with the support of their white teammates, coach, and Athletic Department for further demands to be met and for the university president and chancellor to resign (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019).

Throughout this process, the senior administration repeatedly attempted to use its power and influence to subdue the student voice. Following several incidents of racism on campus, statements were made that were not accompanied by any action to improve or make changes to the campus climate. The administration was slow to take steps towards responding to student concerns and demands, as if hoping the protests would die down without any change being made. When diversity training was mandated for all students and faculty, the Chancellor failed to acknowledge the work of Black students in developing these programs and their work to address racism on campus. Even when the apology the students had asked for was finally issued, it did not meet the level of understanding and reparations the students were expecting or deserving.

When reviewing and analysing this student movement, it is interesting to note that not only did the initial racially charged actions not have serious consequences for the perpetrators, simply a fine and community service for littering, but university administration thought issuing a statement would be enough to quell student protests around such inequities. It took the formation of a collective group of students under one name (Concerned Student 1950) to gain a meeting with the president. It took national recognition of the of the demonstrations on campus to get the key demand of an apology met. Likewise, it took the involvement of a nationally involved sports program with the backing of a key revenue generating department to make any significant headway with the student demands for a change in leadership. This case highlights the elements the university holds most dear. Not the students facing discrimination and inequity on campus, but the university's reputation and income stream.

The demands of students at the University of Missouri were seen as drastic by many faculty, staff and senior administration (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019), but truly, these demands are about asking to be seen, to be given the support minoritised students need in an environment

that was never meant for them when it was constructed. This poor response to activism creates or deepens the lack of trust that exists between students and the university's administration, leaving students to feel that these are not people who will support them or their values. The increase in access to university through various admissions focused initiatives for previously excluded or minoritised groups has brought to campus new needs, new issues and new forms of advocacy that the unchanged campus at large is not prepared or set up for (Mintz, 2021). The demands come from a place of genuine need that has not been addressed and is hindering the ability of students to succeed as themselves.

Role of Student Affairs Professionals

There is limited literature that discusses the role of student affairs professionals across student movements as the focus is typically on the experiences of the students and impacts on institutions (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Kezar, 2010; Stewart et al., 2022). In a series of interviews conducted by Gaston-Gayles et al. (2005), student affairs professionals reflected on how the role of the student affairs professional changed during the civil rights era which will be the focus of this subsection as it is pivotal in understanding the role of student affairs professionals today. The researchers found that from the 1950s-1970s there were two main factors that impacted the roles of student affairs professionals.

Firstly, there was a shift from the historical function of in loco parentis to "independence and empowerment", with professionals seeing students as "maturing adults" who did not need to be controlled by a university (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005, p. 265). As those who worked closest with students outside the classroom, student affairs professionals were often called upon to be the disciplinarians which prior to this era, consisted of subduing student action to keep them out of trouble (Stewart et al., 2022). One of the interviewees noted that it was the contradiction of

dealing with the "procedural issues, the protection issues, and not the civil rights or student needs issues" that changed how student affairs professionals saw their roles as disciplinarians shifting from keeping the peace at all costs to understanding the contextual reasons behind student behaviour (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005, p. 266).

The second change was that senior level student affairs administrators were afforded a seat at the table in the president's cabinet. This allowed for the representation of student concerns at a higher level and was the earliest iteration of the vice president for student affairs position still seen on campus today. This change was also often where student affairs felt the largest conflict between their position as an advocate for students and also as part of the institution. One interviewee in a study conducted by Gaston-Gayles et al (2005), stated that presidents and chancellors "expected us to be on their team" and this was a difficult situation to navigate and where openness with students about their limitations was key to maintaining trust and demonstrating ongoing support (p. 267). This balance of often opposing roles within an institution is a theme that will continue when talking about interactions with student activism to the present day.

Through these changes, Gaston-Gayles et al. (2005) identified five roles that student affairs professionals undertook during this time: disciplinarian, advocate or mentor, educator, mediator, and initiator or activist. The majority of these roles are still considered to be the various stances student affairs professionals take when working with student activists on campus and recent research has explored more about how issues of identity and perception impact how student affairs professionals navigate these spaces (Kezar, 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Linder, 2019a; Stewart et al., 2022).

Relevant Factors from Literature

In this section, I will discuss three main areas impacting student activism on campus: identity, power, and perceptions of leadership. These three areas intersect significantly and so cannot be truly separated, but I will attempt to do so for clarity of discussion.

Identity Impacts on Students & Student Affairs Professionals

Students

Identity impacts students who typically get involved in activism. For those with minoritised identities, activism is seen as a matter of survival, a way of navigating a space that was not built with their experiences in mind (Byrd et al., 2021; Linder 2019b; Linder et al., 2019). As explained by Linder (2019a), "Educators and peers frequently expect students with minoritized identities to address oppression as part of their daily experience, rather than seeing it as a form of activism, involvement, engagement or leadership" (p. 19). Linder & Rodriguez (2012) explored the experiences of seven self-identified women of colour activists on a large predominantly white campus. Through interviews and focus groups, they discovered three categories that illustrated the participants' experiences: developing a path to activism, experiencing marginalisation, and creating safe spaces. They found that the participants were driven to activism because of their multiple and intersecting identities, but often felt marginalised in the organisations, classrooms, and centres on campus due to those identities. Participants described safe spaces that allowed them to explore more of their whole selves where they did not have to explain themselves. They also described allies in these spaces as those who do the work on themselves so as not to cause more harm to others (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012).

Participating in activism has been shown to be simultaneously essential and harmful to students' overall well-being (Linder et al., 2019). As noted by the authors, student activists can

experience isolation from peers and family, decreased academic performance and learning due to time spent engaging in activism, and a detrimental impact on their emotional and mental health (Linder et al., 2019). However, it is important to be aware that these impacts are significantly greater if the activism is connected to the students' own identities. For example, students from lower income backgrounds typically work more hours leaving them less time to participate in activism. They also tend to face greater consequences for civil disobedience. For students from economically privileged backgrounds, engaging in protests, marches and demonstrations is easier as they have more time and resources at their disposal (Linder, 2019a). These students typically are privileged in other identities as well, and have cultural capital that affords them access to systems and people of power, which translates into less significant consequences for engaging in civil disobedience (Linder, 2019a).

Understanding these differences in positionality and risk is essential for student affairs professionals to effectively support students in their activism efforts. Without this awareness, both privileged students and student affairs professionals could create more harm when supporting and engaging in student movements.

Student Affairs Professionals

Identity also plays a significant role for student affairs professionals when responding to activism. Oftentimes, those working at institutions, particularly those with minoritised identities, are subjected to the same conditions the students are protesting (Griffin et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2022). Research by Stewart et al. (2022) found that "[e]ducators with minoritized identities… felt as though they were under the microscope and would experience significant consequences for supporting student activists" (p. 47-48). Educators in identity centres, such as those who work in gender and sexuality centres, particularly sensed that when identity-based student

activism was occurring on campus, they were looked to as accomplices to this activism purely by their professional location, whereas educators who shared the same minoritised identities as the students but worked elsewhere on campus were not flagged in the same way (Stewart et al., 2022).

Student affairs professionals with more privileged identities need to be cognisant of these factors when supporting both students and their fellow colleagues who are facing increased scrutiny and risk for supporting students in activism (Linder, 2019a; Stewart et al., 2022). It is important for allies and accomplices in activism work, especially identity-based activism, to interrogate the impact of their positionality, the way they show up in their work and experiences, and the importance of listening and centring the concerns of those with lived experiences of the issues looking to be addressed (Linder, 2019a; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Stewart et al., 2022). This examination of identities is closely associated with constructs of power, dictating whether student affairs professionals show up in an oppressive or liberatory way for students and each other.

Power

Power and its relations within universities hierarchies and policies are limiting the transformational nature of education and human expression, particularly in relation to student activism. University administration and institutional policy play a significant role in framing how activism is portrayed. In a study by Linder et al. (2019), a combination of a critical framework and narrative inquiry was used to examine how power and privilege influenced the experiences of student activists. Through interviews with student activists, the authors discovered that administrators often a) protected dominance, or the status quo over activism, b) inflicted backlash on students participating in activism, and c) benefitted from the free labour of activists

with little to no credit or recognition going to the activists for the work. The demand most commonly asked of institutions was to change the oppressive structures in place which currently require minoritised students to fight for their survival.

Administrators

Administrators hold tremendous power in their institutions and have varying opinions of activism. Some want to intentionally engage students in activism, while others focus more intently on what they perceive to be "disruptive behavior and related public relationships concerns" (Harrison & Mather, 2017, as cited in Stewart et. al., 2022, p. 45). When activism is looked at as a negative, especially when directed at the institution, it impacts both the students' and student affairs professionals' ability to engage fully (Bernardo & Baranovich, 2016; Linder, 2019a, Linder et al., 2019). Students' intersectionality and social location "influences which students define themselves or are labeled as activists, which has implications for the kinds of support they receive from educators, administrators and the media" (Linder, 2019a, p. 19). This demonstrates how power and perceptions held by those in power impact students' ability to engage and be heard when it comes to on campus activism and Linder (2019a) argues educators must understand power, privilege and oppression to effectively support and guide learning and development among student activists.

Institutional Response

Institutional response to activism, even when well intentioned, does not always bring change or reparations, and can often exacerbate an institution's discord with its students. Too often, desire for action on the part of the institution gets bogged down in conversation, deliberation and consensus building (Anderson, 2019). Institutions often protect dominance and the status quo over activism, leading them to placate students rather than commit to more

transformational responses (Linder et al., 2019). A study by Shah et al. (2017) found that in general, little to no work was done to systematically address areas of improvement noted in feedback surveys submitted by students, nor were results readily communicated. This often led to students losing trust in their institutions because no visible action was taken.

This lack of transparency highlights an issue of power in terms of knowledge held and willingness to communicate. Silence or lack of action can be seen as a form of neutrality by the administration but the forms and structures of oppression students are highlighting are not power neutral, so this position results in the facilitation and reinforcement of the oppression (Stewart et al., 2022). It also relates to the position of student affairs professionals and their ability to support student activists as the lack of clarity around administrators' expectations on this subject. As explained by Stewart et al. (2022), this "leads educators to believe that it is 'risky' for them to engage with students, *when it may not be*" (p. 51, emphasis added). This is a key challenge for student affairs professionals to navigate and has an impact on students too because inaction or perceived lack of support from trusted educations has negative consequences for students (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021).

By interviewing student affairs professionals who support student activists, Stewart et al. (2022) found that "[b]oth the privileging of certain types of activism and civic issues in addition to the cautions [from supervisors] to educators to 'be careful' in their support of activists are vivid reminders that power is always present" (p. 49). This privileging of certain civic engagement is a reminder that identity, power and perceptions of leadership are all significantly tied together in the way activism is seen and valued on campus. These perceptions situate the power of the institutional structure and those in senior administrative positions over the

liberation of its students and frame activism in a more negative light than other more institutionally valued forms of leadership.

Perceptions of Leadership

Activism provides meaningful development and student learning in the areas of democratic processes, citizenship and leadership (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Kezar & Maxey, 2014), but is often undervalued by institutions. There is significant separation between institutional meaning of the concept of leadership and the concept of activism, within institutions and society (Linder, 2019b). Typically, service learning, community service and other forms of volunteerism on and off campus are privileged over other forms of activism by recognition, awards, dedicated offices and staff, funding, and opportunities for continued development (Linder, 2019a; Linder, 2019b; Stewart et al., 2022). When educators and institutions fail to see activists as student leaders, students do not always recognise those skills in themselves, leading them to not seek out or be guided towards institutionally supported development opportunities and programs (Linder, 2019a). This dichotomy also forces student affairs professionals to work more covertly with activists, putting additional strain on their time and resources as it is being done in addition to their positional responsibilities (Linder, 2019b).

Reframing Activism as Leadership

In Stewart et al.'s (2022) study, interviews with educators noted that their respective administrations "explicitly supported student activism in the form of civic engagement and leadership yet hesitated to support students engaged in identity-based activism or direct action toward the university administration" (p. 48). Educators found that the closer they tied their own definitions of activism to the institutionally sanctioned forms of student engagement and leadership, the more support they received when they connected with activists on campus

(Stewart et al., 2022). In order to support activists in their important and often life affirming work (Byrd et al., 2021; Linder 2019b; Linder et al., 2019), it is important to reframe activism in the institutional mindset and culture on campus (Bernardo & Baranovich, 2016; Linder, 2019b).

Linder (2019b) states, a "contemporary definition of leadership…is to influence change for a greater social good… [and a widely used] definition of activism is to seek to interrupt the status quo to create change that benefits more people" (p. 89). These two definitions are undeniably similar and present an inextricable link between activism and leadership. Bringing these concepts together in terms of value and support on campus will be of benefit to many campus constituents. By providing more institutional support and resources, educators can provide better support programs for activist and minoritised students while also expanding the concept of what constitutes leadership for more traditionally minded students and educators (Linder, 2019b). As Kezar & Maxey (2014) affirm:

> an environment that supports activism is one that has greater integrity and reflects the democratic ideals embraced by the United States. What better way for campuses to prepare students than to demonstrate and foster activism - one of the most important aspects of democratic engagement? (p. 31)

Current Support for Student Activism

The year 2020 saw an increase in activism, particularly around issues of racial justice, which were played out globally both on campus and in cities (Cudé, 2020). The "recent surge in protests...is a product of inclusion and empowerment of groups previously excluded or marginalized" (Mintz, 2021). As institutions of higher education strive for equity and inclusion on campus, they are likely to be faced with student activism as students work towards these same goals (Bryd et al., 2021; Linder et al., 2019). The support of student affairs professionals could be instrumental in furthering these goals for student activists.

Contemporary Roles of Student Affairs Professionals

Bernardo & Baranovich (2016) focused on the connection between student activism and student development by examining the institutional culture of Activist University (AU) and the role of student affairs professionals in the Philippines. Through interviews conducted with individual students, groups of students, student affairs leadership, and university leadership, Bernardo & Baranovich (2016) found that the poverty experienced by the vast majority of students attending AU and in the wider society was a driving factor in student activism. Student affairs staff were also identified as key supporters of their students. They provided the students with support and purpose, framing them as the heroes of their stories and of the university to demonstrate the necessity, and expectation, of being involved in the transformation of society. The study also showed that AU sees its role to create a fertile environment for activism, with the university's mission, vision and educational philosophy upholding activism as a key part of AU's identity. Even when administrators were the target of that activism, they maintained that if activism went away from campus, they would be forced to reinvigorate the efforts (Bernardo & Baranovich, 2016). This study shows the significant impact institutional culture plays on how students see themselves and how important student affairs professionals are in framing student activism as valuable to the institution.

Students actively seek to partner with student affairs professionals who could relate to their experiences in activism efforts, and these partnerships are key to the development of the students involved (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Kezar & Maxey, 2014). However, student affairs professionals, often get mixed messages from administrators about supporting student activism on campus (Stewart et al., 2022). Those working in identity centres especially are often asked to "manage these students' concerns and help students assimilate, rather than disrupt,

campus cultures and structures" (Linder, 2019a, p. 20). This presents a challenge and tension for student affairs to navigate as the work to manage crises while also advocating for and supporting students (Linder, 2019a; Stewart et al., 2022).

One strategy that many student affairs professionals embody is that of the tempered radical. Tempered Radicals are defined as "individuals who identify with and are committed to their organizations, and are also committed to a cause, community, or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with the dominant culture of their organization" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 585). This positionality is helpful for those working in institutions to "articulate and recognize [their] complicity in educational systems" (Richter et al., 2020, p. 1014) while also working towards improving those same systems. Tempered radicalism is inherently tied to activism work within institutions and the balance of being employed by the entity you are committed to changing.

As discussed in the history section of this chapter, there are several roles that student affairs professionals typically take when supporting activists on campus and each of these provide space for the tempered radical to reside: educator, mediator or advocate, and activist or initiator.

Educator

One of the preferred ways for student affairs professionals to engage with activism is as an educator (Kezar, 2010; Linder, 2019a). In this role, there are several approaches to educating students. Student affairs professionals can challenge privileged students to think critically in a more effective way than their peers. Educators can expose students to new strategies for learning and development, and identify ways to integrate activism into their existing academic and cocurricular spaces. This approach simultaneously broadens the definition of student success and

engagement and reduces burnout (Kezar, 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Linder, 2019a). Student affairs professionals can also support students by assisting them in navigating structural bureaucracies, developing communication strategies and crafting/refining viable solutions to their concerns (Gaston-Gayles, 2005; Kezar, 2010; Linder, 2019a). In the educator role, student affairs professionals are often able to stay more behind the scenes as tempered radicals while empowering students to be more overt and engage in more radical strategies than they feel they are able to engage with as professionals (Kezar, 2010).

Mediator/Advocate

As a mediator or advocate, student affairs professionals work as liaison between students and senior level administrators (Gaston-Gayles, 2005; Griffin et al., 2019; Kezar, 2010; Stewart et al., 2022). This role helps to present student point of view in spaces they would usually not be heard either by inviting students to meetings or acting as a spokesperson. Conversely, it can also help frame administrators' official jargon into something more easily understood. Educators found this space to be more challenging to navigate as relationships between administrators and student activists are often "contentious and tense" when their ideologies clash (Stewart et al., 2022, p. 46). Griffin et al. (2019) share these findings that close relationships with students are often viewed as "a liability rather than an asset… [positioning student affairs professionals] against the administration in the minds of institutional leaders" (p. 684), which can make moving in this space as an advocate more difficult. Student affairs professionals also reported to Stewart et al. (2022) that their desire to support and advocate for students was tempered by their concern of developing a reputation of being at odds with the institutional goals and facing job related consequences.

Initiator/Activist

The most radical position of all for student affairs professionals is initiator or activist. This role is a very open and clear support of student activism and their concerns against the institution and it much less tempered in its approach (Gaston-Gayles, 2005; Kezar, 2010). It means a lot to students when student affairs professionals show up to a protest, march or other in person visible action (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021), but it is not without its risks. Many student affairs professionals do not feel like it is possible to participate in this way despite considering themselves an activist. One of the educators interviewed by Stewart et al. (2022) stated that they feel strongly about their position as an activist for and with students, but felt "guilt about not being able to be as actively involved because of the politics of professionalism" and felt that this decision was a "cop-out" (p. 49). Many others reported their conversations with students explaining their positionality in their institutions and the boundaries they felt they had to have in place (Griffin et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2022).

Navigating each of these positions is not without challenge and student affairs professionals report feeling "ill-prepared to navigate this advocacy work" (Stewart et al., 2022, p. 46). It is because of this notion that I am discussing some pedagogical practices for social justice teaching in preparation for my intervention to address this lack of preparedness.

Pedagogy for Social Justice Teaching

My intervention plans to provide a space for student affairs professionals to a) learn and explore ways of supporting students engaging in activism, b) build a network of fellow advocates, and c) navigate their positionality within the institution. As highlighted by Stewart et al. (2022), the current demographics of those who work in higher education mean "it is likely that most administrators with whom student activists engage possess a number of dominant

social identities" (p. 45). In order for student affairs professionals with privileged identities to effectively support and advocate for student activists, it is important for them to be able to explore and state their role in the dominant structures of society and institutional culture and learn about the social justice implications.

In a study by Storms (2012), it was found that the pedagogy, such as experiential activities and reflection, were identified more than the content as being most impactful for learners and their social justice understanding. Mayhew & DeLuca Fernández (2007) found that the more specifically a course's content is linked to societal systemic issues and the roles people play in the structures that uphold them, the greater the likelihood that learners report achieving social justice outcomes. These characteristics are embodied in the concept of transformative pedagogy, connecting learning to real world examples through active learning, making personal connections to the issues, providing opportunities for action and inspiring a vision for the future (Fuentes et al., 2010).

Intersectional feminism is a key concept that can be helpful in designing pedagogy and classroom or workshop activities, as well as understanding the identities of those participating (Gibbs et al., 2021; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). Richter et al. (2020) felt that intersectionality is a critical framework for addressing inequities in the educational system and connected the theory to key factors to encourage activism. Skill building, mentorship and spaces to interact with others interested in social justice were frequently described as essential for activism to thrive and feel valued and supported (Barnhardt, 2015; Lantz et al., 2016; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Liu & Shen, 2020; Richter et al., 2020). Encouraging learners' development in these areas, along with a commitment to educate on social inequities leads to increased longevity of a learners' civic engagement and a greater impact for student activists on campus (Barnhardt, 2015; Barnhardt et

al., 2015; Mayhew & DeLuca Fernández, 2007). These pedagogical practices for social justice teaching will help form the curriculum I will be developing for my intervention. The characteristics outlined here will support the student affairs professionals who participate in my workshop series in creating educative, meaningful & transformative experiences for student activists.

Chapter Four: Program Design and Implementation

The thematic concern I plan to address with my intervention is the perspective of student activism. On-campus activism is often seen negatively by institutions, and student affairs professionals are tasked with managing student dissent as opposed to encouraging engagement and listening to concerns (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Linder, 2019a). To address this concern, my proposed intervention is to host a three-part workshop series for student affairs professionals. This series will build a network of student affairs professionals who are equipped to support students, and each other, during student movements on-campus. In this chapter I will discuss the purpose of my program and outline the specific goals, program, and learning outcomes. I will then demonstrate how the previous chapters of this thesis informed my intervention, before reviewing the relevant connections to the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) professional competencies. Finally, I will give a detailed breakdown of each component of my proposed intervention.

Purpose of My Program

My proposed workshop series will illuminate the transformational nature of activism for positive change for both the institution and the students involved, encouraging student affairs professionals to be involved in supporting student activists. It is important for campus constituents to understand the developmental and skill related benefits for students who engage in activism. It is equally important for them to also understand the benefit of the inclusive and supportive changes typically being advocated for within the institution during on-campus activism. The more these two points are understood, the more the campus culture will evolve to see activism as a valid form of leadership and provide it with the same value and support

received by more traditional leadership programs. Additionally, if a campus culture can embrace activism, student issues and concerns can be addressed without rising to a level that shuts down institutional operations. When shutdowns and interruptions occur, there is a negative impact to all. By increasing positive associations with activism as impactful for student development and leadership, my intervention will start to change perceptions on campus of activists and student movements.

Student activists actively seek out partnerships with faculty and staff to further their causes (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Kezar & Maxey, 2014), so for student affairs professionals to be the most supportive, they must first understand how to effectively work with student activists and the various roles they can play. This support is important for building and maintaining trust which leads to more fruitful student outcomes and overall student success (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Linder, 2019). Student affairs professionals significantly increase student development outcomes when they engage with activists (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2021; Kezar, 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2014). My intervention will provide knowledge and support for student affairs professionals so they can proactively engage with students in a positive way to help facilitate change to improve the experience for students and administration alike.

Goals, Program Outcomes and Learning Outcomes

My overall goals, program outcomes and learning outcomes (LO) are listed below:

- Program Goal 1: Improve perception of student activism
  - Program Outcome 1-1: Raise awareness of the positive impact of student movements
  - Program Outcome 1-2: Attendees will be able to articulate how activism is

beneficial for student development

- LO 1: Participants who attend the workshop will be able to articulate at least two historical student movements.
- LO 2: Participants who attend the workshop will be able to demonstrate at least two ways in which activism supports student development
- LO 3: Participants will be able to identity how student activism might contribute to two current issues in higher education

- Program Goal 2: Increase ability for student affairs professionals to support students in activism
  - Program Outcome 2-1: Student affairs professionals will feel more comfortable addressing topics of activism on campus
  - Program Outcome 2-2: Student affairs professionals will understand how to effectively advocate for students
    - LO 1: Participants who attend the workshop will be able to identify at least three ways they can support student movements/activism on campus
    - LO 2: Workshop participants will be able to describe their predicament between supporting students in activism and their role in the institution
    - LO 3: Workshop participants will be able to assess their own positionality and its impact on power dynamics in the institution and spaces of activism, particularly identity based activism

- Program Goal 3: Create a supportive network of student affairs professionals working as tempered radicals
  - Program Outcome 3-1: Student affairs professionals will be able to identify supporters in their work with student activists
  - Program Outcome 3-2: Student affairs professionals will be able to articulate ways to support their colleagues connected to on-campus activism
    - LO 1: Participants of the workshops will be able to plan for collaboration and support
    - LO 2: Participants will be able to articulate at least two ways they can support their colleagues in working with student activists

Theory to Practice (Praxis)

Frameworks from Chapter Two

My philosophy of education is the foundation of my proposed program. In order for students to have the meaningful, educative, and transformational experiences I believe a university should provide student affairs professionals with the knowledge and resources they need to be adequately trained and prepared to support students. As Oakeshott (2003) suggests, students need specific pathways and support to encourage them in their own transformation. Student affairs professionals have a significant role to play in this guidance outside of the traditional classroom/academic setting. Students need spaces to think critically and experiment, to allow them to inform further development. Student affairs professionals are in prime position to support students in this process as their interactions are not tied to a specific year or semester like a faculty member might be in a classroom setting. This on-going relationship with students

allows student affairs professionals to support students throughout their higher education trajectory. Without the proper support, for both students and student affairs professionals in their roles, miseducative experiences are more likely to occur, impacting the future learning and development of those involved (Dewey, 1938). I focused my intervention on educating student affairs professionals to ensure they have the necessary skills to support students during their engagement in activism.

The format of my workshop series and ongoing network community is rooted in Freire's (1970) problem posing education framework. The issue or problem I am posing is my thematic concern: the negative view of activism on campus. My workshop series, with the support of the advisory board, is designed to: (a) expose the challenges facing student affairs professionals in navigating their roles and supporting students in activism, (b) demonstrate an obligation to act due to the significance of the activism for the students, c) increase comprehension on the history of activism and its impact on institutions and students alike, (d) encourage critical thinking and connections as to how to navigate their roles and how to work within or around the system as tempered radicals to support students, and (e) confirm commitment towards this issue by forming the ongoing network (DeeWard, 2015; Friere, 1970). As this process is a cycle, my aim is for there to be structured ongoing work for participants to continue to learn and develop themselves as they form their own network of problem posing educators who are committed to supporting student activists and their meaningful, educative and transformational experiences.

Literature from Chapter Three

The literature discussed in chapter three confirms my commitment to focusing on student affairs professionals for my intervention. Several scholars reiterate the importance of those allies and accomplices to activism work having knowledge of their own positionality, privilege and

power, and how this shows up in their work and experiences in order to be able to effectively and respectfully support campus activism (Linder, 2019a; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Stewart et al., 2022). These reasons are why the second workshop is dedicated to this exploration to minimise the ignorance of how different identities affect lived experience. This is especially important when working with activists engaging in identity-based activism, which in my experience is the most common activism on campus today. The creation of the advisory board is to centre the concerns of those involved in campus activism and with lived experiences of the issues looking to be addressed. Listening to the needs of the population one aims to serve is critical in both activism work and in critical action research.

Another key section of my literature review was the discussion on pedagogies for social justice teaching. As I intend to build a workshop series, it felt important to understand the best practice pedagogies to ensure the best social justice oriented outcomes. Intersectional feminism and transformative pedagogy informed much of the structure of my intervention and concepts for the workshops. The most impactful activities were highlighted to be: (a) active learning opportunities, (b) creating personal connections to issues discussed, (c) providing opportunities for action, (d) inspiring a vision for the future, and (e) reflection (Fuentes et al., 2010; Mayhew & DeLuca Fernández, 2007; Storms, 2012). Intersectionality is important both in the exploration of personal identities but in demonstrating how no one student movement stands alone or evolves without the influence of systemic issues (Gibbs et al., 2021; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). Skill building, mentorship and spaces to engage with others interested in social justice are described in the literature as essential for activism to thrive and feel valued (Barnhardt, 2015; Lantz et al., 2016; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Liu & Shen, 2020; Richter et al., 2020). This evidence strongly informs my proposed intervention. It is why the proposed workshops will focus on skill building

and creating personal connections to specific on-campus activism by hearing community stories and reflection. This research also guides the ongoing network in providing opportunities for action, engaging in mentorship and creating a space to discuss social justice issues.

Professional Competencies

The ACPA/NASPA professional competencies are 10 areas that have been identified as the core educational values of the profession of higher education (ACPA/NAPSA, 2015). The guide provided for these competencies lays out "essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of all student affairs educators, regardless of functional area or specialization within the field" (ACPA/NASPA, 2015, p. 7.) Several of these competencies intersect with my thematic concern and proposed intervention. I will present their relationship in table 1 below.

Table 1

ACPA/NASPA competencies and my thematic concern

ACPA/NASPA Competency Area	**Description** (from ACPA/NASPA, 2015)	**Intersection with Thematic Concern and Intervention**
Personal and Ethical Foundations	The knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop and maintain integrity in one's life and work.	This area is addressed across all workshops: maintaining integrity on a personal level while navigating positionality within an institution that may not match your own value system during student movements on campus.
Values, Philosophy and History	Involves knowledge, skills, and dispositions that connect the history, philosophy, and values of the student affairs profession to one's current professional practice.	Addressed in workshop one: understanding the role of activism in the history of higher education and the development of the student affairs profession is important context for working with activism in the current climate.

Leadership	Addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of a leader, with or without positional authority.	Covered throughout workshop series: student affairs professionals must often navigate spaces of power without positional authority. This area is also relevant in reframing activism as leadership as activists are leaders without positional authority on campus, unlike more traditional forms of student leadership.
Social Justice and Inclusion	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.	Addressed across all workshops, particularly workshop two: this competency is key to understanding student motives for activism and their experiences on campus. This area also addresses structures of power and encourages positional analysis of participants which is essential for supporting student activists appropriately.
Student Learning and Development	Addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student affairs and teaching practice.	Addressed across all workshops, particularly workshop one: my interventions draws connections between student activism and student development and how this understanding can help elevate the resources available for activism and better support student activists.
Advising and Supporting	Addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to providing advising and support to individuals	Addressed in workshop three: advising and supporting is one of the major ways student affairs

	and groups through direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance.	professionals work with student activists. Being skilled in this area is key in facilitating the learning and development of student leaders engaging in activism.

Related Professional Experience

As I discussed in chapter one, my professional experience at Bryn Mawr College (BMC) is entirely responsible for shaping my thematic concern and intervention. The student strike in fall 2020 was my first experience of on-campus activism at that level of institutional disruption and witnessing the response and action (or lack of action) by the administration was eye opening. One of the major missed opportunities I saw was the lack of interaction between students and student affairs professionals during this time period. Students did not seem to see student affairs professionals as trusted support systems and student affairs professionals did not understand why students were not approaching them for support, particularly when they worked in areas of civic engagement.

It is this missed opportunity that shaped my intervention as a way to address my thematic concern. Building relationships and demonstrating trust and reliability must happen before the need to rely on those relationships arises. I hope by educating student affairs professionals about student activism and their impact on supporting students will enable them to be more ready to step up for students during on-campus movements. Simultaneously, I hope having students be part of the advisory board, designing the curriculum, getting to share their experiences, and learning about the network of student affairs professionals taking action will open their eyes to those who want to support them through their activism work and see them as true campus leaders.

Program Proposal

The main component of my program will be a three-part workshop series called "Becoming Agents of Change." Between each session, there will be reflection exercises as reflection is a significant component of social justice learning (Storms, 2012). Another foundational part of my intervention is the formation of an advisory board to continue the practice of critical action research during the design, implementation, and evaluation of this proposal. Including community voices is essential when transformational learning requires experiential activities which would be most impactful when connected to the specific campus using this proposal.

Workshops

Each workshop will be approximately two hours each and will cover the topics outlined below. I have only presented general topic areas here as my intention is for the advisory board to feel a sense of ownership and influence over this program by helping to form and develop the full curriculum. The basic structure of these three sessions is designed as a pathway of exploration. Beginning with a big picture focus on facts and theories, the content becomes more personal and action-based as the workshops progress. I have provided a suggested outline in Appendix A to demonstrate how workshop one could look for the purpose of illustrating how the pedagogical practices from chapter three could be incorporated in this format.

Workshop One. *(Addresses Program Goal 1)*. In this workshop, the curriculum is intended to cover the impact of student activism over higher education's history and the various reasons why students engage in activism (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). If applicable, it will be important to cover specific instances of student activism on the current campus that speak more to the campus culture and experiences of student activists in this specific environment. The

second part of this workshop will be reframing activism as a valid form of student leadership and the impact it has on student development while in higher education and beyond (Kezar, 2010; Linder, 2019a; Linder, 2019b).

Workshop Two. *(Addresses Program Goal 2 LO 2 & 3)*. This workshop builds on the context of the previous workshop to pivot the focus from students to student affairs professionals. My aim is for student affairs professionals to explore their own positionality, both as student affairs professionals in the institution and their personal identities in connection with power and privilege (Linder, 2019a; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Stewart et al., 2022). These experiences set the stage for the following workshop by providing the personal context and implications of their position when supporting student activists.

Workshop Three. *(Addresses Program Goal 2 LO1 & Program Goal 3)*. This workshop will cover the three main roles student affairs professionals can take when supporting student activists as presented in the student affairs literature: educator, mediator/advocate, and initiator/activist (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Kezar, 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Linder, 2019a; Stewart et al., 2022). Participants will then have the opportunity to map out ways they can employ these strategies and work together as a network in the campus community to support students and increase the positive perception of activism as valued leadership and civic engagement.

Reflection Work

Between each workshop, there will be reflection prompts and pre-work for the next session to solidify past learning and prepare for the new topic to maximise the workshop time. As mentioned previously, reflection and the opportunity for additional context building outside the classroom setting increases the likelihood that social justice outcomes are met (Fuentes et al.,

2010; Mayhew & DeLuca Fernández, 2007; Storms, 2012). Suggested activities could include:

- Taking the time to listen to a student group talk about their activism work, their motives and their experiences;
- Connecting with a faculty member to learn more about the connection between student activism and identity development;
- Research why student leadership is a well-resourced area of student affairs and why activism is not typically associated with this area;
- Reflect on what surprised you the most from the previous session;
- List three resources on campus that support activism, and if you cannot find three, reflect on why that is;
- Complete an identity wheel exercise and reflect on the salience of each in your life. How does the salience of your identities correlate to those most often connected to instances of student activism?

I also plan for there to be structured ongoing work beyond the end of the workshop series as I hope those who attend will form a network to support each other and students on an ongoing basis. I intend to, in collaboration with the advisory board, provide guidance on how to continue learning and growing in this area but the exact details are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Advisory Board

Another key component of my program is the advisory board I plan to form. This board would consist of student activists, and staff and faculty leaders on topics presented in the workshop. I propose that there are six seats on the advisory board. Three seats will be held by staff or faculty (at least one of each) with a professional or lived experience in the areas of activism, student development and leadership, and university governance. Three seats will be

held by student activists, ideally a first or second year, a third, fourth or fifth year and a graduate student but this would not be a requirement. This advisory board will be formed nine months before the launch of the first workshop. In this time period, I suggest monthly meetings to establish themselves as a board and finalise the curriculum, with the frequency to fall to twice a semester once the workshops are underway. Each meeting will be co-chaired by a different pairing of a student and faculty/staff member of the advisory board.

Length of term on the board will be at least two years in order to see the workshop series through in its entirety and the initial formation and work of the network in order to be able to provide feedback for the next cycle and assess the program outcomes. The primary mission of the advisory board will be to ensure the student activist experience is centred throughout the workshop series and beyond. The goals they will use to achieve this mission are to design the curriculum for the workshops including the reflection and work between sessions, provide guidance for the ongoing work of the tempered radical network, and to assess the effectiveness of the program and make adjustments. The mission is also the guiding star for the advisory board.

The intention of this program is to improve the perceptions of activism on campus to better support students. Therefore, the intervention itself is aimed at student affairs professionals with the end goal to improve the experiences of the students. Together, the advisory board will create by-laws to govern how they interact with each other, keeping their mission front and centre. Ideally, the advisory board would undergo training on transformative pedagogies for social justice learning so they have the skills and support they need to build the curriculum effectively. My intention is to provide financial compensation for those serving on the advisory board. As this is a considerable time commitment as well as significant responsibility for each

member, I propose paying $1000 per member, per semester, distributed through the course of the semester.

Materials

I will be developing a curriculum in collaboration with the advisory board which, as mentioned above, will include reflection and individual pre-work material. While this will need curating and so will be a cost in terms of hours paid to the advisory board, I intend to share this information digitally for ease of access for the participants during the program and beyond which will not incur an additional cost. In addition to this, I will need to create marketing materials both for the advisory board and potential participants. At least initially, these will be targeted emails to individuals known to have knowledge and interest in supporting campus activism to invite them to participate. Any graphics included would be made using an institutionally provided Canva account so no additional costs for this recruitment method.

As a next step, the advisory board would also provide potential ongoing discussion topics for the development of the network beyond the workshop as ongoing learning and developing is an important part of my educational philosophy, but these would also be provided digitally. Light refreshments would be provided at each workshop and for the first iteration of the program, I would not be looking for more than ten participants. As part of the ongoing network, I envision one component could be a common read so this would be an additional material to be provided in e-book or physical form, depending on participant preference.

For workshop participants, upon completion of the series, I would plan to provide them with a pin badge and a sticker to signify membership in the network. This is both to commemorate their commitment to student activists but also, a visible way to signal that they are in the network to colleague and students. While signaling can be problematic, it is important that

there is a way for students to identify those who are committed and are themselves supported in order to support student activists.

Challenges

The main challenges I envision are, fitting the necessary content into the workshops, measuring longitudinal culture changes as a result of the program, and negative perceptions of the program on campus. The content to cover feels at this stage is pretty extensive and the literature consistently states that a poor level of exploration of positionality, power, and privilege can cause more harm than good. Therefore, it is really important that this program does not make current support for activism, or the experiences of student activists, worse. My thematic concern is the overall negative perception of activism and while the specific learning goals can be measured by completing assessment with the workshop participants, it will be more difficult to track the long term, big picture, potential change in perception of activism on campus.

Finally, the potential negative perceptions of the program on campus could deter attendance or highlight participants as 'problematic' for the institution or senior leadership. This fear is connected to a consistent theme throughout this thesis of student affairs professionals navigating the balance between supporting students who are counter to the institution while maintaining position within the institution itself. In order to try and counteract this, I would frame the program as integrally connected to institutional values of education, exploration and supporting our students. We, in student affairs, can all agree we care about student success and development, and this program is part of the mission to enhance those outcomes.

Chapter Five: Implementation and Evaluation

In this culminating chapter, I will outline a proposed timeline for implementation of my workshop series, including a plan for obtaining funding, program budget, marketing, and recruitment. I will discuss various leadership strategies for approaching the different constituents connected to this program to aid in the implementation. I will then consider the assessment and evaluation component of the program. Following this discussion, I will outline the limitations of my program and opportunities for future development, before providing some concluding remarks.

Implementation

As with any program, planning ahead is essential for participant buy-in and successful implementation. In this section, I will provide a detailed timeline, funding, and budget proposal for my program and present two leadership approaches I anticipate using in the implementation.

Timeline

One year prior to the launch of my program, a venue on campus should be secured for the three planned workshop dates. After speaking with fellow student affairs professionals, the summer was suggested as the best time for this series to take place, given the reduced pace during these months. With a summer launch in mind, in the spring semester a year before the launch, I would work with student activists to identify students, staff, and faculty to be approached about serving on the advisory board. The advisory board would ideally meet virtually once during the summer to get to know one another and establish their by-laws before beginning fully in the following fall.

In the fall semester, the advisory board would be tasked with finalising the workshop curriculum and approaching any campus partners for participation. For example, recruiting

students to record videos detailing their experiences engaging in campus activism, or asking community members to present on topics of which they have particular expertise.

During the spring semester prior to the summer launch, the advisory board would work on collecting all necessary materials into an online format (e.g., Google Drive, website, etc.) and preparing the reflection and pre-work for the participants between sessions. This semester would also be the time where any marketing and recruitment for workshop participants would take place and any physical materials, such as pin badges, would be ordered. Catering requests could also be placed at this time.

The summer of the launch, the three workshops would be spread evenly across the summer, allowing adequate time for the reflection and work between workshops to be achieved. When the advisory board reconvenes in the fall, they will be able to review the assessment and evaluation data from the summer and make any necessary updates for the following iteration of the program. If this program runs on a yearly cycle, at this stage additional venue bookings, confirmation of collaborators for the workshops would be finalised. The fall is also when the network of those who attended the sessions would begin meeting to continue to work together on the topics begun during the summer. The advisory board would also engage with this network during the year to do further assessment and evaluation of the program. A visual presentation of this timeline can be found in Appendix B.

Funding

There is a tendency when discussing student activism to hide the intentions so as not to alert others to its presence until it is a fully fledged movement. However, in order to change the perceptions of activism on campus as I am proposing to do, this work must be brought into the light. Supporting student activism is supporting student development and civic engagement, both

values strongly held by divisions of Student Affairs at institutions of higher education. A workshop for student affairs professionals to develop new skills to more effectively support students in their activism is a form of professional development, another value strongly held by divisions of Student Affairs at institutions of higher education.

For this reason, my first strategy for fundraising would be to approach this division for funding for the program and "test the waters" to see how it is received. I believe that framing activism as the valid form of student leadership and civic engagement that I have outlined in this thesis that benefits both the student and the institution. Additionally, it will create the necessary connections to the work done in student affairs to obtaining funding for a pilot program. I also believe that alumni, and perhaps even faculty would be interested in contributing to this work directly if the opportunity was provided to them. In order to approach them with this opportunity, I think creating a GoFundMe or similar page would be the easiest way to receive support outside the bounds of the typical donating structure. This would allow for easy sharing and a chance to explain the purpose of the fund in detail.

Budget

A detailed budget for funding is outlined below in Table 2. The majority of the funding would be needed to compensate the advisory board for the work that they will be doing to establish the curriculum and compile assessment and evaluation data. Light refreshments will be provided for the workshop participants and facilitator(s) each session. The merchandise will be kept at a minimum and provided to allow students to identify student affairs professionals who have participated and are part of the ongoing network. The marketing and materials will be of no cost due to using no printed copies and providing everything digitally.

Table 2

Program Budget

Expense	**Description**	**Cost**	**Total** (per year)
Stipends	Payment to Advisory Board Members (6)	$1000 per member per semester	$12,000
Workshop Refreshments	Water, tea and coffee for participants (10)	$50 per workshop	$150
Merchandise	Stickers & pin badge for participants (10)	Stickers $15 Pins $19	$34
Marketing	Targeted emails	none	-
Materials	Workshop materials will be available digitally	none	-
		TOTAL	$12,184

Leadership Approaches

Looking at Sriram & Farley's (2014) interpretation of Bolman and Deal's four frames for the context of higher education, several frames will be appropriate when approaching various parts of the implementation process. When approaching senior leadership for program funding, initially the symbolic frame would be the most appropriate, creating the need to communicate through storytelling (Sriram & Farley, 2014). For this to be most impactful, I would propose asking student activists to come and share their experiences and why the additional support they would receive as a result of the program would be important to them. Student affairs as a division is ultimately here to support students so hearing directly from them would be the most impactful to demonstrate the need and benefits of this program.

Combining with this frame, I feel that following the storytelling, the political frame would come in next to advocate for the required resources. It is here Sriram & Farley (2014)

speak to "seeking commonalities and partnerships among the divergent interests represented" (p. 107), so negotiating the view that activism is leadership and the various impacts on student development would move the stories into the structural learning outcomes of the division.

Forming the advisory board and later, recruiting participants will be a more grassroots approach. Typically, grassroots leaders rely more on word of mouth and email, which is how I would hope to manage these parts of the implementation (Kezar et al., 2011). The reason this approach is the most applicable in this setting is because I want to focus on collective action and a non-hierarchical process. Student activists on campus will have the most knowledge of who is engaged in this space and this approach allows that knowledge to be centred in the way the advisory board members are contacted.

For this first iteration of the workshop series, I would also be looking to target student affairs professionals who have already had some experience or interest in engaging with student activists to solicit their feedback on the process. Again, the knowledge of the student activists and, by the time workshop recruiting occurs, the advisory board will be the most relevant for inviting participation. This grassroots leadership approach for implementing the program itself, ties hand in hand with the tempered radical approach of my intervention (Kezar et al., 2011).

Assessment & Evaluation of Program

In critical action research, assessment is a reflective practice that is ongoing throughout the process (Stringer, 2014) which also connects to Freire's (1970) model of problem posing education I discussed in chapter two. The practices complement each other and provide the foundation for my circular and ongoing method of assessment. While evaluation of each iteration of the workshop is possible, I believe the process and the content should be constantly transforming, in alignment with my philosophy of education.

This transformation of the workshop will be a result of both the experiences of those who participated, and the external changing context of student activism. Responding to these key inputs will provide the most meaningful and educative program experience. Throughout the workshops and beyond into the ongoing network meetings and further learning, assessment and evaluation will be essential to keep the experiences of the community at the centre of the work and measure the success of the program goals.

Program Evaluation

Each of the learning outcomes will be evaluated after each workshop as part of the reflection and work designed by the advisory board. For example, after the first workshop, participants will be asked to reflect on two ways that activism supports student development. Using this data built into the flow of the program allows for ongoing assessment to happen and adjustments to be made if the outcomes are not being met. These adjustments could be adding materials to the resources provided to participants or having a more detailed conversation outside of the workshop on a particular topic area.

For the larger program goals, more longitudinal assessment and evaluation would be beneficial to assess the long-term success of the program. I have selected focus groups and built-in data for my evaluation methods as I feel they are methods better suited to addressing larger cultural shifts in the institution and the experience of working as a collective. Suggested questions for each focus group proposed below can be found in Appendix C.

Program Goal 1. To assess an improved perception of student activism, I propose two methods of evaluation. First, I believe the best way to assess the experiences of student activism during and after an on-campus student movement would be through focus groups. Focus group assessment would be most relevant within the first four years of the program. It is important to

get data from student activists who were on campus prior to the program implementation.

The second method of evaluation would be using built-in data from campus messaging on the topic of activism. Gathering messaging from campus wide emails and institutional publications for years prior to my intervention and then ongoing in the years following would allow for trends in tone and perception to be tracked over time. The ongoing results of this research would assess the impact of the workshop and allow for adaptations to be made to the program to better meet this goal if necessary.

Program Goal 2. While the reflections post-workshop will provide short term assessment data on whether student affairs professionals have an increased ability to support students in activism, a different method will be needed to track this data over time. With the intention of having monthly meetings for the ongoing network, I propose having one or two members of the advisory board attend a meeting every six months and use part of the meeting for a short focus group session to assess the ongoing benefits of the initial program and the network itself. This strategy is useful for evaluation following an on-campus student movement. This assessment will provide data about the preparation of the workshop participants and their ability to support student activists during that time.

Program Goal 3. Creating a supportive network of student affairs professionals working as tempered radicals within the institution is another long-term goal. While the network will be formed immediately, knowing how it functions in years to come is the most valuable measure of its supportiveness. Once again, I believe this can be assessed through the same focus group methodology as program goal 2, through bi-annual check-ins with the network and also discussions following or during periods of student activism. It will also be a way to assess how new members adjust and feel supported by the initial group as the program continues and

membership grows.

Limitations & Looking Ahead

This intervention specifically focuses on student affairs professionals supporting student activists, but they are not the only constituent on campus that directly supports students. In the future, a version of this program could be beneficial for faculty, staff working in academic affairs, including graduate students, and central senior leadership. Including these populations would allow more areas of an institution to better understand the value of activism for students and the community as a whole. Consequently, more inclusion of faculty, staff, and students could result in a bigger impact on the overall campus perception of activism. Changing the perception to be more positive would also allow for all those on campus supporting student activists to be more overt and provide distinct guidance from senior leadership to clearly define parameters that are typically missing in the current higher education environment (Stewart et al., 2022).

My proposed program is designed as a beginning point to introduce people to a different approach to supporting student activists. As such, it could also be used as a pre-conference workshop or within a school system to create a network that went beyond one particular campus. The ongoing network is an important piece of the longevity and sustainability of the program and would require significant continuing work to provide content and guidance. In the long term, a collective structure of responsibility could be created to relieve the advisory board from such an integral role but the development of this concept is beyond the scope of this thesis. If these networks continued, it would be interesting to do follow up research through surveys, interviews, or focus groups, depending on the participant pool, to see the long-term influence of the program on changing institutional perspectives of activism.

Conclusion

When I began this program in September 2020, I had no idea what the topic of this thesis would be. I had been working in higher education for three years but had not yet come across an issue that sparked for me. In the fall of 2020, the Bryn Mawr Strike Collective was formed and the experience of that student movement while I was studying in this program and also working at Bryn Mawr College, brought all the pieces together for me. It has been an enlightening process to go through this program and produce this thesis, to refine my own philosophy of education and define meaningful, educative, and transformational experiences as a central tenet of my work. Through my literature review, I was inspired to explore the potential of student affairs professionals to create these experiences for students. Chapters two and three came together to form the foundation of my intervention.

This workshop series is just the first step for a campus to begin providing resources for activist leadership in the same way resources are provided for more traditional forms of student leadership. I believe that through engaging in this content, the network can advocate not just for students during student movements, but for additional resources for their development as campus leaders. Student activism is an invaluable form of self-expression and civic engagement that helps students find their voice and work for social justice. Increasing the positive associations to this work on campus is something I will continue to do in my career, whichever direction it takes me. I plan to work as a tempered radical to support those transformational activists I meet along the way.

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Appendix A

Proposed Workshop Outline

Workshop One.
Program Goal 1: Improve perception of student activism

Part One: History of Student Movements

Program Outcome 1-1: Raise awareness of the impact of student movements.
LO 1: Participants who attend the workshop will be able to articulate at least 2 historical student movements.

Active Learning Opportunities: Ask group in advance to think about campus movements they have been a part of or know about and research information to share with the group. Discuss impact of these movements on the face of higher education today. Be prepared as facilitator to discuss major events such as civil rights movement, Vietnam war protests, Black Lives Matter and their impact on student affairs profession.

Creating Personal Connections: Hear stories from students involved in recent student movements discussing motive, importance and impact on their experiences on both their activism work and place in the campus community. Provide space for student affairs professionals to share their experiences of the same activism. Discuss what they wish had gone better (advisory board can use feedback from these responses to help shape workshop three).

Part Two: Activism as Leadership

Program Outcome 1-2: Attendees will be able to articulate how activism is beneficial for student development.

LO 2: Participants who attend the workshop will be able to demonstrate at least two ways in which activism supports student development

Active Learning: In small groups, consider the skills established through on-campus activism as part of student development. What strategies can you use as student affairs professionals to demonstrate the value of this form of leadership to your colleagues? Begin to think about university power structures and the influence on resource allocation and positioning of leadership vs. activism.

Creating Personal Connections: Ask participants to name characteristics of student leaders they know on campus and then characteristics of student activists on campus. Use your campus as a case study to review on campus resources for student leadership and then student activism. Discuss similarities in definitions but disparity in support.

Reflection

LO 3: Participants will be able to identity how student activism might contribute to two current issues in higher education

Between workshop one and two, ask participants to reflect on previous student movements and the stories they heard from students. What issues have students raised in the past that are still relevant today?

Share an identity wheel exercise with participants to complete and reflect on their salient identities and those prevalent in identity-based student activism.

Ask participants to look at the power structure of their campus. Review the dominant visible identities of those in positions of power ready for discussion next week.

Appendix B

Proposed Program Timeline

Note: For clarity, I am using a proposed launch date of Summer 2024.

Timeframe	**Action**
Spring 2023	● Advisory Board formed
Summer 2023	● Advisory Board meet virtually to create bylaws ● Venue for summer 2024 dates booked
Fall 2023	● Advisory Board creates and finalises curriculum for workshops ● Campus partners approached to support workshop content
Spring 2024	● Advisory Board compiles online resource to include relevant materials for workshop participants and plans reflection component ● Marketing and recruitment for workshop participants takes place ● Orders places for merchandise and catering
Summer 2024	● Program launch ● Workshops take place
Fall 2024	● Advisory Board review assessment and evaluation data to measures program success and inform future iterations of the program ● Future workshop dates decided and venue secured ● Network of participants begin meeting to continue work begun during the summer to support student activists ● Advisory Board meets with network to assess long-term impact of program
Spring 2025	● New Advisory Board members selected and handover meeting takes place ● Marketing and recruitment for workshop participants takes place ● Orders places for merchandise and catering

Appendix C

Focus Group Sample Questions

Audience: Student activists following student movement

This focus group aims to explore student activists' perceptions of institutional support during their on-campus movement.

1. How do you feel about the movement?
2. Where did you receive support from?
3. How did student affairs professionals provide support during this time?
4. What did you think about the response from the institution?
5. What problems or pushback did you encounter?
6. How did you handle these issues?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences?

Audience: Network of student affairs professionals six months out

This focus group aims to explore student affairs professionals' ability to support student activists on campus.

1. What were your feelings after completing the workshop series?
2. How has this network helped continue your exploration in this area?
3. How confident are you in supporting student activists on campus?
4. What topics are you continuing to explore?
5. What do you like best about the structure of this program?
6. What ways could the advisory board best continue to support you?
7. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience at this time?

Audience: Network of student affairs professionals after student movement

This focus group aims to explore student affairs professionals' experiences during an on-campus movement.

1. How did you feel during the movement?
2. What was your experience like working with activists?
3. How did what you learned in the workshop support you during this time?
4. How did the network support you during this time?
5. What problems or challenges did you face?
6. In what way was the institutional response different to previous student movements?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?