

THE STORIES OF STUDENT CONDUCT OFFICERS AND THEIR LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE

by

AARON M. THOMPSON

(Under the Direction of Dallin George Young)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to explore how student conduct administrators in the United States perceive workplace learning, and specifically, how workplace learning contributed to understanding and performing their job roles. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six research participants, and through categorical analysis, four common themes were found amongst the participants' stories. The conduct officers who served as participants for this study described learning and being supported in the workplace through the following four themes: (a) shadowing, reverse shadowing, and debriefing, (b) meaningful interactions with fellow conduct officers, (c) navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices, and (d) access to artifacts. The findings in this study supported the concept of learning and the sociocultural practices in the workplace as inextricable. The work environment is teeming with learning opportunities, and this study hopes to add to the existing training of student conduct administrators by highlighting the workplace itself as a hub for learning. This study gives recommendations for professional student conduct administrators and how they may create better environments conducive to learning in the workplace. The study also shares recommendations for future research.

INDEX WORDS: student conduct, student conduct administrator, student conduct officer,
workplace learning, work-related learning, community of practice, situated
learning

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AARON M. THOMPSON

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AARON M. THOMPSON

Major Professor:	Dallin George Young
Committee:	Laura A. Dean
	Shauna H. Harris

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

To Mama, Daddy and Alex.

To the divine beings on the Other Side that led the way.

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Thank you to my grandmother, Madelyn, who keeps me grounded. When I shared with her my dissertation topic and findings, she paused for a moment, then responded: “You know, that does not sound interesting at all.”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Many student disciplinary systems have lost their educational effectiveness, usefulness and zeal” (Waryold, 2006, p. 39) due to the lack of training and support given to the professionals hired to maintain these systems: student conduct administrators. These administrators are responsible for holding students accountable for violations of policy at the collegiate level. The overarching school of thought in the field of student conduct is that the profession must take a student development approach to the investigation and adjudication of student conduct cases (Fischer & Maatman, 2008; Lancaster, 2006). This aligns with the philosophy of the entire student affairs profession, of which student conduct is a part. According to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), the organization that leads the professional development of those in the student affairs field:

Student learning doesn’t only happen in a classroom. Opportunities for teaching and development exist everywhere on campus, and it is the responsibility of student affairs professionals to seize these moments and promote positive interactions. Encouraging an understanding of and respect for diversity, believing in the worth of individuals, and supporting students in their development are just some of the core concepts of the student affairs profession. (About Student Affairs, n.d., para. 1)

Student conduct officers also follow these principles. However, “student conduct practitioners often find themselves at the intersection of competing value systems---institutional, legal, ethical and individual” (Fischer & Maatman, p. 14, 2008), which over time has caused the adjudication

process to lean more towards a legalistic, punitive approach as opposed to the desired outcome of a more nurturing, holistic approach that supports student growth (Brown-McClure & Cocks, 2020; Clark, 2014; Karp, 2019; Glick & Haug, 2020; Lancaster, 2006; Lowery, 2006; Stimpson & Janosik, 2015; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b).

This departure from the nurturing, student development approach in student conduct can be ascribed to reasons that include, but are not limited to, student conduct officers feeling burdened with a high caseload and being inadequately trained (Waryold, 2006). Constant changes to the “law and higher education...and the rapidly changing complexion of campus cultures create a situation in which few senior student affairs professionals are able to stay abreast of the intricacies of student discipline” (Waryold, 2006, p. 39). Thus, a legalistic approach sometimes takes center stage as it is a constitutional mandate for students to have due process, while educating students on their behavior and its impact on the community takes a backseat.

To mitigate the constant changes to the laws and cultures of higher education, “continuing education, training and development have now become essential to stay current with the changing demographics of the student population...as well as best practices and legal developments in the field” (Fischer & Maatman, p. 17, 2008). As a former, full-time employee in the student conduct field for five years, any sort of training I received fell short of what the literature describes as necessary to perform the job duties appropriately. For example, Fischer and Maatman (2008) state “understanding student development theories is...a necessary ingredient” in student conduct work (p. 17). I never knew one student development theory until my third year into my professional student conduct career and, by chance, learned these theories through my doctoral program. It seems as though the “what” should be learned by student

conduct officers is clearly defined by some scholars (Fischer & Maatman, 2008; Lancaster, 2006), even though it may not be applied in the day to day, on the job training.

What seems to be missing is the “how” student conduct professionals are learning their roles from their own perspectives, and for the basis of this study, how student conduct administrators learn specifically in the workplace. The work environment is its own place of learning, and simply relying on once a year, national trainings is insufficient. It seems as though the scholarship and literature on the student conduct profession has not fully focused on or delved deeply into examining the workplace as a learning environment that may help assuage the aforementioned issues in the field. For example, Fischer and Maatman (2008) contend that discussion with colleagues and campus partners in the work environment is a part of training and developing student conduct officers. However, it is imperative the field go beyond the mere assertion that discussion is enough. Though it is an important part of learning, there may be ramifications caused by discussions that perpetuate and spread misinformation, masked as truth, into the field. Research must dig deeper into how these conduct officers learn in the work environment, intentional discussion included, as this could then be used to contribute to enhanced training opportunities for student conduct administrators.

Historical Context of the Student Conduct Field

A brief, historical synopsis of the student conduct profession is necessary to put into context where the principles of student conduct officer training first emerged. At times, the ideals that first formed the basis of the student conduct profession still seep into today’s workplaces where student conduct officers are situated in the learning of their job roles.

The earliest institutions of higher education in the United States were birthed during the colonial period of the 17th century (Rudolph, 1990). These colleges could never have fathomed

what the modern-day colleges and universities of the 21st century would become. It has been nearly 400 years since the colonial colleges were established and since then, not only have places of higher education expanded from their cluster in the northeastern region of the United States to the rest of the country (Rudolph, 1990), they have changed in their mission, vision, size, educational content, student body, and beyond.

Early colleges were created for white men to become clergymen (Ford, 2017; Rudolph, 1990; Smith, 1994; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b), and since then, the scope of higher education has moved away from an exclusive, strictly Puritan education (Rudolph, 1990). “Gender..., racial and ethnic segregation [were] prevalent in institutions of higher education” at the time of the earlier colleges (Glick & Haug, 2020, p. 7). Today, those seeking entry into institutions of higher learning can select from a wide of range of colleges and universities, choices that simply did not exist in the colonial era. Contemporary universities and colleges include, but are not limited to, liberal arts, public, private, single sex, religious, technical/vocational, minority serving, etc. Each college and university also has its own unique array of extracurricular activities and departments, including but not limited to, social clubs, sports, Greek life, academic honors organizations, internships, community service opportunities, career center, counseling services, disability services, LGBTQIA center, student diversity, women’s center, military service and more. The differences between each college and university are endless, but they all have one communal and shared element: a mission and vision to develop and prepare the student to become an individual that is not only skilled and mastered in their craft or area of discipline but also positively contributes to the global community with integrity and responsibility (About Student Affairs, n.d.; American Council on Education, 1937).

The common thread amongst these places of higher education is their academic component and educational mission. Though the education itself may be different, the common theme is that each institution supports and is dedicated to higher levels of academia and holistic development. To honor this dedication, each institution has a code of ethics or standards that all students must abide by to uphold the integrity of the individual college or university. This began with the founding institutions of higher education in the 1600s, as “colleges have a long history of established rules to guide student behavior, and institutions have adapted over time to respond to cultural and societal changes” (Glick & Haug, 2020, p. 6). These rules and regulations are established for the safety of its students but also for the protection of the university from litigation. Modern-day institutions “understand the need for helping students to learn to live better, safer, rule-governed lives” (Lake, 2013, p. 257), and codes of conduct create a standard and expectation for both the students and the institution. In the late 1980s, a group of professionals was established to maintain the ethical standards of its students at the collegiate level. These professionals are known as student conduct administrators who view “the development and enforcement of standards of conduct [as] an educational endeavor which fosters students’ personal and social development” (Ghering, 2006, p. 15)

Student conduct administrators are tasked with creating a fair and just process for students alleged of violating university policy. Policy violations may include drug usage, underage drinking, disruption to the community, academic dishonesty, hazing and sexual misconduct. Giving students the right to a fair investigation and due process is commonplace in today’s college and universities. This is completely different from the harsh, *in loco parentis* practices of the founding colleges (Smith, 1994; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b) and “this evolution reflects the growing complexity of higher education, along with an emerging and

deepening understanding of society, culture, and student development” (Glick & Haug, 2020, p. 5). The 1961 court case of *Dixon vs. Alabama State Board of Education* created the start of the transition from *in loco parentis* to the right of due process as a federal mandate for all universities receiving federal funding (Lee, 2014). Chapter two will detail more of the history of this case and other court cases that went against *in loco parentis*, but it is important to note that the implementation of due process at the collegiate level was the start of the modern-day field of student conduct. “Dixon ultimately presaged a radical revision of students rights” (Lake, 2013, p. 37) and this case serves as the foundation of the student conduct field. Thus, The Association of Student Judicial Affairs was created for the new wave of student conduct professionals that now had a duty to uphold due process as well as create a learning environment for the student in the conduct process (Waryold, 2006). This organization, known today as the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA), serves as the beginning of a formalized student conduct professional organization, which in turn marks the introduction of the professional development and training of student conduct administrators that is still seen today. However, even with professional development now in place for conduct officers, there still seems to be this division and tension between the implementation of a student development approach to collegiate judicial proceedings and the remnants of the punitive, legalistic beginnings of the field. The goal is to find a healthy balance between the nurturing and legalistic approach to student conduct, where the needs of the students are met by serving their basic rights (i.e. due process) and through supporting their development into responsible members of the community (Stimpson & Janosik, 2015).

Background of the Problem

As mentioned briefly above, my personal experience in the student conduct field has led me to this study. Like many college students, I was completely unaware of the realm of student conduct as I never had to utilize their services during my collegiate career. The first time I was introduced to the field was in graduate school at Georgia State University as I pursued a Master of Arts degree in Teaching: middle level grades with a concentration in mathematics and science. I searched all over campus trying to find compensation to pay for my tuition, and eventually I landed an assistantship in the Dean of Students Office. As the graduate assistant, I began to understand the inner workings of the student conduct field, even without a formal education in student affairs.

Student conduct was my first entry into the entire field of student affairs. I had no prior knowledge of the field and learned everything I knew on the job, at the assistantship itself. I utilized transferrable knowledge that I intuited from my training and academic curriculum in teaching. I was trained extensively to become a middle school teacher through my undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and multiple internships at elementary and middle schools. This is similar to the experience of many working professionals, such as hair stylists, medical professionals, plumbers, architects, engineers, etc., who have some sort of learning or training that takes place prior to field work. This prior training is then utilized in tandem with continued learning and training that comes through the experiences on the job itself. From my own experience and personal communication with my fellow colleagues, most of the learning that takes place for student conduct administrators is in the work environment. To enter the student conduct field, there does not seem to be a requirement that any specific student conduct training or experience is needed to be an eligible candidate for the role. Though there are many student

affairs related master's programs that offer relevant curriculum and internship/assistantship opportunities that can support a new student conduct administrator's learning, these qualifications are not a requirement for entry into the field. Instead, transferable skills are highly accepted, and most training and learning on the specifics of student conduct work occur on the job to fill in the gaps.

I have served on several search committees during my student conduct career, and I can attest to the fact that having a student conduct background is not always a pre-requisite to be hired as a student conduct administrator. We would consider transferable skills and other relevant experiences, such as conflict management, educational outreach, student engagement, and case management, when hiring a student conduct administrator if the candidate did not have direct experience in student conduct work. This can be seen in several job descriptions that recruit student conduct administrators. Emory University posted a job opening titled "Student Conduct Coordinator, Campus Life" that described minimum qualifications as "a bachelor's degree and two years of experience working in a college or university setting, OR an equivalent combination of education, training, and experience" (Emory University, n.d., para. 3). Only in the preferred qualifications section did it mention direct student conduct-related work. A similar job description comes from Georgia State University: "Coordinator of Judicial Affairs". The minimum requirement was a "master's degree and one year of related experience; or a combination of education and related experience" (Georgia State University, n.d., para. 3). The preferred qualifications make no mention of direct student conduct work.

It is clear that having prior student conduct experience is not a steadfast requirement to enter the profession. From my own personal observations, and as seen in the job descriptions above, quite a few of my student affairs colleagues have transitioned into the student conduct

field without prior experience. The work environment is a place where new conduct officers can become well-informed and knowledgeable of their roles and duties, especially when they have related experience but not directly in the student conduct field.

Glick and Huag (2020) claim “today’s conduct system incorporates legalistic requirements while aiming to create an educational and developmental conversation between the conduct administrator and the student” (p. 9-10). This sentiment is seen in much of the literature of student conduct work (Brown-McClure & Cocks, 2020; Karp, 2019; Lancaster, 2006; Stimpson & Janosik, 2015; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). The idea that student conduct is truly developmental for students is aligned with the philosophies of professional student affairs and student conduct organizations (i.e. NASPA and ASCA) to support students outside the classroom, but this is not always the case in practice. From my own personal experience working in several different conduct offices, each work environment differed completely in their training and outlook on student development. I had transferable skills from my teaching background that helped supplement my lack of prior training in my full-time role as a student conduct administrator. However, my on-the-job training, and the work environment that supported my learning, was inadequate based on the principles some scholars (Fischer & Maatman, 2008; Lancaster, 2006) suggest are needed to become an intentional practitioner (which will be discussed more extensively in the following chapter). My position as a former student conduct officer who lacked proper training experiences in the workplace is what led me to this research. Throughout this study, I will share my voice, stories, and opinions from this unique lens.

Problem Statement

Understanding the role of the student conduct administrator, from my own personal experience, is dependent upon the learning that takes place in the workplace itself. It goes

beyond what is learned through curriculum in a classroom, professional standards, or national conferences (though these are great foundational spaces for learning). To best understand how conduct officers learn their roles, we must examine and explore the workplace as a natural hub for learning. There is no field of study in an academic setting geared specifically towards the student conduct officer profession, and thus, supplemental education in the workplace must take place for these conduct officers to become successful in performing their job roles. Though there are higher education and student affairs graduate programs that help students learn about the general knowledge of the student affairs field, workplace learning is still vital for conduct officers to understand their roles. This is the impetus of my study, as there is a limit as to what can be learned in spaces that do not allow for full immersion in the workplace, specifically in student conduct.

The problem is not a lack of resources, standards and curriculum in the student conduct field that help support student conduct officers and their learning. On the contrary, there are professional organizations (i.e. Association of Student Conduct Administration), professional standards (i.e. Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) and academic literature that show student conduct as a legitimate focus area in student affairs and higher education. There are also master's degree programs that teach student affairs curriculum and encourage workplace learning through supervised practices, via assistantships and internships in student affairs, that can support budding student conduct officers in learning their roles. These places of supervised practice give opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to the practices of the job itself. However, there are many conduct officers who come from unconventional backgrounds that did not receive a degree in higher education nor an internship or assistantship in a student conduct office. Even those conduct officers who may have

received a degree and internship in student affairs/higher education, there is a limit to what can be learned without opportunities for participation in the workplace as a full-time professional in student conduct. Thus, this study sought to explore the workplace of student conduct officers to understand its role in conduct officers' learning.

When examining the scholarship on student conduct, I did not find any literature or research related to workplace learning. Current research on student conduct relates to students' perceptions of the methods and procedures of the conduct process (Howell, 2002; Stimpson & Janosik, 2015), history of the profession (Glick & Haug, 2020; Lee, 2014), legalistic versus student development approach (Clark, 2014; Lancaster, 2006), university laws and regulations (Lake, 2013), restorative justice and sanctioning models (Karp, 2019) and philosophy/competencies of the student conduct administrator role (Fischer & Matmaan, 2008; Warylod & Lancaster, 2008). These lines of research are necessary for the conduct field as they help refine processes in order to better support students alleged of violating policy and grant them due process. However, minimal literature was found that actually gave voice to the student conduct administrators themselves. A few studies were found that elicited the personal experiences and stories of conduct officers, such as their engagement in the conduct process (Long, 2020), job satisfaction (Nagel-Bennett, 2010), and their perspective of student conduct as its own profession (Glick & Degges-White, 2019). There still remains a lack of knowledge around how student conduct officers, from their point of view, learn their job roles in the communities of practice.

Though there was no literature found related to student conduct officers and their workplace learning, some of the literature on workplace learning includes service technicians (Orr, 1996) and employees of a "government-owned energy provider" (Lancaster & Di Milia,

2014). One study covered five work environments ranging from the food industry to retail (Billet, 2000). The student conduct field was not found amongst these studies, and thus, my research sought to indicate that the work environment can serve as a place of learning for student conduct administrators. “The process of learning through work can best be understood as being negotiated between the personal and social contributions” (Billet, 2010, p. 25) from the individual employee and the work environment. The work environment must give the employee opportunities for learning to take place, but the employee must also be a participant in their own learning (Billet, 2010). Learning is supported in the workplace by “fostering access to and membership of the target community of practice” (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 49). Once student conduct officers are “engaged in work-related learning...their workplace effectiveness will be sustained” (Billet, 2010, p. 11). When an employee is supported and well oriented in their role, this can in turn create increased job satisfaction, lower job-related stress (Wilson et al., 2020) and empower employees to remain in their position (Collins, 2009; Saunders & Cooper, 2009). An employee's effectiveness and competence in their roles also assists in “the organization's overall competitiveness in the long term” (Jacobs and Parks, 2009, p. 135-136). Hiring the proper candidate and promoting healthy learning practices in the workplace will allow the employee to productively perform their job duties, even when changes arise (Jacobs & Parks, 2009). I have left the student conduct field because of my lack of training and learning opportunities in the work environment. This study hopes to reduce the discomfort that comes from the lack of work-related learning by encouraging those who train conduct officers to take into consideration the voices of their employees. My research study not only adds the student conduct profession to the literature on workplace learning, but more importantly, serves as a starting point for those designated to train conduct officers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to explore the perception student conduct administrators in the United States have of workplace learning and how it has contributed to understanding and performing their roles. The study sought to recount the lived experiences of student conduct professionals.

Significance of the Study

The stories of the student conduct administrators were collected and used as data for the research study (Butina, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Because little research exists that gives credence and respect to these stories and narratives of student conduct officers, as it relates to how they learn in the workplace, it seems reasonable to conclude the current training being given, or not given, to student conduct officers may be based upon: (1) the subjectivity of the individual tasked with creating a work environment that supports learning, (Wilson, et al., 2020) (2) a list of competencies given from professional organization(s), (Association for Student Conduct Administration, n.d.; Fischer & Maatman, 2008) and (3) the conduct officer's "temperament and attitude" towards their own education of the field (Fischer & Maatman, 2008, p. 25). This is also supported by my own personal observations in the field and discussion with colleagues. Those professionals who are not properly trained find their own ways to fill in the gaps. At times, "entry level and mid-level student conduct administrators are forced to work independently to solve complex issues" without the assistance of those put in place to train them on their roles (Waryold, 2006, p. 39). Though the aforementioned list is not exhaustive, it helps give an idea of what criteria might be used to train student conduct officers if student conduct officers' perceptions of how they learn are not being taken into consideration. This study will

help give student conduct administrators a say in their own learning and highlight how they make meaning of their experiences.

Neither of my full-time student conduct roles adequately taught me how to be an effective student conduct officer. During my time in each of my separate full-time roles, I created an operations manual that went into extensive detail on how to perform the job duties which included, but was not limited to, (a) instructions on how to use the student conduct judicial database, (b) explanation on how to collect Clery data for federal reporting (and who to contact for reporting), (c) organizational charts of the department, (d) weekly meetings to attend, (e) campus partners to contact in certain scenarios, and so much more. I created both operations manuals at different institutions, not only for my own sanity, but potentially for the individual who would one day fill my role upon my departure. This was not mandated of me by either institution. Then, when realized I was limited in the learning given in my work environments, I would research ways to learn outside of the institution. “A multitude of seminars, workshops, and conferences can provide the requisite level of knowledge needed for effective practice” (Fischer & Matmaan, 2008, p. 17), and though I requested to attend these learning opportunities, I was given empty promises that did not manifest into reality. Much of the personal communication I have had with colleagues in the field share these same sentiments and have experienced similar, unfruitful opportunities to learn.

The existing literature describes student development as the foundation for student conduct work (Brown-McClure & Cocks, 2020; Lancaster, 2006; Stimpson & Janosik, 2015; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). If there is a true desire for the student conduct field to find a balance between the legalistic approach with a student learning centered approach (Glick & Haug, 2020), it is imperative to explore the work environment as an essential place of learning.

Without this exploration, there is a missed opportunity to potentially assist with the full transition out of the punitive approach in student conduct and into a model that supports both the legal aspects and student development elements of student conduct work. Combining this approach to student conduct work with data driven research on student conduct officers' workplace learning may enhance unexplored, fruitful training opportunities.

This study shed light on a new perspective of workplace learning from the voice of the student conduct administrators. The stories and lived experiences shared in this study may assist those who train conduct officers in creating enhanced work environments filled with learning opportunities that are vital for student conduct administrators to adequately perform their role. My departure from the student conduct field was mostly due to the lack of training from my supervisors who were unprepared to create a work environment that supported learning. This research will help employers “respond to their current and anticipated employee competence needs” via workplace learning (Jacobs and Parks, 2009, p. 136) and possibly reduce employee turnover. It has been over 30 years since the creation of the first student conduct professional organization. It is time to infuse the voices of the student conduct administrators into the literature of the profession.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace?
2. How do student conduct administrators describe how they receive support for learning in the work environment?

Theoretical Framework

There is a myriad of ways learning can take place in any profession. Learning can occur independently, inside the work environment, outside the work environment, during collegiate/graduate school studies, at ongoing training conferences, and more. However, my study specifically concentrated on the workplace itself as the nidus of learning for student conduct administrators. This is not to undermine other forms and places of learning as trivial and inconsequential. On the contrary, learning opportunities that serve as fruitful and beneficial to fulfilling job duties are encouraged. However, the framework that guided this study challenges “the tyranny of the assumption that learning is [merely] the reception of factual knowledge or information” without taking into consideration the social interactions of the workplace as a vital component of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 1). Thus, the following framework was chosen to ground this study.

The conceptual framework of this study is the analytical perspective of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) by Lave and Wenger. My study sought to understand learning specifically in the workplace, and the conceptual framework of this study, legitimate peripheral participation, views learning as a sociocultural practice through engagement in the community/work environment (Lave & Wegner, 1991). Legitimate peripheral participation underscores the idea that “learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skills requires newcomers to move toward full participation in sociocultural practices of a community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). This conceptual frame emphasizes that there is no separation between learning and the social practices/interactions in the community of practice. Thus, this legitimate peripheral participation guided my study to help identify how learning and the workplace coincide.

There are several ways in which the work environment can provide support for its employees to learn, including but not limited to, “mentoring”, “guided learning strategies (modelling, coaching, questioning, analogies and diagrams)”, and “everyday activities and intentional interventions” (Billet, 2001, p. 209-210). As it relates to student conduct administrators, this can look like seasoned conduct officers allowing a newly hired conduct officer (newcomer) to observe and participate in a student investigation in real time, mentors sharing and reviewing a diagram of the adjudication process, role play opportunities with fellow colleagues, or access to supportive curriculum (such as a manual) that is directly related to the practices in the work environment. Though this is not an exhaustive list, it illuminates the possibilities that will be examined in this study.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were utilized for this study:

Workplace learning: The literature uses several different definitions. For this study, workplace learning is defined as “a broad term that encompasses many conceptualizations of learning and may be defined in terms of learning for work at work and through work” (Sadler-Smith & Smith, 2001 as cited in Streumer & Kho, 2006, p. 4). Other terms that will be utilized as synonyms for workplace learning are work-based learning and work-related learning. Workplace learning emphasizes the learning that takes place specifically in the work environment.

Student conduct officer: A professional in the field of student affairs who has been appointed to investigate allegations of students, at the collegiate level, who have been accused of violating university policy. The conduct officer investigates and adjudicates each case. Other synonymous terms that may be used: student conduct administrator and conduct officer.

In loco parentis: A policy or rule that permitted institutions of higher education “discretion to determine what constituted conduct unbecoming of a student” and allowed these institutions the right to investigate a policy violation of a student and make a sanctioning decision without notifying the student or gaining the student’s input or testimony (Lee, 2014, p. 5).

Community of practice: “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (E. Wenger-Trayner & B. Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1).

Newcomer: A new employee that has little to no experience in the field (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Old-timer: A seasoned, more experienced employee (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Chapter Summary

My study sought to magnify the voices of the student conduct administrators in order for their lived experiences to be taken into consideration to support a more purposeful and intentional professional experience. The student conduct profession is an integral part of higher education, and thus the training opportunities for these administrators must be examined and maintained. There seems to be discrepancy between what the literature describes as a well-trained, competent student conduct practitioner and what is actually upheld and taught in the workplace. This study sought to observe the workplace as a haven for educational opportunities for student conduct administrators from the mouths of the student conduct administrators. The hope is that in turn, the conduct field will evolve and grow to enhance its training practices. But first, “in order to make sound decisions for the future of the student conduct profession, it is imperative to know from where the profession originated” (Glick & Haug, 2020, p. 5) and this is what we will dive into in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter anchors the research study by exploring how the student conduct profession began on college campuses in the United States and what the profession now looks like in a contemporary world. The first portion of the literature review will describe (a) the transition of colleges from a dictatorial style of higher education to a modern perspective of student development, (b) the evolution of the student conduct profession and its values, and (c) the court cases that revolutionized the entire student conduct profession. In order to fully make sense of the lived experiences of modern-day student conduct administrators in the workplace, understanding the genesis of the student conduct field in its historical context is vital. The profession of student conduct and how it looks today is directly related to the evolution of college campuses and their outlook on equity and fairness. This history will serve as a foundation that will give insight into how student conduct officers are trained today.

The overview of the history of the student conduct field also serves as the foundation for the second portion of the literature review. The basis of this study is to explore how student conduct administrators describe their experience of workplace learning. Thus, it is imperative that the history of workplace learning is also examined and defined in order to fully comprehend the current perspectives of the conduct officers in this study. Because there was no research found that studied workplace learning in the student conduct field, the second portion of the literature review delves into (a) training that currently exists for student conduct professionals, (b) the definition(s) of workplace learning, (c) a brief history of workplace learning in the United

States, (d) research studies on workplace learning outside of the student conduct field and (e) supervised practice in student affairs preparation programs.

The Evolution of Student Conduct in Higher Education

Student conduct administration has been in existence since the establishment of American colleges in the early to mid 1600s (Smith, 1994), though it was not an established field at the time. The purpose of college life during this time was based on the preservation of Christian principles (Ford, 2017; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). White men were educated to become clergymen and morally bound advocates of the Christian faith (Ford, 2017; Rudolph, 1990; Smith, 1994; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). The scale of morality was decided by the college administrators, and students were held to these standards inside and outside of the classroom (Smith, 1994). Students were forced to endure “an authoritarian form of governance, that did not distinguish between mental and behavioral discipline, or between religious and intellectual training” (Dannells, 1997, p. 3). During this colonial period, students’ entire lives were shaped and regulated by our first conduct officers: faculty members and presidents of the college (Dannells, 1997; Hevel, 2016; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b).

The First Conduct Officers

The early American colleges had strict rules and policies that dictated the daily lives of its students (Dannells, 1997). Days were rigidly planned out for the students from the foods they were allowed to eat to the clothing they were allowed to wear (Dannells, 1997). The idea of *in loco parentis* was in full force (Smith, 1994; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). The nature of “in loco parentis was not about university duties towards students but about university rights, powers, and prerogatives over students” (Lake, 2013, p. 24). Not only was the day to day restricted, but the punishments were also just as severe. Corporal punishment was the discipline

of choice, with flogging being the most callous (Smith, 1994). When flogging was considered too heinous, the ‘boxing of ears’ became the next punishment of choice, “a practice that consisted of a kneeling student receiving a hard slap on the side of the head” (Smith, 1994, p. 78). These early colleges also practiced other colorful sanctioning methods such as monetary compensation, public humiliation, additional homework, suspension, expulsion, and more (Dannells, 1997; Smith, 1994). True to the *in loco parentis* philosophy, fair and just trials were nonexistent, with the fate of a student’s livelihood in the hands of a subjective disciplinarian. As stated previously, physical abuse was commonplace to rectify student conduct related issues. One of Harvard College’s “first code of laws” reads as follows:

“If any Schollar shall be found to transgresse any of the Lawes of God, or the Schoole, after twice Admonition, he shall be lyable, if not adultus, to correction, if adultus, his name shall be given up to the Overseers of the Colledge, that he may bee admonished at the publick monethly Act” (Morison, 1935, p. 43, as cited in McDaniel Moore, 1974, p. 335).

Punishment for transgressions was left up to the determination of our early conduct officers without the contribution of student input. As time went on, the professors and presidents of colleges found it difficult to keep up with their own responsibilities, such as teaching classes and other administrative tasks, as well as disciplining the students (Dannells, 1997; Hevel, 2016; Smith, 1994). Thus, in the mid-1800s, we see the creation of deans of men and women (Dannells, 1997; Hevel, 2016; Smith, 1994; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). These newly appointed positions were not just the beginning of the student conduct administrators, but the beginning of the entire profession of student affairs (Hevel, 2016; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). Deans of men and women “were primarily responsible for the welfare and behavior of students”

(Hevel, 2016, p. 847). Though corporal punishment was no longer being practiced, these new practitioners were still seen as dictatorial in their methods (Hevel, 2016).

From Totalitarian-Like Control to Due Process

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, students began to push back on the harsh and stringent disciplines of their college administrators (Smith, 1994). From the post-civil war era to The Great Depression, the idea emerged that students should be seen less like children who need to be beaten into submission, but as adults with their own agendas and philosophies (Dannells, 1997; Smith, 1994). Students began to stand up and act, suing their universities and colleges for being accused of infractions, and consequently being punished, without a fair trial. One such case was that of *Stetson University v. Hunt (1924)*, where student Helen Hunt was accused of using cow bells to wake up students in the dormitories (and other unruly behavior) that disrupted the community (Lake, 2013; Terrell, 2019). The premise of Hunt's complaint was that she was not allowed to refute the allegations before she was subsequently suspended (Terrell, 2019). However, the court sided with the university, and underscored the idea that colleges could "do with its students as it saw fit" under the *in loco parentis* practice (Lake, 2013, p. 23). More and more students began to sue their universities claiming they wanted a fair and just trial. The most famous of these, and what has been marked as a turning point in student conduct and student affairs history, was the case of *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education (1961)*.

The Case of Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education (1961)

Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education (1961) cemented the notion of due process in our higher education judicial proceedings that we still abide by today (Stimpson & Janosik, 2015). In February of 1960, North Carolina A&T college students conducted sit ins to peacefully protest segregated lunch parlors (History, 2021; Lee, 2014). This began a sweep of sit-ins

crossing the Southern states (History, 2021; Lowery, 2006), one being at Alabama State College (Lee, 2014). The students at Alabama State College “were protesting the Whites-only policy in place at the lunchroom” of a local courthouse (Lee, 2014, p. 2). The students were refused service at the lunchroom (Lowery, 2006). The governor of Alabama at the time, democratic official John Patterson, commanded the Alabama State College President, Harper Council Trenholm, to expel the students participating in the sit-in (Lee, 2014; Lowery, 2006). In the following days after the sit-in, Alabama State College students continued to protest by marching and holding rallies, following Dr. Martin Luther King’s call to continue to fight against injustices, even if it means incarceration (Lee, 2014). The president of Alabama State College was hesitant to expel the students for protesting but was overruled by the Alabama State Board of Education who decided to expel nine students: “Bernard Lee, St. John Dixon, James McFadden, Joseph Peterson, Edward English Jones, Leon Rice, Howard Shipman, Elroy Emory, and Marzette Watts” (Lee, 2014, p. 5). The board claimed *in loco parentis* as the basis for the expulsions (Lee, 2014).

The expelled students at Alabama State College took their case to court citing the violation of their right to a fair trial and their Constitutional right to due process (Lee, 2014; Lowery, 2006). In an amazing turn of events, after an appeal trial, the court sided in favor of the students (Lee, 2014; Lowery, 2006). This ruling went against all previous court cases that allowed universities the *in loco parentis* privilege of handling student disciplinary matters without due process (Lee, 2014). Dixon became known as a landmark case, because “for the first time in the history of American law, students at a state institution were afforded constitutional due process protection by a federal court” (Lee, 2014, p. 11).

Impact of Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education (1961) on American Higher Education

Because of the courage shown by the expelled Alabama State College students and the overturned court decision, higher education has been changed forever, especially in student judicial proceedings. Many colleges began to update their judicial processes to reflect a more student-centered practice that safeguard student rights (Dannells, 1997). Lowery (2006) states the “right to [have] notice of the charges and an opportunity for a hearing at which to present a defense against the charges remains at the heart of students’ due process rights in public higher education” (Lowery, 2006, p. 21). The era of *in loco parentis* dwindled (Lee, 2014), and students finally had more control in their fate.

Legalistic versus Nurturing Approach to Student Conduct

Over the next couple decades after the Dixon ruling, the profession of student conduct began to form as we see it today. In 1987, our first official professional organization was formed, the Association for Student Judicial Affairs (Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). Thus, the mission and purpose of the student conduct administrator role was formulated. Waryold & Lancaster (2008b) state “the fundamental purpose of student conduct work is to promote growth and development in students while protecting the interests of the larger campus community” (p. 8). The protection of the student and the university is vital. This is a far cry from the early days of the colonial period where colleges sought to have full control of the students. Today, we see the shift to a more student-centered focus in conduct, but at the same time, judicial proceedings must also align with the university’s best interest. Thus, we see two approaches to student conduct emerge: nurturing versus legalistic (Lancaster, 2006; Smith, 1994). The nurturing approach is student development focused, while the legalistic approach is federally mandated and keeps the university out of litigation. Lancaster (2006) describes this dual approach to conduct as

somewhat contradictory. He states: “We are trained to respect the boundaries of law and policy and educated to believe that development and a concern for ethical behavior in us and in our students is of paramount concern” (p. 1). This can seem like a balancing act for many conduct officers who find it challenging to advocate for the student, but also advocate for the institution (Lancaster, 2006).

Legalistic Approach

According to Clark (2014), “most campuses have employed a legal system of justice in their disciplinary proceedings” (p. 707). The legal approach to conduct is like a “criminal court” with an emphasis on assigning a policy violation, reviewing evidence, and finding the student responsible or not responsible (Karp, 2019, p. 21). The main focus in the legalistic approach is on the end result: sanctioning (Clark, 2014). Since the case of *Dixon v. Board of Education* (1961), courts have mandated that universities give students their due process. Many institutions have taken accountability and implemented the court directives into their practices. For example, as stated previously, students must be notified of the alleged policy violation and given the chance to refute the charges on their own behalf (Lowery, 2006). However, applying the court directives alone is inadequate (Stimpson & Janosik, 2015). In order to be good stewards of the true essence of student conduct, there must be a marriage of both legal and student development aspects (Stimpson & Janosik, 2015).

Nurturing Approach

The nurturing approach to student conduct lies in student development and intentional practice. Lancaster (2006) defines intentional practice as “developing expectations, creating environments, establishing processes, listening for stories, making meaning and reflecting on outcomes” (p. 133). Intentional practice allows students to feel as though they belong to the

community, even if they fall off the path. The nurturing approach allows students to reflect on their past behavior, choose positive behaviors that better align with their personal values and the values of the community, and move forward to their goal of graduation (Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). An environment that incubates learning must be created within the student conduct process, so students feel safe enough to share their stories and believe they are heard (Lancaster, 2006; Stimpson & Janosik, 2015; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). Research shows that students who perceived the judicial proceedings as safe and educational left their meetings feeling more positively than compared to students who went through a court-like, traditional conduct proceeding (Karp, 2019). The educational approach allowed students to feel as if they learned from their mistakes and left with a higher sense of belonging and purpose on campus (Karp, 2019). Conduct officers have a huge opportunity to meet students at a difficult time during their college career and help them course correct to a brighter future (Lancaster, 2006). The conduct meeting could change the entire trajectory of a student's life. Lancaster (2006) urges student conduct administrators to remember our work can be life changing:

Each day we should remind ourselves that our most important legacy as individuals and professionals may lie in how students reflect in the long-term about their interactions with one another and with us. Each of us has the ability to make a difference in the lives of our students, every day of our lives and, thus, to change the future and the world – one person at a time. (pp. 144-145).

The Beginnings of Student Conduct Training

“Changes in the handling of student discipline generally coincide with societal, demographic, and educational movements” that are occurring at the time (Smith, 1994, p. 78). The cruel and punitive disciplinary actions of the colonial colleges echoed the religious and

social norms of the colonial period (Smith, 1994). At the time, “Connecticut...had laws stating that children could be put to death if they disobeyed or cursed their parents” (Smith, 1994, p. 78). Fast forward to the 1960s, the civil rights movement was well underway, which is a direct reflection of the implementation of due process in higher education judicial processes. The profession of student conduct was created as a response to the new social changes that supported a more fair and just society (Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). Because of the social movements of the time and the changing demographics of students on campus, the field of student affairs, including student conduct, was called to shift their perspectives to “assist in the development of the whole person” (Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b, p. 11), a massive difference from the dictatorial ways of *in loco parentis*.

The profession of student conduct is still in its infancy, as the first professional organization of the field was established only a few decades ago (Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). As stated previously, it was created out of necessity for the rapidly changing landscape of society and higher education. Because the field is still somewhat new, the training of student conduct officers is also in its beginning stages. My study seeks to amplify the voices of the student conduct administrators as it relates to workplace learning so that in turn, the field can have tangible ways to create training opportunities that are robust and research based. The following section describes the current training of student conduct officers in the field.

Training of Student Conduct Officers

As discussed in chapter one, my first experience in the student conduct field was during my assistantship in graduate school where I was trained with a more nurturing approach to student conduct. However, during my first full time position as a student conduct administrator, I was trained with a more legalistic approach. Neither in my graduate school assistantship nor in

my first full time position was I introduced to student conduct administrator competencies, nationally recognized professional student conduct associations, training manuals, empirical research studies, or literature reviews related to student conduct. I was trained and taught to perform my job duties via word of mouth, strictly based on what my respective supervisor believed to be reasonable and effective. Though the student conduct profession may have certain training opportunities in place, discussed below, in my personal experience they were not utilized for my learning. As a prior full-time conduct officer for over five years at the time of conducting this research study, I have never once been trained in any of the competencies/trainings/teachings, discussed below, that serve as the foundation of the student conduct field.

A well-known training event for student conduct professionals, that began in the late 1980s to early 1990s, was started by Dr. Donald D. Gehring who wanted to support student conduct administrators in their development (Association for Student Conduct Administration, n.d.). The Ghering Academy “[provides] education and training in basic and advanced competencies and beginning and advanced mediation skills for student conduct practitioners” (Fischer & Matmaan, 2008, p. 15). The academy was created by the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA), formerly known as The Association for Student Judicial Affairs (ASJA), a professional organization that “educates, develops, and supports student-centered conduct professionals” (Association for Student Conduct Administration, n.d., para. 4). In the student conduct profession,

the basic competencies that have been identified through research and practice and must be learned and understood include the governance and environment of the institution in which the professional works, the “mechanics” of student conduct administration and

operations, methods of adjudication of student conduct matters, the essential components of a comprehensive and well-written student code of conduct, professional ethics, student development theories, multiculturalism, and relevant laws, policies, and legal mandates affecting the profession. (Fischer & Matmaan, 2008, p. 15).

Though the Ghering Academy is not a required training to become a student conduct professional, it is widely accepted as the spearhead of the field. The literature describes a successful, well-trained conduct officer as a person with an advanced degree, awareness of legal issues that may impact student conduct work, understanding of theories related to student development, experience with diverse student populations, and the deep need for a fair and just process for all students (Fischer & Matmaan, 2008; Waryold & Lancaster, 2008b). Training can be done through a variety of avenues, including but not limited to, participation in professional conferences, discussions with fellow colleagues in the field, individual experience, and advanced courses (Fischer & Matmaan, 2008).

Limited Literature

As seen in the first portion of this literature review, there is quite a bit of scholarship that covers the history of student conduct and how the student conduct profession began. There is also research that describes the different attitudes toward student conduct that universities tend to implement, as seen in the nurture versus legal approach section above. However, when it comes to how student conduct administrators are educated about the history of the profession or how they perceive their training to become competent and successful student conduct administrators, the literature is scarce. There were a couple of studies found from the last few years that explore the experience of student conduct administrators. One such research study was created by Glick and Degges-White (2019) in response to a request from the Association for Student Conduct

Administration (ASCA) Board of Directors that asked for more research on the training of student conduct officers. This was a mixed-methods study that examined if student conduct was “an independent and unique profession” (Glick & Degges-White, 2019, p. 169) based on a specific set of criteria. Only one of the criteria covered training. A second study that explores the experience of student conduct administrators was from Long (2020) who completed a qualitative, phenomenological study about student conduct officers’ experiences “as they engage in the student discipline adjudication process” (p. 10). The introduction of Long’s research study also mentions that there is not much literature surrounding conduct officers and their viewpoints (Long, 2020). Though student conduct administrator training was mentioned in the two aforementioned studies, it was not the focus of the research. For example, in Long (2020), the participants mentioned where they were trained (on the job or at a conference) but went into no detail about what the training entailed.

My research study seeks to take the subjective training of student conduct officers a step further by exploring how student conduct administrators describe their learning of their role in the workplace itself. As seen above in my own personal account, there may be a disconnect between the nationally recognized training/competencies of the field and what is actually practiced in the day to day of the job. No research was found that describes workplace learning in the field of student conduct. Thus, the following sections will detail workplace learning from a broader perspective.

Defining Workplace Learning

There are various definitions of workplace learning in the literature. Jacobs and Parks (2009) refer to workplace learning as a “process used by individuals when engaged in training programs, education and development courses, or some type of experiential learning activity for

the purpose of acquiring the competence necessary to meet current and future work requirements” (p. 134). Garavan et al. (2002) provide a slightly different yet similar definition, describing workplace learning as “a set of processes which occur within specific organizational contexts and focus on acquiring and assimilating an integrated cluster of knowledge, skills, values and feelings that result in individuals and teams refocusing and fundamentally changing their behavior” (Garavan et al., 2002, para. 6). The definition that will be utilized throughout this dissertation is from Sadler-Smith and Smith (2001). They define workplace learning as “a broad term that encompasses many conceptualizations of learning and may be defined in terms of learning for work at work and through work” (Sadler-Smith & Smith, 2001 as cited in Streumer & Kho, 2006, p. 4). There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to workplace learning, and as seen in the aforementioned definitions, there is not a specific approach that is characterized as the ‘best’ way to enhance learning. The workplace definitions above use terms such as ‘processes’ or ‘conceptualizations’ by which learning can take place, but do not define a specific method. Depending on the area of discipline, employee-supervisor relationship, geographical location, size of the organization, etc., different strategies may need to be utilized for an employee to gain the knowledge and skillset needed to achieve success in their roles.

Though one specific technique or procedure is not indicative of the success of learning in the workplace, it is pivotal to recognize the work environment as the foundation for learning. The workplace itself is the learning environment and there is a ‘co-participation’ that takes place between the employee and the workplace (Billet, 2001). The willingness of the employee to participate in workplace learning and the preparedness of the workplace to give the employee the proper tools to succeed are critical entities for learning to take place (Billet, 2001). Within this co-participation between the individual and the workplace environment are different modes of

learning: formal learning, also referred to as structured learning, and informal learning, also referred to as everyday learning (Billet, 2001; Jacobs & Park, 2009; Streumer & Kho, 2006). Formal learning is “intentionally constructed learning activities” while informal learning is “unplanned, unintentional or interdependent learning that derives from experience” (Streumer & Kho, 2006, p. 12). Both modes of learning are crucial, and one does not supersede the other.

As stated previously, the way workers learn and how workplace learning occurs, informally or formally, is not definitive or finite. However, what remains steadfast in the literature on workplace learning is that the work environment incubates learning. Work-based learning is not only formed by engaging activities and accessibility to proper instruction, but it is also formed by the “contributions provided by the physical and social environment of the workplace” (S. Billet, 2001, p. 210). Workplace learning is rooted in the interplay between the individuals who promote learning and the work environment itself (Jacobs & Park, 2009). This interaction can either impede or enhance learning outcomes. The literature suggests that “supporting learning [in the workplace] assists employee growth and career opportunities as well as [signals] to employees that they are valued and respected by the organization” (Kraimer et al., 2011 as cited in Lancaster & Di Milia, 2014, p. 643). When employees feel respected, valued, and see opportunities for career growth, they are more likely to remain in their job roles due to increased work satisfaction (Lancaster & Di Milia, 2014). As stated in chapter one, the idea is that by enhancing workplace learning for employees “throughout their working lives, their workplace effectiveness will be sustained” (Billet, 2010, p. 11).

Brief History of Workplace Learning

The above analysis of workplace learning is a more modern take that has transpired in the late 20th and early 21st century. However, workplace learning as we see it today did not start off

this way. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Taylorism was the standard approach in the United States (Harris, 2000). Taylorism was a philosophy initiated by Frederick Taylor, an engineer, who “emphasized total management control over all work processes” (Harris, 2000, p. 13).

Supervisors were the dictators, while the employees were mindless subjects that followed instructions without input (Harris, 2000). This is apparent amongst industrial corporations of the time, such as “petroleum refining, steel manufacturing, and electrical power” (Library of Congress, n.d., para 1). The image that may come to mind is an assembly line in a factory, where the employees’ main role was to maximize production (Harris, 2000). But as we entered into the 1970s to 1980s, technology caused a wave of rapid change (Harris, 2000) and employees began to challenge the idea of having the same job their entire lives (Streumer & Kho, 2006). The “work content [had] come to have shorter life cycles” and companies and departments were beginning to update and revise their “workflows” more frequently (Jacobs & Park, 2009, p. 135). Thus, the essence of Taylorism became outdated, and the development of knowledge and skillset through teamwork and employee support took its place (Harris, 2000). Workers were now encouraged to be a part of decision making, and the hierarchy of supervisors was made less authoritative and more democratic (Cotton, 1993, as cited in Harris, 2000). The employee was no longer robotically working and following directives from a supervisor, but instead, was required to use their own knowledge, skills and values to contribute to their work to keep up with the fast-moving pace of the changing 21st century job market (Harris, 2000; Streumer & Kho, 2006).

During this time, the need to remain competitive in the global market and the advancement of technology were the main reason for the shift out of the Taylorism mindset (Harris, 2000). In this new age, the nature of work was constantly evolving, which meant learning became a perpetual occurrence and a required pillar to succeed in the work environment

(Streumer & Kho, 2006). In fact, “the development of knowledge in the work situation was advancing so rapidly...the only possibility was to locate learning at the workplace itself” (Streumer & Kho, 2006, p. 10). What came from this was the idea of the work environment as “a learning culture” that supports the needs of the employees in the continued development of knowledge and skills (Streumer & Kho, 2006, p. 10). In order to have successful workplace learning in the work environment, “how workers are afforded opportunities to participate and be supported in this endeavor will shape the prospect of rich learning outcomes” (Stephen Billet, 2001, p. 213).

Studies on Workplace Learning, Organizational Support, and Guided Learning

A few themes appeared when reviewing research studies on workplace and employee learning: learning occurs (a) between the interaction of the employee and the work environment, (b) through relevant training opportunities, and (c) with support and competency of the supervisor. These themes align with Fischer and Matmaan’s (2008) viewpoints, discussed above, on the various ways student conduct officers should be trained in order to become effective in their roles. Though the research studies mentioned below are not directly related to student conduct, it is interesting to see the parallels of workplace learning and effective student conduct training.

As stated previously, Billet (2000) underscores the idea that the workplace is a learning environment. In Julian Orr’s ethnographic study on workplace learning amongst service technicians at Xerox, he found that the hands-on practices of the service technicians in the field (referred to as ‘noncanonical practices’) were pivotal to the success of the organization (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996). It is critical to have this co-participation between the workplace and the employee in order to support learning (Billet, 2001). However, in Orr’s research study, there

were strikingly different practices taught by the organization itself through training and manuals (referred to as ‘canonical practices’) that contradicted what was being learned by the service technicians in the field (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996).

The employees’ on the job practices of the Orr (1996) study did not align with the expectations of the employer (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996). The complexities of the machines required service representatives to make intuitive decisions that were not clearly defined in the corporation’s manual or given in previous training (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996). If the prescribed practices from the corporations’ trainings and manuals were utilized without further input from the service technician, it would be impossible to complete the assigned job duties. Thus, “the [service] reps develop[ed] sophisticated noncanonical practices to bridge the gulf between their corporation's canonical approach and successful work practices,” which in turn becomes the foundation of the corporation’s success (Brown & Duguid, 1991, p. 42). Orr’s study underscores the idea that separation of learning from the work environment is damaging to the outcomes expected by the organization (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996). The workplace itself must be embraced as a learning environment.

Orr’s study also leads into the next two themes that were found in the research studies on workplace learning: relevancy of training information and supportive supervisory relationship. If the service technicians of Orr’s (1996) study had better relevant training and a competent and supportive supervisor, there would have been less contention between the employees and the employer as shown in Lancaster & Di Milia’s (2014) study. This study found three factors that enhanced employee learning: (a) “aligning the training content with corporate strategy” (Lancaster & Di Milia, 2014, p. 652) by including the corporation’s strategic plan and learning outcomes into the training, (b) willingness of supervisors to be a part of the training to learn

alongside the employees, and (c) relevancy of training material and knowledgeable program leads (Lancaster & Di Milia, 2014). Lancaster and Di Milia (2014) completed a cross sectional study on employees of a “government-owned energy provider” who went through one of four leadership training programs (p. 645). Upon completion of an employee’s assigned program, Lancaster and Di Milia researched how these employees felt they learned in the program. This study sought to fill the gap in the research on the type of learning support employees need from their organization in order to properly perform (Lancaster & Di Milia, 2014). It directly aligns with the idea that when “workplaces afford opportunities for learning” and the employee is willing and able to participate in these opportunities, the workplace becomes the perfect learning environment (Billet, 2001, p. 209).

Stephen Billet (2000) supports their claim of the work environment as an inseparable place for learning by conducting a study of five different workplaces, companies varied from textile to food industry, to examine guided learning in the workplace. This took place over a six-month period. Mentors in these workspaces were trained to assist workers in their learning. The chosen methods of guided learning that were to be provided by the mentors to the employees were “questioning dialogues, the use of diagrams, and analogies within an approach to workplace learning emphasizing modelling and coaching” (Billet, 2000, p. 272). It was found that the guided learning did in fact enhance learning amongst the employees and “the readiness of the enterprise and its workforces to participate in these kinds of work experiences is the crucial basis for securing the kinds of outcomes desired by workers and enterprises alike” (Billet, 2000, p. 11).

Supervised Practice in Student Affairs: Master's Level Preparation in the Work Environment

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was created “for the purposes of developing and promulgating standards of professional practice to guide higher education practitioners and their institutions” (CAS, 2019, p. 2). CAS serves as a conglomerate of several professional higher education groups, including but not limited to, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA) (CAS, 2019). In 1979/1980, these organizations came together “to devise preparation standards...for student affairs practice and academic [training at the master's level]” (CAS, 2019, p. 2). Standards have been created for over 40 functional areas in student affairs, including student conduct and master's level academia (CAS, 2019). Though this can serve as effective resource for many institutions of higher education, these standards are limited in their scope (Young, 2019).

As stated previously, the work environment plays a vital role for learning. This sentiment is mirrored in the CAS standard for “master's level student affairs professional preparation programs” (CAS, 2019, p. 342). It underscores the idea that supervised practice, such as “internships and practicums” in the workplace (Young, 2019, p. 291), is essential for master's level students to become successful and competent student affairs professionals. However, the limitation is that these standards do not “offer guidelines for the kind of learning that can be expected from supervised practice experiences” (Young, 2019, p. 292). The standards describe how long the supervised practice should be, the type of supervisors to select, and when the supervised practice should take place in sequence with other coursework (CAS, 2019; Young, 2019). It leaves out the learning objectives of the supervised practice experience and how

students can learn in the workplace (Young, 2019). It is clear CAS sees the work environment as a crucial place for learning but falls short in detailing what this looks like. My research seeks to fill this gap in the research about workplace learning as it relates to working professionals already immersed in their student affairs roles, specifically student conduct officers.

“Experienced based learning” or “hands-on” education amongst student affairs professionals can be found in the literature on supervised practice in student affairs (Janosik et al., 2014; Young, 2012). Janosik et al. (2014) state that due to the diverse student bodies of today’s modern universities and the rapid changes in the higher education environment, student affairs professionals must be adaptable to these dynamics in order to be of service to their community. Thus, the education that takes place in the classroom amongst student affairs professionals is inadequate on its own as it does not allow for application to real-world scenarios in the workplace (Janosik et al., 2014). What is taught in the classroom must be combined with supervised practice opportunities for student affairs professionals to stay abreast to the perpetual evolution of the higher education setting (Janosik et al., 2014). Supervised practice in student affairs allows student affairs professionals to “learn nimble thinking, recognize the nuances in a workplace, read the intentions of coworkers and supervisors, and take individual initiative to create solutions that fit the organizational structure” (Janosik et al., 2014, p. 4), which cannot be done in the silo of a classroom. These internships and practicums, the ones that are intentional and experiential, give the student affairs professionals a chance to apply their formal education to “professional practice” (Janosik et al., 2014).

Though master’s level preparation and supervised practice are avenues that include workplace learning, not all student affairs professionals take this route. I received my master’s in teaching (middle level grades 4-8) and stumbled upon a graduate assistantship opportunity in the

Dean of Students office by happenstance. Both helped propel me into becoming a student conduct officer, despite not having a formal student affairs education. The literature shows “those who successfully complete internships are more likely to be deemed qualified for entry-level positions than those who have not worked in a professional setting” (Janosik et al., 2014, p. 34). Though my assistantship did serve as a fruitful internship experience, most of my learning was in the field itself as a full-time professional. Thus, my study seeks to elicit stories that allow student conduct officers to share how they learn in the workplace. This in turn will help provide more research that supports adequate training of student conduct administrators.

As stated previously, there was no study found that examines workplace learning amongst student conduct professionals. The literature suggests that in order for newcomers, in this case new student conduct administrators, to be most successful in the mastery of their role(s), it “requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers: [professionals more seasoned in their roles], and other members of the community; and to information, resources and opportunities for participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 101). Much of this takes place in the work environment itself. As discussed briefly in chapter one, my view of workplace learning in the conduct field can be seen as (a) supervisors competent in the field sharing relevant stories and having open dialogue with newcomers, (b) engagement with the artifacts of the community of practice (i.e. student judicial database), and (c) opportunities for participation in student conduct hearings. This is not an exhaustive list, and my research will show specifically how student conduct administrators view their own workplace learning.

Chapter Summary

The literature review began with the history of the student conduct profession and how it transformed from an authoritarian approach to a more student-centered perspective. The second

portion described current training in the conduct field and compared it to workplace learning in the boarder context of various work environments, including supervised practice in student affairs. Chapter 3 will take a deeper dive into the methodological approach to the research study, narrative inquiry, which served most effective in understanding the lived experiences of student conduct professionals in relation to their learning in the work environment.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study is to explore the perception student conduct administrators in the United States have of workplace learning and how it has contributed to understanding and performing their roles. Though one of the first professional organizations of student conduct, the Association for Student Judicial Affairs, was established in 1986 to serve the needs of student conduct officers at the collegiate level (Association for Student Conduct Administration, n.d.), the research on student conduct officers' perceptions of their roles remains sparse and limited. This study seeks to fill this gap in the research through a qualitative approach. The research questions that guide my study are as follows:

1. How do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace?
2. How do student conduct administrators describe how they receive support for learning in the work environment?

Chapter three includes the following: (a) positionality statement that gives more context to my worldview to help give context to my interpretations of the study, (b) explanation of the constructivist paradigm utilized to explain how I make meaning of the research, (c) theoretical framework that grounds the study (d) research design and research methodology (narrative inquiry) and (e) research methods (semi-structured interviews).

Subjectivity/Positionality Statement

As briefly shared in the introduction of chapter one, my path to the field of student affairs was not a traditional one. By trade, I am a certified middle level grades (4th – 8th grade)

mathematics and science teacher in the state of Georgia. I earned a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Georgia State University in fall 2016, and because of this background, much of how I showed up in my student conduct work was from an educational, student development lens. During my master's program, I was the Graduate Assistant in the Dean of Students Office which sparked my interest and completely changed my career trajectory. I transitioned from an educator in the public school system to a student conduct administrator in higher education and was in the field for five years. Learning in the workplace was pivotal to learning my role as a student conduct officer, as I did not attend an undergraduate or graduate school program in student affairs. My approach to learning in the workplace was one of openness and a desire to learn. I prefer hands on learning and enjoy observing those more senior in the community of practice (in this case, student conduct) so I can emulate what is expected. I was first trained to be a conduct officer in graduate school, and I was allowed to shadow senior level conduct officers performing their job duties. I observed my supervisor at the time, the Assistant Dean of Students, show an ethic of care and fairness to the students, which is something I implemented in every student meeting since. After graduate school and during my full-time career in the conduct field, workplace learning was subpar and at times non-existent. I had to use my graduate assistantship training and my education in teaching to fill in the gaps when workplace learning was unavailable. I even went as far as to ask supervisors for professional training through a national organization and was met with resistance and silence.

How I view student conduct work and learning in the workplace cannot be separated from my teaching experience or my graduate schooling, but my research participants did not have this same background or viewpoint. Though I relate to my research participants because we have worked in the same field (which in turn makes me an "insider"), their lens of reality is not

the same as mine. Dixon and Seriki (2013) highlight the readings from Tinker and Armstrong (2008) and Young (2004) that explain the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider as a researcher. Insiders may be able to build better “rapport and trust” with the research participants but may find challenge in “maintaining criticality in analysis” due to their familiarity and preconceived notions about the subject matter (Dixon & Seriki, 2013, p. 216). To be an effective researcher is to constantly be in a state of awareness of our own limitations, especially as an “insider” of my research.

To mitigate the blind spots that may arise as an insider, Vagle (2010) suggests “bridling: a reflexive project where the researcher constantly interrogates her or his preunderstandings and developing understandings of the phenomenon” (p. 403). One way I did this was through journaling (Thurairajah, 2015; Vagle, 2010; Wickens, Cohen, & Walther, 2017). Keeping a reflexivity journal throughout the research process allowed me to be aware of and challenge the biases and assumptions I hold, to review and question what I believe to be true or not true, and to monitor how my viewpoints and assertions change over time (Thurairajah, 2015; Vagle, 2010). Another way I practiced reflexivity was through open dialogue with my dissertation chair and other colleagues. Speaking with those inside and outside of the student conduct realm helped me expand beyond my own limited scope. I was aware that projecting my own experiences or feelings of the field onto research participants would taint the data and communicating with others outside of my field helped further clarify and illuminate my own restrictions.

Dixon and Seriki (2013) note that “all research is informed by the ‘positions’ and ‘identities’ of the researcher” (p. 211). There is truly no separation between who I am and how I conducted and interpreted the research study, but the ultimate goal was to be attentive and thoughtful about my own limits. Though my study did not reference social identity, I think it is

important to note how I identify. I am a cisgender, African American woman, and it is no secret that the field of higher education professionals consists of mostly white men and women, especially in the more senior level positions. Research shows there is low representation of people of color amongst student affairs professionals, even though our student populations are becoming more diverse (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). I have had the pleasure of working in institutions that serve a diverse population of students and in student conduct offices that employed predominantly people of color. As far as my religious affiliation, I grew up in a Catholic household, but today I identify as spiritual, believing there is credence and lessons to be learned in more than one religion (this aligns with my constructivist view as described in the following section). I believe in a higher power, and the terms I use to describe this higher power are God, Universe, Spirit, ancestors, spirit guides, and the divine. My religious preference and ethnic/racial identity give more context to my worldview and how I show up to interpret the stories shared in this study.

Growing up in an African American, Catholic Church in the South definitely shaped my understanding of the roles of justice and morality, the fundamental principles of the student conduct field. As a child, I would attend weekly mass and Sunday school classes that reiterated the biblical standards of right and wrong, and demonstrated how reconciliation/penance was the way to atone for your sins. I was taught to ‘love thy neighbor’ and to forgive those who failed to uphold Catholic values. Though I do not identify with the Catholic faith as an adult, I would be remiss to disqualify my upbringing from my positionality as it formed my idea of justice and ethics, whether consciously or unconsciously. Biases that are constructed through childhood and in society may affect how individuals show up in the workplace, including religious upbringing. I recognize that how I was socialized may have an impact on my work as a student conduct

officer, and this further reiterates the need for proper training in the student conduct field.

Student conduct officers come from different backgrounds and value systems and going a step further than simply acknowledging these biases is to implement effective training opportunities that address how to navigate these differences while maintaining fairness during the judicial proceedings.

Lastly, as mentioned throughout this study, I did not have the best experiences when it came to learning in the workplace. During my time as a professional student conduct officer, I once had a supervisor who treated our students like second class citizens. The stories of this supervisor's inhumanity are endless. On one occasion, a student arrived to have a meeting with my supervisor about an allegation of misconduct. This student spoke English as a second language and felt more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue, especially in such a high-stakes situation during a student conduct investigation. The student, who was extremely nervous during the student investigation, asked my supervisor if they could switch to speaking in the language the student felt more comfortable using. The student expressed concern of potentially not being able to fully understand the conduct process due to the language barrier. My supervisor, who was fluent in both English and the mother tongue of the student, utterly refused to switch languages and continued the investigation in English. On the outside looking in, this may seem like a small incident. However, my previous supervisor received great joy from seeing our students squirm with fear. This supervisor's condescending demeanor and supercilious behavior made me and my colleagues uneasy. We held secret meetings, without my supervisor's knowledge, to discuss the inappropriate behavior and share our concerns. This story (among many others) shaped my view of workplace learning. I was highly aware that these experiences were not helpful to my learning and sought to make my own approach to student conduct. I

started to ask myself, “Do other conduct officers have experiences like this? How are other conduct officers learning their roles?” This is what led me to create my study, so I could fully explore how conduct officers experience workplace learning and find the training practices in the workplace that conduct officers actually found helpful and supportive.

Research Paradigm

According to Mertens (2021), the constructivist paradigm underscores the idea that “reality is socially constructed” (p. 14). In this context, reality is not linear, and instead, it evolves dependent upon the participant (Mertens, 2021). The conduct officers’ experiences and perceptions are based on their individual worldview and environmental contexts, and the way in which a conduct officer perceives their learning in the workplace is subjective. To put it simply, the conduct officers that served as research participants in my study had different educational backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, cultural perspectives, ethical standards and more. Thus, their views on how they learn in the workplace varied because the lens at which they view their experiences is completely different. Even with these differences, the constructivist paradigm underscores the idea that each story in my study was true because there is no singular truth. Many realities exist at once, and as a constructivist researcher, I reviewed, understood, and synthesized each story to discover the multiple truths that existed amongst the research participants. To align with the constructivist paradigm, the methodology I chose for this study was through qualitative research, specifically narrative inquiry approach. This approach allowed participants to freely express their own interpretations of their experiences and allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore these experiences noting the absence of a singular truth, and instead, the presence of “multiple realities” (Mertens, 2021, p. 18).

Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology

From my ontological perspective, through the lens of the constructivist paradigm, I believe there are many variations of reality and truth (Mertens, 2021; Smith & Gayles, 2017). It was my duty as the researcher to understand subjectivity is the essence of truth, and to be open to the dismissal of objectivity (Mertens, 2021; Smith & Gayles, 2017). With the narrative inquiry approach, I engaged research participants in open-ended questions (Mertens, 2021), giving space for research participants to share their own individual stories. Open ended questions align with the constructivist paradigm by allowing the research participants to share their realities in a way that does not prompt or generate a certain response. Because there is no one truth, this form of questioning allowed for the varying stories of each conduct officer to be shared without a prescribed direction. It also allowed me the opportunity as the researcher to view the multiple truths revealed in the narratives. I did not assume I knew how conduct officers learn in the workplace, but instead, acknowledged each conduct officer's testimony was genuine and reliable (Lowrey et al., 2017; Mertens, 2021). Thus, my research participants and I were in an "interactive process" through open dialogue and discussion (Martens, 2021, p. 17).

From my epistemological perspective, there is little to no separation between the research participant and the researcher (Mertens, 2021), and there must be an interaction between both parties to mutually generate knowledge and understanding (Lee, 2012; Mertens, 2021). To support the epistemology of the constructivist frame, one method of data collection I used for my study was in the form of online, face-to-face interviews. In this way, the researcher listens and interprets the narratives described by the research participant, and thus, "the knower and the respondent cocreate understandings" (Lee, 2012, 407). As the researcher, I also built "rapport and trust" with my research participants by our connection as conduct officers in the field

(Dixson & Seriki, 2013, p. 216). Having this shared, unique experience helped research participants feel as if their story was heard and fully understood.

Lastly, ethics in all research paradigms must “be an integral part of the research planning and implementation process, not viewed as an afterthought or a burden” (Mertens, 2021, p. 10). This research study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and thus, was vetted to ensure research participants were not harmed when participating in the research study (Mertens, 2021). See Appendix E for the IRB approval of this study. I reminded participants that this study was anonymous, and that their identity would remain confidential throughout the entirety of the research, including in the published results of the study. Each participant was given the opportunity to select a pseudonym or allow me to select a pseudonym on their behalf. Research participants volunteered their time and could leave the research study at any time if they no longer expressed interest in the subject matter. As the researcher, I exhibited an ethic of care amongst participants and remained respectful and considerate. Lastly, as stated in the subjectivity statement, I continuously engaged in reflexivity through journaling and communication with my dissertation chair and trusted colleagues to better understand any biases or assumptions. Because I have a limited frame of what my assumptions and biases are, looking inwardly (i.e., journaling) and outwardly (i.e., discussions with colleagues) helped ensure research participants’ individualized reality was told accurately and fairly. I am inevitably influenced by my own values and worldview, and this could skew how I viewed my research participants’ lived experiences. Engaging in the aforementioned practices allowed me to better represent each story in the way it was intended by the individual research participant.

Methodology

As stated above, my research study took on a narrative inquiry approach where “the key to this type of qualitative research is the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 34). From a constructivist lens, qualitative research and its methods (such as observations and interviews) encourage the interaction between researcher and research participants. These interactions allowed me the opportunity to explore the perspectives of conduct officers and review the similarities and differences each story presented. Because of this, as the constructivist researcher, I noted that the multiple realities amongst the narratives in my study could have caused a change in my initial research focus. I allowed the research to unfold as it may, even with an initial ‘direction’ in place, and brought integrity to the stories of the conduct officers in the shape that it naturally formed in the narratives. Narratives were collected from conduct officers who had vastly different years of experience to better assist in exploring the different realities that exist pertaining to how student conduct administrators learn in their roles.

Theoretical Framework

Some scholars “explore learning as embodied practice, [and] refuse to separate knowledge from processes of knowledge production, from processes of producing knowledgeably skilled practitioners” (University of California Television, 2012). They believe these processes that produce knowledge occur in the work environment through social practice (University of California Television, 2012). This aligns with Lave and Wenger’s analytical perspective, legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). LPP gives credence to the interconnectedness of those who participate in the work environment/community of practice and describes this interconnectedness as a viable, and inescapable, way of learning (Lave & Wenger,

1991). The idea is that a ‘newcomer’ of the field is acquainted to the community of practice, located in the work environment, “through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29).

The notion of LPP began to blossom starting with research in Liberia, amongst the Vai and Gola apprentices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These apprentices were learning how to become experienced tailors. Through ethnographic studies, researchers learned that becoming a high-level tailor came from the participation and collaboration amongst novice tailors and those more seasoned tailors (Lave & Wenger). The tailor shop was the schoolhouse, the entire community of practice was the classroom, and those participating in the community of practice were both teachers and students (Lave & Wenger, 1999). Thus, the “learning curriculum unfolds in the opportunities for engagement in practice” and changes over time as practices evolve and grow (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93).

As stated previously, “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice,” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 31) and the idea is to see the person and the environment that supports learning as one (University of California Television, 2012). Some believe learning is done only in the traditional classroom, where the teacher simply feeds the students information for the students to then memorize and regurgitate for the exam. However, LPP completely refutes this way of thinking. Observing the mastery of the skills and the hardships of the craft is an excellent way for a student (or newcomers) to learn the subject matter at hand (University of California Television, 2012). Then, the student must have an opportunity to apply this knowledge firsthand for learning to fully be solidified (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) supports the idea that when “the circulation of knowledge among peers and near-peers is possible, it spreads exceedingly rapidly and

effectively” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93). This knowledge is gained through the social interactions that can be found in the workplace (or community of practice) which is the focus of my study. One way to view these social interactions is through the “conversations and stories” shared amongst old-timers (those more seasoned in the field) and newcomers, which in turn can be seen as forms of knowledge and meaning-making that enhances learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 108). I believe storytelling is essential to workplace learning, and this aligns with my decision to collect the stories of student conduct administrators, through narrative inquiry, as data for my study (discussed in more detail in the following sections).

Research Design

Narrative research has been utilized across many different disciplines including, but not limited to, social sciences, humanities, healthcare, and education (Butina, 2015; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Narrative research seeks to explore the lived experiences of an individual or group of individuals through first person testimony (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Thus, it is used by researchers to understand the stories and narratives shared from the perspective of the research participants (Creswell & Proth, 2018). These stories are then used as the data for the research study (Butina, 2015). Humans have shared their stories and narratives since the beginning of time and will continue to do so in perpetuity. “Whether it be through cave drawings in ancient times or in a contemporary context, through Facebook” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 34), stories are how people make sense of their realities (Moen, 2006). It is then through the collaborative process and open dialogue among the researcher and research participants that these unique stories and narratives are brought to life (Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Moen, 2006).

As stated previously, “stories are how we make sense of our experiences, how we communicate with others, and through which we understand the world around us” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 34). In my study, a narrative inquiry approach gave space for student conduct administrators to share how they make meaning of workplace learning by collecting their personal stories. I chose a narrative research approach because narrative inquiry “aims at understanding and making meaning of experience through conversations, dialogue, and participation in the ongoing lives of research participants” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p.5). Workplace learning has yet to be explored in the context of student conduct administration, and my research sought to fill this gap in the literature. I also chose narrative inquiry to elicit the stories that aligned with the theoretical framework of the study, legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). LPP shows that “learning is a process of participation in communities of practice...that increases gradually in engagement and complexity” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 1). I wanted to highlight the lived experiences of the conduct officers and allow them to share how they were able to engage and learn in the community of practice through their unique narratives and perspectives. I was then able to make meaning from the shared stories of my participants and explore how learning and the workplace are connected, which is the foundational tenet of LPP.

As discussed in chapter two, the advancement in technology, competition in the job markets overseas, and increased dissatisfaction with corporate professional training has led to the reevaluation of workplace learning (Harris, 2000; Van Woerkom & Poell, 2010). This reevaluation has transitioned workplace learning from a totalitarian perspective of a supervisor or manager leading all aspects of work life to methods that seem to be more viable and long-lasting such as teamwork, employee autonomy, and the development of problem-solving skills (Harris, 2000). In order to enhance workplace learning in the modern world, Billet (2001) underscores

the idea that the following components must be present: a work environment that is inviting to the learner, structured learning that is specifically designed for needed outcomes, involvement among the learners and the facilitators that is stimulated, and proper training of the facilitator or instructor that best assists the learner (Billet, 2001). These components show the importance of the workplace itself as a hub for learning. The literature also suggests that learning and engagement in the work environment are indivisible (Billet, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Work-based learning can be viewed through the lived experiences and stories shared from student conduct administrators. Though “work activities, the workplace, other workers, and observing and listening” (Billet, 2001, p. 210) have been identified as avenues for learning, it is only through the stories and the narratives of the conduct officers themselves that a researcher can truly explore how conduct officers recognize workplace learning. Utilizing narrative research to better understand how student conduct administrators perceive workplace learning will hopefully help lead members of the student conduct field to examine, evaluate and reconstruct current work environments to ensure a culture of learning is supported and maintained. When this occurs, the workers' success in the workplace is prolonged and the desired outcomes of the work environment are more likely to be met (Billet, 2010). Narrative inquiry “[attends] to the ways individual narratives of experience are embedded in social, cultural, and institutional narratives” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 3), and my research study attempted to connect how student conduct officers’ learning is supported, or inhibited, in the larger context of the work environment.

Research Site, Sampling, and Data Collection

Qualitative research is meant to evolve as the study unfolds, as it is “characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context-sensitive” (Mason, 2002, p. 24). Though

the following sections are an overview of the initial data collection and sampling methods, I was open to shifting perspectives and strategies throughout the research process.

Selection Criteria and Target Population

The chosen sample of student conduct officers possessed specific qualities and “elicit[ed] insight and greater depth of understanding about the phenomenon of interest” (Jones et al, 2022, para. 14). The phenomenon being studied in my research is workplace learning through the perspective of student conduct administrators. Thus, the target population of this study was student conduct officers who were engaged in workplace learning in the workplace. The criteria selected for the research participants were as follows:

- (1) individual must have been in a full-time student conduct administrator position before or at the time of interview,
- (2) individuals must have one to six years of experience as a student conduct administrator in a full-time capacity, and
- (3) participant must have been employed in at least one work environment where interactions with other student conduct administrators took place.

The emphasis on the participants having had interactions with other student conduct administrators in the workplace derived from (a) the definition of workplace learning and (b) the conceptual framework of my study: legitimate peripheral participation.

An employee’s participation in the work environment is directly connected to their learning (Billet, 2001), and because of this, the research participants in my study were directly engaged in the work environment, past or present, so they were able to describe the phenomenon of workplace learning. As stated previously, the conceptual framework of my study underscores the idea that there is no separation between learning and interaction in the workplace (Lave &

Wenger, 1991). Lave and Wenger (1991) outlined legitimate peripheral participation as an analytical perspective that “describes engagement in social practice where learning is an integral and inseparable component” (p. 32). Therefore, selecting research participants that did not have interaction or engagement in the work environment would not have properly served the purpose of this study. Likewise, I made a point to collect stories of research participants who could recall and provide insight about their lived experiences, specifically in learning their role as a conduct officer. For example, someone who has been a conduct officer for several decades may not remember how they were trained in their role, while a conduct officer trained within the last few years could likely call to mind their experience. Collecting data from individuals who are not able to remember their initial training or are not able to share their stories about learning in the workplace would not serve this study.

Lastly, it is important to note that every position title is not always a true representation of the job duties of that position. A person who has the title of a student conduct officer, but does not adjudicate cases of student conduct, would not suffice as a viable candidate for this study. However, a person who has the title of residence life coordinator, but their role is mostly student conduct related work, would meet the standard of an appropriate research participant. For this study, participants whose job role is mostly geared towards student conduct related work, and more specifically investigating cases of student misconduct, is considered a full time conduct officer. To measure this, I used my discretion as the researcher.

Sampling Methods, Sample Size and Recruitment

I utilized a combination of two sampling methods for the research study: purposeful sampling and snowball sampling (Jones et al., 2022). For purposeful sampling, I “[selected] information-rich cases for in-depth study” (Patton, 2015, p. 264 as cited in Gentles et al., 2015)

that were relevant, added extensive value, and aligned with the sample criteria. I recruited people in my social network. Because of my previous role as a student conduct officer, I had a social network of conduct administrators and contacted potential participants via phone and email. I also utilized the snowball sampling method by eliciting referrals from key informants who knew student conduct administrators that fit my target population (Jones et al., 2022). I then sent an email to the Association of Student Conduct Administrators' (ASCA) research team requesting their permission to utilize their membership database for recruitment. By the time the ASCA team responded and requested I submit an application request, I had enough research participants interested from my own social network and referrals from key informants in the field. Thus, the ASCA membership database was not used.

Once potential research participants were identified, I sent a recruitment email, with a flier as an attachment to the email, requesting their participation in my study (see Appendix B for the recruitment email and Appendix C for the flier). The recruitment email included the purpose of the study, the criteria for each research participant, and the interview process. Once a potential research participant responded to the recruitment email and notified me that they met the selection requirements, I scheduled an interview and sent a consent letter via email (see Appendix D for the consent letter). The consent letter reiterated the purpose of the study, the interview structure, confidentiality requirements, and the voluntary nature of the study. I sought to continue recruiting research participants until full saturation had been met, meaning the researcher believes there to be enough data to discontinue sampling (Jones et al., 2022; Glaser & Strauss, 1967 as cited in Saunders et al., 2017). Six research participants were interviewed for this study.

Data Collection

As stated previously in the research design section, narrative research seeks to explore the lived experiences of an individual or group of individuals through first-person testimony (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These first-person testimonies, also known as stories and narratives, are then used as data for the research (Creswell & Proth, 2018). Oral interviews were conducted to collect these stories as it aligned with the methodology of narrative inquiry (Jones et al., 2022). “Stories reveal truths about human experiences” (Riesmann, 2008, p. 10), and my study sought to explore the narratives of student conduct administrators and attempted to give a voice to student conduct administrators who have seemingly been left out of the literature.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as this type of interview gave room for both uniformity in the types of questions that were asked to the research participants and flexibility in how the question was presented based on responses from the research participant (Jones et al., 2022). I created interview questions (see Appendix A) that would prompt my research participants to share stories about their participation in the sociocultural practices of the workplace. This aligned with the analytical perspective of the study, legitimate peripheral participation, that states learning is “embodying...the structure characteristics of communities of practice” through collaboration and participation in the workplace. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 55). Narrative interviewing was also utilized as “interviewer and interviewee seek meaning together in relation to” (Brown & Coles, 2018, p. 178) the experiences shared by the research participant. Interviews were held via live video chat and recorded for future transcription and analysis. I reviewed notes and themes with the research participants at the end of each interview as best practice to verify accuracy of stories and clarify any misconceptions (Jones et al, 2022). I

also contacted research participants after the initial interview via email or phone if I needed more clarity on their responses or had additional follow up questions.

Data Analysis

I reviewed the narratives of student conduct administrators' perception of workplace learning and analyzed the data for the study. Data analysis, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), “is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning” (p. 202). I utilized “categorical analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to create themes that grouped and classified the data.

Categorizing the data into thoughtful themes and categories helped me view and conceptualize the research participants’ responses (Jones et al., 2013). This was done in tandem with data collection until the point of saturation had been met (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The point of saturation is met when “the ongoing analysis of [the] data has produced categories, themes, or findings robust enough to cover what emerges in later data collection” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015 p. 199). Immediately after each interview with a research participant, I reviewed the recording and transcribed the shared stories and narratives. This allowed me to gain awareness and intuit themes and categories that aligned with the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I used open and axial coding to assist in the creation of themes from the research findings (Jones et al., 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The process of coding “is a procedure for organizing the text of the transcripts and discovering patterns within that organizational structure” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 31). I began with open coding to find prospective answers and useful information that was relevant to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I took notes on the transcript itself or on a

separate page and assigned “single words, letters, numbers, phrases, colors, or combinations of these” to the relevant data, thus formulating codes for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 199). I reviewed the codes and looked for “repeating ideas” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) that seemed to be a pattern across the stories of the research participants. The shared groups of thought and common stories that start to emerge from these repeating ideas are called themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The process of collecting codes and categorizing them even further into overarching categories or themes is called axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This form of narrative analysis, specifically categorical analysis, allowed me to extract commonalities amongst the stories and find meaning in the data that supported the research questions and conceptual frame of the study.

Trustworthiness

My research study was committed to “producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 237). I ensured the trustworthiness of my study by applying the following strategies: member checks, peer review, statement of positionality, and saturation.

Member checks

With member checks, the researcher seeks “feedback on...preliminary or emerging findings from” the research participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 246). During the semi-structured interviews, I reviewed my interpretations of the data with the research participants themselves (Kornbluh, 2015). In this way, I ensured my own personal biases or assumptions were not permeating the data. For my study to truly answer the posed research questions, my data must have aligned with what was intended by the research participants.

Peer review and final strategies

The third strategy that enhance trustworthiness was peer reviews. I solicited peer reviews from colleagues familiar with the subject matter (i.e., fellow conduct officers who are not research participants) and those who may not be as familiar with the topic (i.e., other student affairs professionals, my dissertation chair and committee, fellow doctoral candidates, etc.). The peer review brought an objective lens to the study and ensured my interpretations of the data were accurate. The final strategies that were utilized in the study have been previously discussed in this chapter: saturation and subjectivity/positionality statement.

Chapter Summary

This study used a narrative inquiry approach to highlight the experiences and voices of student conduct administrators by exploring how they learn in the workplace. It sought to add to the limited literature on the perceptions held by student conduct administrators. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants who were found via personal contact from the researcher to past colleagues and references from key informants in the field. Bridling was utilized to uphold the integrity of the research through a reflexivity journal and open dialogue with colleagues inside and outside of the student conduct field. To analyze the data, open and axial coding were used to identify themes and patterns in the research. The following chapter will describe the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to explore the perception student conduct administrators in the United States have of workplace learning and how it has contributed to understanding and performing their roles. Workplace learning describes learning that takes place in the work environment itself. The foundational principle of this study was that learning and the sociocultural elements of the work environment, or rather the interactions amongst the community of practice, are intertwined (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The data collected supported this concept, as detailed in the following sections. Two research questions framed this study:

1. How do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace, and
2. How do student conduct administrators describe how they receive support for learning in the work environment?

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and each research participant selected, or allowed the researcher to select, a pseudonym to be utilized in lieu of their name for confidentiality purposes.

To elicit the most fruitful data for this study, each of the research participants fit the following criteria:

1. individual must have been in a full-time student conduct administrator position before or at the time of interview,
2. individuals must have one to six years of experience as a student conduct administrator in a full-time capacity, and

3. participant must have been employed in at least one work environment where interactions with other student conduct administrators took place.

Six individuals were interviewed that met the above criteria.

This chapter begins with a description of the student conduct administrator position and culture of the workplace. Giving this context to the reader before reporting on the findings of this study will help shape the oral stories and narratives shared by the research participants. I am an insider in the student conduct field, having worked in a full-time capacity for five years before exiting the field, and each of my research participants was aware of this. When the research participants shared their stories, they shared them from the perspective that I, as the researcher, already knew the role of the conduct officer and the workplace traditions. However, not every reader of this study will have that same insider privilege, and thus a section was added to clarify any nuances that needed to be addressed in order to better understand the data. The chapter then leads into a summary of each research participant, including their reason for entering the student conduct field and their personal approach to student conduct. The chapter concludes with a summary of the data collected and the common themes that presented themselves through categorical analysis.

Context: The Workplace of Student Conduct Officers

I created this context section after I analyzed the data and realized that knowing how language is used amongst conduct officers and knowing what takes place in the work environment are vital to understanding the stories of the research participants. Without this foundational knowledge, it would be difficult to grasp the full depth of the narratives. To reiterate, this study does not delve deeply into “what” is meant to be learned by student conduct officers in their job roles, but instead, explores “how” student conduct officers learn their roles.

The “what” is meant to be learned was described in this context section to serve as a foundation for the reader. The “how” student conduct officers learn their roles was defined by the voices of the student conduct administrators who served as research participants in this study (which will be discussed in the themes section of this chapter).

The Student Conduct Investigation

Student conduct administrators are responsible for reviewing, investigating, and adjudicating cases of student misconduct at institutions of higher education. A typical day for a student conduct officer involves meeting with students alleged of violating campus policy and procedure. These meetings are referred to as a ‘student conduct meetings’, ‘student investigations’, ‘student hearings,’ or some other variation of these terms. Once an allegation of policy has been filed, it is then assigned to a conduct officer who is tasked with finding a student responsible or not responsible for violating policy (using language such as “guilty” or “innocent”, as seen in a state or federal courtroom, is not appropriate at the collegiate level). The conduct officer will review the allegation to determine which policy violation to assign based on the given evidence. Policy violations are located in a student code of conduct that is written, and periodically updated, by an institution. Once the allegation has been found to be legitimate and a policy violation(s) has been assigned, the student now has what is referred to as a ‘case’ with the student conduct office. At this time, the conduct officer will contact the student to discuss the student’s case. The student will then meet with the conduct officer to share their perspective of what occurred and respond to the allegation. These meetings can take place virtually or in-person depending on preference. As seen in chapter two, this meeting can either take a legalistic or a nurturing approach depending on the training and/or values of the conduct officer.

Adjudicate The Case

Upon the conclusion of the investigation, student conduct administrators must find a student responsible or not responsible for violating policy. As stated previously, the language of “guilty” or “innocent” is more suited for state or federal court, though legal rhetoric does, at times, seep into the fabric of student conduct work. Conduct officers use verbiage such as “resolve” or “determine” when referring to the action of deciding the outcome of a case, but they also use the legal term “adjudicate”, which is widely accepted in the conduct field. In my personal experience, the word “adjudicate” was used the most in my previous workplaces, and it also appeared amongst the collected data of this study. Once the student conduct meeting is over, the conduct officer will adjudicate the case based on the preponderance of the evidence (which is different from the state and federal court systems where the burden of proof is ‘beyond a reasonable doubt’). The preponderance of the evidence is based on the threshold of ‘more likely than not’. The conduct officer considers the student’s testimony and either (a) dismisses the case if no policy violation was found, thus finding the student not responsible, (b) gathers more information and evidence before making a decision, or (c) finds the student responsible and assigns appropriate sanctions. If the student would not prefer the case to be adjudicated by a student conduct administrator, they have the option of having the case heard by a panel of their peers and/or faculty members. This study will focus on the student conduct administrators who investigate and adjudicate cases of student misconduct directly with the student alleged of violating policy.

Record Keeping and the Judicial Database

Once a decision of not responsible or responsible has been reached, the student conduct administrator will update this information in the online judicial database for record keeping

(some schools may utilize paper files instead of an online database, though this is a rare and outdated practice at the time of this study). The online judicial database holds all past cases of student misconduct, and each student alleged of a policy violation has a student profile in the database. The student conduct officer can upload documents and information pertaining to the student's case in the judicial database, including but not limited to, a written summary of the student's testimony/student's response to the allegation, the conduct officer's reason for finding the student responsible or not responsible, and any sanctions assigned, if applicable.

Due Process and Students Rights

Each institution has a different format of the student conduct meetings and judicial database upkeep, but it is usually some variation of the above description. The student conduct meetings are a federal mandate as each student has a right to due process, and thus, in all student conduct meetings the conduct officer must share with the students their student rights (i.e. the right to remain silent, the right to an advisor, etc.). One example is the right to an appeal. If a student does not agree with the responsible findings of their case, they have a right to appeal the decision. The appeal is then assigned to a conduct officer who did not investigate the original case known as the appellate officer. The appellate officer then makes the final decision. Though there are other specifics and details that may be shared during a student conduct meeting, they are not relevant to understanding the data in this study. Student conduct administrators may also hold other responsibilities in their job roles such as giving presentations to students and faculty on the student code of conduct, cross-departmental collaboration to promote integrity and responsibility on campus, and other educational pursuits.

As conduct officers become acclimated to the workplace, they begin to learn the language, customs, and traditions of their work environment. This study highlights how the

conduct officers who served as research participants were able to understand and learn these aspects of the workplace, specifically through sociocultural interactions and behaviors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews that elicited the stories shared by the conduct officers selected for this study. To better understand the narratives shared by the research participants, the reader must have foundational knowledge about the culture of the workplace and the role of the conduct officer. Thus, the above context section was created to give the reader this context so they may make meaning of the stories shared by the conduct officers.

Summary of Research Participants

Six former or current student conduct administrators were interviewed for this study. Among the six research participants, two identified as male, three identified as female, and one identified as non-binary. Two of the research participants identified as Black/African American, three participants identified as White or Caucasian, and one participant identified as Hispanic/Latina/Latinx. The participants ages ranged from 30 years of age to 45 years of age, with a median age of 35.5 years. The participants' years of experience in a full-time student conduct role were between one and five years. Several of the research participants had some student conduct experience prior to their full-time role in student conduct (i.e. part-time work, internship, etc.). This will be discussed in their summaries. Three of the participants' most recent or current conduct role was in a higher-level position as an Assistant Director or Assistant Dean, while the remaining three participants most recently served as coordinators. Two of the research participants are currently in full-time conduct roles, three have left the field to pursue nonprofit work, and one participant is in-between roles and looking for full-time work in student affairs. Data in the below table were collected in summer 2024. Current and most recent roles, age, gender/pronouns, years

of experience, and all other data seen in Table 1. reflect each participants responses given at the time of data collection.

Table 1. Research Participant Summary

Name	Current or most recent full-time conduct role	Gender and Pronouns	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Years of experience in a full-time student conduct role	Years of full-time experience in student affairs**
Khiro	Assistant Director (current)	Male He/him/his	Non-student affairs related degree	Student affairs related master's degree	Black/African American	35	2.5	11
Kenneth	Assistant Director (current)	Male He/him/his	Non-student affairs related degree	Student affairs related master's degree	White	36	3	7
Sarah	Coordinator (most recent)	Female She/her/hers	Non-student affairs related degree	Juris Doctor degree	Black/African American	30	1	1
Charly	Assistant Dean (most recent)	Female She/her/hers	Non-student affairs related degree	Student affairs related master's degree	Caucasian	37	5	11
Sam	Coordinator (most recent)	Non-binary He/him/they /them	Non-student affairs related degree	Student affairs related master's degree	White	33	1.5	7
Nora	Coordinator (most recent)	Female She/her/ella	Non-student affairs related degree	Student affairs related master's degree	Hispanic/ Latina/Latinx	45	4.5	10.5

**Also including years in a full-time student conduct role; not including part-time work or internships

Khiro

Khiro has worked in higher education as a full-time, student affairs practitioner for 11 years. He currently serves as an Assistant Director in an office of student conduct in one of the top public institutions in the nation. Khiro began the first few years of his professional student affairs career in various roles, including as a student success coach, program coordinator, and academic support coordinator. He then accepted a role in housing as a hall director before transitioning into a student conduct role, as a coordinator, where he remained in a full-time capacity for almost three years. During his role as a hall director, Khiro had the opportunity to investigate cases of student conduct, but the caseload was minimal, only being assigned a few cases per month. This gave him the foundational knowledge that assisted him in landing his next role as a full-time conduct officer.

Khiro was always interested in student conduct work because of the developmental aspects of the role, specifically how he could best assist students in their own development. He shared, “What I enjoyed about conduct is the learning that goes along with learning about your potential mistakes that are being made and how to become a better person from those mistakes that tend to happen.” Khiro credits his natural abilities and strengths in relationship building and problem solving as his reason for being drawn to the field. He leverages these gifts to help students understand their behaviors and how their actions impact their own lives. Khiro shared that his greatest joy in the role is to work with students and say to them: “Let’s figure out how to make this [situation] better [so you can] do better and make better decisions in the future.” When asked what else interests him about the student conduct field, he spoke on his love for the teaching element of his role where he has the opportunity to train students and faculty on campus about the conduct office:

I think I continue to gain an appreciation of [the student conduct field], finding ways to be even more proactive with the learning piece or providing that understanding and the educational piece in other ways, whether that's through going to [give a presentation at] one of our freshmen seminar classes on our campus, or tabling, or creating new type of innovative programming on campus to put the word out there, advising student organizations that focus on this same area. [My appreciation for the field] has definitely expanded more, I think my strengths just continue to help me to grow in my understanding but also to help others grow in their understanding of the policies and procedures.

Khiro has a bachelor's degree in a non-student affairs related field and holds a master's degree in student affairs. In college, Khiro served as a resident assistant, and during his master's program, he had an assistantship in the diversity office. Khiro did not have an internship or any other work-related experience in student conduct (i.e. student investigations) during his undergraduate or graduate studies. After graduate school, he served in several student support roles before entering housing and residence life as a hall director. Khiro then became a coordinator in an office of student conduct (his first full time, conduct role). Khiro is currently the Assistant Director in an office of student conduct and is also enrolled in a doctoral program in student affairs.

Kenneth

Kenneth currently serves as the Assistant Director in an office of student conduct at a public, research university. He has worked as a full-time, student affairs practitioner for the last seven years in various roles. Kenneth began his professional student affairs career in residence life as a coordinator before transitioning into his first, full-time student conduct role where he

served as a coordinator in an office of student conduct. Prior to entering student affairs, Kenneth was in law enforcement. He shared:

I never thought about higher education really, had gone into law enforcement after I had got done with undergrad, really my whole purpose was just kind of help people and support people, and that was my whole reason for wanting to do law enforcement after seeing a neighbor of mine overdose on heroine growing up.

Kenneth decided to end his career in law enforcement and took the foundational skills he learned from the role, along with his love for helping and supporting others, into his next career in higher education. This career change began after enrolling in a master's program for student affairs in his late 20s.

Kenneth shared what initially attracted him to the student conduct field was an incident that occurred while he was as a student in college. After breaking university policy, Kenneth had a run in with the dean's office. He stated: "It started with a house party that I had thrown on campus, and I got placed on probation, had to pay a huge fine". He goes on to share that after the incident, one of the deans pulled him aside and changed his life forever:

One of the questions that one of the deans asked me, and I still remember to this day, and it's kind of like my purpose now, asked me this question about 'How much time are you wasting?' And it hit me like a brick wall.

Because of this impactful moment, Kenneth changed his life around. He often uses this incident as an opportunity to connect with students going through the judicial process. During an investigation, he does not shy away from telling students his own personal story and lets them know "I've been there." He knows the power a student conduct officer can have on a student's life, and he wants to help students reflect on their behavior and point them down a different path.

When sharing about his student conduct philosophy, Kenneth stated: “There is a lot more to student conduct than what’s in a report, we don’t know what that student is dealing with”.

Kenneth is a self-proclaimed “poster boy” for what not to do as a student, and he brings this non-judgmental energy and authenticity into each of his conduct meetings.

Kenneth earned a bachelor’s degree in a non-student affairs related field and began a career in law enforcement. He then pursued a master’s degree in student affairs. During his master’s program, he served as a graduate assistant in residence life with some student conduct responsibilities. After graduate school, Kenneth became a coordinator in residence life, also with some conduct duties, and then transitioned into a coordinator of student conduct role (his first, full-time role in student conduct). Kenneth is now the Assistant Director in a student conduct office. He does not plan on getting a doctoral degree any time soon, although, it is not off the table completely.

Sarah

Sarah served as a student conduct administrator in a full-time capacity for one year. She is no longer working in student affairs and has transitioned into the nonprofit sector. Her most recent student conduct role was at a leading research university in the South where she was the coordinator in an office of student conduct. Prior to her first student conduct role, Sarah began her career in student affairs as a part-time academic advisor. When asked how she entered the student conduct field, she said:

I guess I reached a point in my career as an academic advisor, who was also working as an advisor while I was in law school, and I figured that conduct would be a nice intersection of working with students while using some of my new legal knowledge.

Sarah “worked part-time as an academic advisor at [a local community college] ...during the day” while simultaneously attending law school, taking classes in the evening. Sarah was unclear about her career path after law school but found a love for supporting students through her advising work. She knew she wanted to work with students in some way, and combining her law background with student advocacy, she found student conduct to be a fitting role. Upon graduation from law school, Sarah landed a full-time role as a conduct officer.

Sarah’s first encounter with the student conduct field was actually in college as a student. Her college “had a reputation for being a party school” and gave severe sanctions for violating policy. Sarah served on the student conduct review board as an undergraduate student. She shared that every student investigation, where a student was found responsible for violating policy, ended in suspension: “There was not probation, there was not a warning, they were suspended out right. Some of them up to two years.” She recalls this time as impactful because it shaped her student conduct philosophy. Sarah said students left these conduct meetings disheveled and confused as their lives were completely turned upside down due to the punitive and punishing nature of the judicial process at that institution. She saw this time as an opportunity to build her own approach that was rooted in integrity and healing:

I now have an opportunity to be the person who, you know, kind of guides the student through this situation but also reassures them that, yes, better decisions can be made if they’re found to be responsible [for violating policy], but also letting them know this isn’t the end of anything. Like you can still get back on track, you can still make better decisions moving forward.

Sarah holds a bachelor’s degree in a non-student affairs related field and earned a Juris Doctor degree. During her undergraduate studies, Sarah volunteered on the student conduct

review board. This was her first experience in the conduct field. In law school, she served as a part-time academic advisor, and though she volunteered to be on a board of staff members who investigated cases of student conduct, she did not end up adjudicating any cases. Sarah accepted her first, full-time student conduct officer role after graduating from law school. She left this role after one year in the position and is now doing nonprofit work.

Charly

Charly worked in higher education as a full-time, student affairs practitioner for 11 years. She has left the field to pursue nonprofit work, but before her departure, she held multiple positions over her decade long, professional career in higher education, including five years in various student conduct roles. Charly started in student affairs as a hall director in housing and transitioned into an Assistant Director role, also in housing. She then accepted her first, full-time student conduct position as a coordinator. Charly spent the next several years working her way up in the conduct field, eventually becoming Assistant Dean at a private institution, her most recent conduct role. When asked what initially interested her student conduct, she shared:

I don't really remember why it interested me. I think partially because like seeing students, having conversations with them, and then like seeing that changed behavior was a positive experience, usually. I think I just like crisis management in a way, like being on rounds, being on call, supporting my staff as they were dealing with issues. I'm not a person that likes doing the same thing every day and conduct always kind of provided that variety.

Before her full-time roles in student affairs, Charly was a resident assistant while in college, and a graduate assistant in housing during her master's program. Residence life was her main

introduction to student conduct, but while in residence life, she shared that student conduct was a “part of my overall role, not my sole focus.”

Charly’s student conduct philosophy was shaped while in her assistantship in graduate school. During her assistantship, she stated: “I supported a full-time hall director, and we like co-ran a building together.” Part of running the building involved supervising student staff. This is where Charly’s supervisor shared with her a piece of wisdom about the management and supervision of student staff: “sometimes they won’t learn until they fail.”

We had a student [staff member] that fucked up off campus, and we ended up basically like having to fire them. And sometimes that’s the only way that they’re going to learn and be able to grow is like holding them accountable-accountable for their actions. And that like, sometimes they’re not going to learn if we don’t hold them accountable in the ways that they need to be. Even if that means letting them go, in the case of the [student] staff member, and I really took that to heart even with conduct.

As it applies to her outlook on student conduct, she believes accountability is “going to be that student’s greatest teacher,” and holding them responsible for their actions can benefit the student more in the long run.

Charly holds a bachelor’s degree in a non-student affairs related field, and a master’s degree in student affairs. During her undergraduate studies, she served as a resident assistant. During her graduate studies, she received an assistantship in residence life where she held student conduct related duties, though it was not the entirety of her role. After graduate school, Charly worked in housing and residence life, with partial student conduct responsibilities, before transitioning into her first, full-time student conduct role as a coordinator. She worked her way up in the conduct field serving in high-level positions. Her most recent role in student conduct

was as an Assistant Dean at a private institution. Charly has since left student affairs and now works for a nonprofit organization. When asked would she pursue a doctoral degree in the future, she laughed and said, “Most likely not.”

Sam

Sam has worked in higher education as a full-time, student affairs practitioner for seven years. He is presently in-between jobs and is actively searching for a new, full-time role. Sam began his professional student affairs career as a residence life coordinator. While in this position, “there was a shakeup in leadership that brought in a new dean of students,” and thus, Sam’s job role was updated. The new dean was not keen on adjudicating and investigating cases of student conduct, and instead, delegated all cases of student conduct at the university to Sam (while the dean served as the appellate officer). When asked what initially attracted Sam to the student conduct field, he shared it all started in college: “I actually had a human resources internship in undergrad with a nonprofit...and I remember it was time for folks to re-up their insurance benefits”. Sam worked as an intern in human resources while simultaneously working as a student assistant in the conduct office. He was having a difficult time during his internship in human resources and confided in his supervisor in the conduct office. He stated:

No one made a lot of money. [The human resources internship] was nonprofit work, but people were so upset about their benefits, and I remember telling the dean while I was at my actual job that paid me [in the conduct office], “If I have to talk to one more person screaming at me about their benefits, I’m going to lose my mind.”....And she said “[Sam], that’s not your area of expertise....have you ever thought about doing what I do every day?”

The dean saw Sam's strengths and skills as beneficial to the field, and this conversation is what sparked Sam's interest in student conduct.

After graduating from college, Sam entered a master's program in student affairs and accepted an assistantship in the conduct office. When asked about his personal style and approach to student conduct, he shared: "So I would say [my approach] is more conversational based with educational components built in." Sam prefers to understand who the student is as a person: "Like I want to know like you know, why are you here in the first place? What's your major? What do you want to do?" He then uses this information as a base point to then educate the student on how their behavior can impact them in the future. He shared:

For example, let's just say I had a student who was an education major. If the student was charged with underage drinking in [name of state], that makes them ineligible for a teaching license in [name of state] for ten years past their conviction date...That would be a conversation I would have with students like, 'Did you know this was a thing'? And nine times out of ten they'd be like, 'No'.

Though in this example, the alcohol violation and teaching license ineligibility would only be upheld on the state level and not at the institute level, Sam would use these types of scenarios to give the student a perspective on what could happen to their future if certain behaviors continue.

Sam holds a bachelor's degree in a non-student affairs related field, and a master's degree in student affairs. In college, Sam served as a resident assistant in housing and a student assistant in the office of student conduct. During his master's program, he held a graduate assistantship in the student conduct office where he investigated cases of student conduct. He then began his professional career as a residence life coordinator which turned into a full-time student conduct role. He held this position for a year and a half before transitioning back into various housing

roles. He is now in-between jobs and is searching for full-time work. When asked if he planned on pursuing a doctoral degree, Sam said, “I do plan to go, but I would like to be in a Juris Doctorate program versus a traditional PhD program.”

Nora

Nora worked in higher education as a student affairs practitioner for 10.5 years. She has since left the field and currently works for a nonprofit organization. Nora’s first full-time position in student affairs was as a coordinator in the student conduct office. She remained in this role for four and a half years before transitioning into a director position where she led campus safety and student advocacy initiatives. When asked how she entered the conduct field, she shared, “It was by accident. I don’t think anyone when they’re little they think about wanting to be a student conduct officer as a career in higher ed.” Nora was a part-time program coordinator (in a separate department) when the coordinator role in the conduct office opened up. She applied and got the job, though she had no prior conduct experience.

Nora was initially drawn towards the educational component of her conduct role. The conduct position was a combination of investigating cases and “education and prevention.” But due to “lack of staff”, she had to lean into adjudicating “heavier” cases, including Title IX violations. When discussing her student conduct philosophy, she stated “I think most of [our students] learn through [their] mistakes, through quote unquote what people call failures, right? And so, understanding that at that age, you know, we all make mistakes, but we [as conduct officers] have to be compassionate and empathetic to our students.” Nora liked to be “that educator in a moment of vulnerability for our students...I don’t see student conduct as a punishment, I see it as an opportunity.” She also believes student conduct officers should do more for their students:

And sometimes we do have to walk [students] through, you know, the path that they need to go to or show them because they don't know otherwise. Specifically, first gen students. They don't know what resources are available for them, and so, they don't know how to time manage, they don't know how to utilize, you know, a TA, tutoring place, because maybe they never had that before. And so sometimes it's just sharing those resources and sharing the locations, sometimes you got to walk them to the location. We have to go above and beyond then just investigating and adjudicating a case. We really have to see students as a whole.... We're humans, sometimes, and every human has their own speed. So, we have to walk at the speed of humanity, be compassion, be empathetic with each other.... That's what we do in higher ed, we're there to support our students. And they all come from different walks of life, we have to acknowledge that as well.

Through Nora's passion for helping students and through observing the lack of resources in the conduct office on her campus, she left her position to become a director in an office that created student advocacy initiatives. She became the change she wanted to see and filled the gaps to provide more resources to students on campus.

Nora holds a bachelor's degree in a non-student affairs related field and a master's degree in student affairs. During her master's program, she had an internship assisting with bystander education programs. Nora then began her first full-time, student affairs role as a coordinator in an office of student conduct. She served in this position for four and a half years before transitioning into a director role in student advocacy. She has since left the field of student affairs and is currently working for a non-profit organization. Nora is also enrolled in a doctoral program in student affairs.

Themes

Categorical analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) was used to create themes that grouped and sorted the data. Organizing the data through open and axial coding helped answer the research questions that framed this study. Finding codes and common themes amongst the data took place until full saturation was met. Narrative interviews were conducted amongst six research participants to elicit their personal stories and lived experiences. Four main themes emerged from the data that describe how conduct officers learn in the workplace and what they identify as supportive to their learning in the workplace: (a) shadowing seasoned conduct officers, (b) meaningful interactions with conduct officers, (c) navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices, and (d) access to artifacts.

“See one do one”: Shadowing Seasoned Conduct Officers in the Workplace

Shadowing refers to the time in which a new employee observes the habits, practices and routines of a more senior practitioner in the workplace. As it relates to student conduct and the data collected in this study, shadowing is a way for conduct administrators to become acquainted and conversant with the policies, regulations and processes of the conduct office. This technique was mostly used when participants were learning how to lead student conduct investigations. For shadowing to be seen as efficacious and valuable, some seasoned conduct officers measured if the initial shadowing phase allowed the novice conduct officer to properly learn. This was done through, what I will refer to in the following sections as, ‘reverse shadowing’: an opportunity for the newcomers to actively engage in the workplace and practice their role in a safe environment while allowing a more seasoned practitioner to observe the new employee in real time. Five out of the six research participants reported shadowing more seasoned conduct officers as a way in which they effectively learned their job role.

As I interviewed my research participants, I made a point to initially ask broad and general questions that allowed the conduct officers to freely share their stories without my input. I did not ask my research participants how they learned to investigate and adjudicate a conduct case, but instead, I asked them how they learned in the workplace. The difference is nuanced, but I felt it was important to make this distinction. Without any prompting, each participant immediately correlated workplace learning to learning how to properly conduct student investigations. These student investigations are at the heart of the student conduct field and, in my opinion, are the most important part of the job. This is why it was no surprise that the conduct officers in this study shared stories of how they learned to investigate and adjudicate conduct cases. Being able to shadow and observe fellow colleagues who have successfully conducted countless student investigations in the workplace helped alleviate some of the anxieties of what to expect for a newcomer in the field. It was as if these observations gave each of the participants permission, license, and inspiration to create their own way of approaching their work. Each of the participants saw student conduct work as a team effort, and through participation in the workplace itself via observations, engagement, and discussions with ‘old-timers’ of the field, the conduct officers were able to perform and make meaning of their roles. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), “the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (p. 29). The concept of shadowing, reverse shadowing, and debriefing were identified by the research participants as ways to both support their workplace learning and help move them towards full immersion in their roles (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Shadowing allowed the research participants the opportunity to transition from newbies of the field to seasoned practitioners (discussed later in this theme).

The two research questions that framed this study sought to elicit how conduct officers describe (a) their learning in the workplace and (b) the support they receive that makes the workplace conducive to learn. As it related to the first research question, conduct officers described observing more seasoned conduct officers in the workplace as a way in which they were able to learn, and thus perform, their job role. These initial observations gave the research participants an opportunity to see an example of what the role entails, and thus, participants learned how to participate in the community of practice. Shadowing not only taught the conduct officers how to understand and perform their roles but led them to create their own style and approach conduct. Participants also described how they learned in the workplace through reverse shadowing and debriefing. This allowed the participants an opportunity to practice their new roles and ask questions to their more seasoned colleagues. In this way, they were able to engage in the work environment through legitimate practice, thus bolstering learning.

As it related to the second research question, the conduct officers in this study described their supervisor and colleagues (the more seasoned conduct officers) as the supportive entities that made the work environment, through all phases of the shadowing experience, a safe space to learn. The supervisors and colleagues' willingness to be present and assist the newcomer conduct officers through shadowing, reverse shadowing, and debriefing made each participant feel safe and supported, which in turn created an environment conducive to learning. The feeling of safety allowed the conduct officers to participate in the social practices of the work environment which is the stimulus and foundation for learning. The below section highlights the narratives and stories shared by the conduct officers in more detail.

“They’ll bless you and you will go off and continue to do this on your own”: Shadowing and Creating Your Personal Style

As I interviewed the research participants, I was not at all surprised to find shadowing as a method by which the conduct officers learned to understand and perform their roles. It was the way I was taught when I was a budding student conduct officer, and it was also my method of choice when I began training newcoming conduct officers how to conduct student investigations. Shadowing was like lifting the veil into the heart of student conduct work, especially when the opportunity came to take a front seat in a student investigation for the first time. Amongst the research participants, Charly, Khiri, Nora, Sam and Sarah highlighted shadowing as a way in which they learned in the workplace. Nora shared:

The way that I learned some of the student conduct was through shadowing. And so, at that time, the director was a male director, and so he would sit me with, during his interviews with the student and I would shadow. You know and I would take notes...write down what words he would use, the verbiage, the tone of voice, the manner in which, you know, his body language, I observed the body language and observed the student’s reaction. You know all of that really helped me to fully understand, not just the theoretical pieces but the practical pieces of how to be a good interviewer to make the student feel safe in that space of vulnerability.

Sarah echoed this sentiment, sharing how she “mostly shadowed everyone on the team.” She explained:

But most of my training was hands on, just watching people work, I think I watched at least three if not four other coordinators in how they conducted their sessions to get a good feel for how to do things.

The participants mentioned that shadowing took place early on in their training, mostly within the first few weeks on the job. As Charly described, a newcomer conduct officer shadows “somebody who was more seasoned [in the role] and who had already been doing [the job] for a while.” Shadowing was not an isolated incident for participants, but instead, an ongoing practice that continued until “whomever is overseeing conduct thinks you’re ready, they’ll bless you and you will go off and continue to do this on your own,” as Charly recounted. The research participants also made it clear that the practice of shadowing was not only designated to the supervisor but to other conduct officers in the office or on campus.

It is important to note that shadowing was not seen by research participants as a way to copy their colleagues’ methods in the student investigations or during other workplace practices. Shadowing was not considered synonymous with stringent imitation. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), “newcomers’ legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an ‘observational’ outlook post: It crucially involved *participation* as a way of learning---of both absorbing and being absorbed in---the ‘culture of practice’” (p. 95). Instead of mimicking their seasoned conduct officers, participants relied on their observations of colleagues in tandem with creating the participants’ own unique flair. This allowed participants to participate in their own learning and craft their personalized conduct approach. Khiero described the combination of observing and creating your own style:

Having a chance to shadow some of those coordinators or assistant directors or even director, I think was really helpful because I can see what are some of the best practices, what are they doing that helps in providing students information, what kind of tone you should give them, how direct you should be. Also understanding that each coordinator has a different learning style or different way of approaching things. Seeing everyone’s

different way of approaching things helped me to figure out what is the best way I want to approach these conduct meetings as a new coordinator in the office. Shadowing experiences were definitely helpful.

Charly and Sam expressed the same sentiment of developing your own personal approach to conduct and mentioned being given direct instruction from more seasoned conduct officers to “be yourself”. Being encouraged by their supervisors and colleagues to make the work their own was described as helpful to their workplace learning. The willingness of the supervisors and colleagues to allow the newcomers the leeway to create their own styles was instrumental in creating a safe space where learning could thrive. This made participants feel nurtured, cared for, and is if they had a say in their own learning, thus creating an environment conducive to learning. Charly commented on being encouraged to add her own personal style to the work by her follow colleagues:

[The more seasoned conduct officers] were very good of like, in the conduct meeting like you kind of figure out what your style is, for the conduct meeting, but these are the boxes to check, this is what we need you to do, these are specific things you might need to say, other than that, be yourself. You’re having an accountability conversation but like be yourself in that. Cool.

Like Charly, Sam recalled, “[I] would be in the room as my supervisors would be handling conduct cases,” and Sam’s supervisor encouraged him to infuse his own personality into each meeting with students. Sam said:

Because one of the things that my supervisor at the time really expressed to me is that everyone has their own particular style...We’re not meeting with students because something positive happened, right? We’re meeting with students because there has been

an act of disobedience or breaking the rules, what have you. And so, we want to try to make this conversation as authentic as we possibly can. And so, he wanted me to see the vantage point of different people and how they have hearings so that I could come up with my own style.

Khiro did not mention being given a directive to create his own style but did share that through his observations of other conduct officers, he knew what worked for him and what did not. He said:

Specifically, throughout shadowing different people, I notice how some people can be more stern and some can be more casual, friendlier I guess you could say but still saying that these are the policies and procedures. So, me I was like oh I'm not that stern when it comes to that, I know that's not my personality. So I can fit what makes sense for me even though, this [conduct officer] does really well in a stern manner, I feel like I can do well in another way because in my way I can develop this trust and understanding [with the student] like, "Hey, this person is not out to get me, if the coordinator feels like I, the student, am responsible, I may not agree with it but I know that they were fair." As opposed to sometimes I feel like a student will get that firmness from somebody else and feel like, "This person is out to get me."

Khiro credited his own personality and character as helping him create his own style to student conduct work. However, he reiterated that a stern approach is neither negative nor positive, it is simply a different approach to his own. Khiro recalled a time when he shadowed a conduct officer on his team that was "kind of harsh." The conduct officer did not greet the student at the beginning of the meeting and would "just jump straight into it." Khiro said if this particular conduct officer "feels like a student is potentially lying [they'll] make a remark like, 'Yeah...that

don't sound right to me, I think you're lying', and then laugh." This did not align with Khиро's natural disposition, and thus, he formulated his own approach while maintaining the integrity of the conduct process. One of the themes discussed in the following sections highlight, in more detail, other research participants' propensity to lean into their own values and morals when it comes to conduct work.

"I want to see how you handle it": Reverse Shadowing and Debriefing to Solidify What Was Learned

The idea of reverse shadowing also came up amongst the participants as a way they were able to perform and learn their job role. After a new conduct officer shadowed their supervisor or colleague in the workplace, specifically in a student investigation, the time would come for the new conduct officer to lead their first case. The decision of when the conduct officer was ready to adjudicate a case was based on the discretion of the supervisor. When the newcomer is assigned their first investigation, participants identified this as the time when reverse shadowing would typically take place. After analyzing the data, I decided to separate reverse shadowing and debriefing from the initial phase of shadowing, thus creating two distinct subthemes. Though both subthemes are closely and inherently linked, shadowing requires simple observation, while reverse shadowing and debriefing require legitimate participation in the work itself. Workplace learning "implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Observations are an important element of learning, while the actual participation and social practice in the workplace is where learning is fully embodied (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Nora shared what happened once the initial shadowing phase was complete:

After a few practices of [shadowing the supervisor], then I would conduct [a student investigation], and then [my supervisor] would shadow me, and then he would provide feedback to ensure that I was doing things, you know, in a professional and ethical manner.

Charly had a similar experience. Those who trained Charly would say: “Here’s the process...here, go sit down with another [conduct officer] or with somebody in the conduct office, you’re going to sit and watch them have a meeting, then they’re going to sit and watch you have a meeting.”

The concept of debriefing after shadowing, or after reverse shadowing, also came up amongst participants as a way they learned in the workplace. This practice is when the new conduct officer meets with the more seasoned conduct officer after a student conduct investigation (when the student is not present). Sarah said: “I would also sit with [the conduct officer] after the session concluded to watch them do their rationales. And then the technical side of using, I think it was [name of online judicial database] at first and then it was [name of online judicial database].” (When Sarah mentioned ‘rationales,’ she was referring to her conduct office’s requirement to upload into the online judicial database the reason the conduct officer is finding the student responsible or not responsible for violating policy, known as ‘rationales’.) Khiri also experienced debriefing and said:

After the shadowing experiences, we would have like a Q&A right afterwards to see if I had any questions about what I learned or what I saw, is there anything that I would have done differently. That was really good to process through those conduct meetings, it was just really, really helpful.

Khiro's ability to lean on the more seasoned conduct officers for continued assistance throughout the learning process was shared amongst all of the research participants in this study, specifically through debriefing or reverse shadowing. Participants described their colleagues and supervisors who created safe workplaces through sincerity and willingness to assist as supportive to their workplace learning. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that "the effectiveness of the circulation of information amongst peers...may well be a *condition* for the effectiveness of learning" (p. 93). In other words, without peer connection in the workplace, learning may not take place. The following theme will delve into the meaningful interactions amongst conduct officers in more detail.

Though I was not surprised to see shadowing and reverse shadowing as a common practice amongst the research participants that helped support their learning, I was taken aback when I found an outlier amongst the group. Four of the participants, Khiro, Nora, Sam and Sarah, utilized the word "shadowing" without any prompting from the researcher, while one participant, Charly, used the term "see one do one". All five credit shadowing as a part of their learning. However, one participant was an anomaly and did not mention any term related to shadowing until asked directly. Once asked about shadowing, Kenneth shared that during his first, full-time conduct role he did not experience an initial phase of shadowing with seasoned conduct officers and that he only experienced reverse shadowing. Kenneth said:

[My supervisor] was like "I'm going to assign you your first case, I want to see how you handle it". And I said, "Okay I don't know what I'm clicking here in [online judicial database], but I'm sure you'll tell me as we go through it". And [the supervisor] was like, "Yeah that'll be right, you know, you know how to do this more than you think you know how to do this." I was like, "Okay let's do this."

Kenneth's supervisor assigned him a student investigation, and Kenneth led the case, with the student present, while his supervisor observed and gave feedback. Kenneth was not given the opportunity to observe his supervisor. Due to Kenneth's previous experience in law enforcement, Kenneth was aware of how to lead an investigation but was not aware of the process the conduct office followed as he was new to his role as a full-time conduct coordinator.

Conclusion

The student conduct administrators of this study described shadowing, reverse shadowing and debriefing as ways in which they were able to learn their roles in the workplace, especially when it came to student investigations. The shadowing experience allowed conduct officers to observe how to conduct a proper investigation, while reverse shadowing and debriefing allowed them to apply what was learned, create their own approach to the work, and ask questions to gain further clarity when needed. The student conduct administrators described receiving support from supervisors and colleagues who encouraged creativity in the role and who were sincere and genuine. Thus, the supervisors and colleagues created a safe space where learning could thrive. This theme, shadowing, was split into two subthemes that described how conduct officers learned their roles: (a) initial stage of shadowing and (b) reverse shadowing and debriefing. The support conduct officers received from colleagues and supervisors were addressed in both subthemes.

“It was the best, just being able to walk down and talk with each of my colleagues”:

Meaningful Interactions with Conduct Officers in the Workplace

All six research participants in this study attributed meaningful interactions with colleagues and supervisors as a way in which they were able to learn in the workplace. These interactions were both unplanned and intentionally coordinated. Whether a spontaneous

occurrence or a structured training session, the former and current conduct officers highlighted the people on their teams as instrumental and supportive to their learning. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest “acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners make learning legitimate and of value from the point of view of the [newcomer]” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 110). This theme will delve into some of the interactions amongst old-timers and newcomers more closely. Conversely, this theme will not include discussion of shadowing, as the shadowing theme was detailed above. However, it is important to note that shadowing was a significant part of participants’ interactions with other conduct officers in the workplace.

As stated previously, the conduct officers in this study collectively saw student conduct as a joint effort. As I analyzed the data, I saw that learning how to conduct a student investigation, mainly through shadowing and reverse shadowing, was not enough for the conduct officers to fully understand their job roles. Conduct work comes with a level of nuance, as no student investigation is like the other. Workplace learning is not a siloed event, and the continued connection to colleagues helped the research participants reflect on their own understandings of the role while also acknowledging their limitations. It was clear the former and current conduct officers needed recurrent conversations and interactions with colleagues to further support learning in the workplace, according to the data.

In this theme, as it related to the first research question of this study, participants described learning their role through the meaningful interactions and conversations with colleagues and supervisors in the workplace that allowed for open discussion, encouraged teamwork, showed competency in their knowledge of the role, and allowed conduct officers agency in their role. As it related to the second research question, conduct officers described having accessible and trustworthy colleagues and understanding supervisors that created a safe

work environment conducive to learning. This included, but was not limited to, supervisors and colleagues who fostered healthy relationships, allowed of mistakes without ridicule, and showed an ethic of care for their employees. When the research participants felt safe and secure amongst their fellow colleagues and supervisors, they felt more inclined and supported in participating in the social practices of the workplace, which ultimately led to enhanced learning in the workplace. The following subthemes will go into more detail about these meaningful interactions in the workplace.

“Hey, are you free for a quick call?”: Accessible and Trustworthy Colleagues

All participants noted meaningful conversations and interactions with fellow colleagues in the workplace as an avenue to understanding and learning their job roles. This need for intradepartmental interactions and collaboration with colleagues was shared amongst all participants. It reflected the notion mentioned directly, and indirectly, throughout this chapter: student conduct is a team effort and is described by participants as the way in which they learn in the workplace. Collaboration through interactions with colleagues in the workplace allowed student conduct administrators the opportunity to participate legitimately in the work environment and community of practice, which in turn supported their learning. Two participants, Khiero and Sarah, discussed these meaningful, collaborative interactions with colleagues in the form of staff meetings. Sarah shared:

I think I appreciated our team meetings...I think they were bi-weekly, we had team meetings, and we were all able to just like discuss some of the things we were working on, we would really get in depth with cases and if we noticed trends amongst certain students.

Staff meetings were a chance for newcomers and old-timers in the conduct office to come together as a team and discuss how to improve their practices. Sarah described how she learned in the workplace was through “having the open space” to share ideas and collaborate “so that we’re on the same page and also no one is left out of anything”. Khiero shared similar sentiments. He said:

Staff meetings is a great way of bringing up cases so the whole team can hear about it, especially if there is some large investigations. That was really helpful for me to understand investigation processes because we would talk about these large investigations that’s going on our campus, what is being done in those situations.

In order for staff meetings, or any other meaningful interaction amongst colleagues in the workplace, to be a successful and effective way for the research participants to learn in the workplace, a certain level of safety amongst the conduct officers must be present. When I analyzed the data further, I began to see how conduct officers were reliant and dependent on a safe space in the workplace in order to learn their job roles most effectively. I saw how conduct officers did not learn in spite of a safe work environment, but as a result of it. As this subtheme appeared in the data, it showed that the unreliability and intolerance of their fellow colleagues in the workplace were the antithesis for learning. Learning in the workplace is a joint, communal endeavor and cannot be supported without the assistance of the community of practice. When the community of practice, in this case student conduct administrators, made the research participants feel comfortable and relaxed, each participant noted they were able to learn from their fellow colleagues. Charly shared this sentiment and described reaching out to her colleagues to ask questions about the role as supportive to her learning. She said:

I'm an out loud processor.....having those conversations with another professional like "How would you handle this?" Or like, "This is what I've done, like, what are some other things that maybe I could do or think about that I haven't thought of?" And then can kind of do like the back and forth, for me, is helpful. Because again, external processor.

Likewise, Sarah talked about the convenience of having colleagues who were prompt in their responses:

Everyone was easily accessible. If I had a question about anything I could message someone on [messaging app]. Or if it was something sensitive and I couldn't put it in a message, I could just say, "Hey, are you free for a quick call?" For the most part if I couldn't get in touch with one person, there were at least two if not three other people I could reach out to.

Sarah worked in an office where all of the conduct officers were hired before she was. She said having more experienced people around her was "really helpful" in creating a safe space for learning to take place. Kenneth also relied on the experience of more seasoned colleagues and their accessibility:

It would be great to go down the hallway and be like, "[Colleague name], I'm throwing up my hands today, I don't know what to do. This investigation is just taking a turn down," and [colleague name] would be like, "Did you flip this rock over yet?" ... It was the best, just being able to walk down and talk with each of my colleagues.

Kenneth said he would work together with his co-workers and "tag team" to share their different viewpoints on approaching student investigations. As stated previously, these meaningful interactions take place because of the safety of the workplace created by the community of practice that allowed learning to occur. Two participants, Nora and Khiron explained how retreats

with all members of staff built a rapport amongst the team that helped create a safe space to enhance their learning. Nora shared:

We would do retreats during the summer, and that's where we would also come back and do some skill building, and you know, relationship building. We would have potlucks, and when we had a new administrative assistant, she would go all out on our birthdays...All of that really built our relationship in surrounding the work that we do. Because it's important also to ensure that our well-being, that we're okay, that we're taking care of ourselves as well.

Nora described the high morale in the office came from the idea that those in the office were "family." If a colleague had a personal matter or emergency at home, it was understood that the colleague should attend to their personal needs while other colleagues in the office stepped up and filled in. "The level of trust there was so high," Nora said.

Similar to the shadowing theme, I was fascinated to find another outlier in the data. So far, all participants have named colleagues' natural disposition to be of service as supportive to learning in the workplace, through the colleagues' reliability, trustworthiness, accessibility, and openness. Amongst all of the participants, Charly was the only one to mention the gender of a colleague as supportive to learning their role as a conduct officer. She said:

I've had a lot of amazing women specifically in my career....I have trusted going to other women in my career, and not because I don't think people who identify as male have less experience, but I think as I've gotten up higher [in student conduct positions] there is definitely a gender dynamic...the number of women who are in conduct in general, or just in a higher leaderships position in conduct, are definitely less than men.

Charly found she could relate to other women in the field as a source of support. During her five years in full-time student conduct work, she worked her way up into higher-level positions. Her last role was as an Assistant Dean at a private institution. Through her experience, she realized that not everyone looked like her. She said, “We see that in student affairs in general, the higher you get up in leadership, the more white men you see.” She made a point to find connection with individuals who looked like herself.

“We’re all human, this is not an easy job”: Supervisors Who Understand the Job Role, Nurture Their Employees and Create a Safe Environment for Learning

Beyond the partnership with fellow colleagues, participants recalled their own supervisor-supervisee relationships as a part of their lived experience. All six participants spoke favorably upon this relationship, citing it as a significant, contributory factor in work-related learning. Participants not only spoke on supervisors who taught them the practical nature of the job (for example, how to use the online judicial database or conduct a student investigation), but almost all participants mentioned both the supervisors’ ethic of care and nurturing temperament that made them feel safe, thus bolstering their learning.

As I conducted the interviews, participants continuously described supervisor who made them feel seen and recognized as a pivotal element to their learning. Research participants shared they learned through supervisors that encouraged them to have agency over their work and gave relevant context as to what to expect in the job role. When I was first exposed to student conduct work when I was graduate assistant in the dean’s office, my supervisor was instrumental to my learning. He was the reason I went into the field, completely changing my career trajectory from middle school teacher to conduct officer. Supervisors have a salient role in the lives of their employees and have the power to inhibit or hinder their learning. With the right supervisor,

learning is inevitable in the workplace. Nora agreed, and described a supervisor who allowed her the agency to practice the work on her own as a way in which she was able to learn in the workplace. Nora shared:

And having the [supervisor] that was there at the time, guiding you through the process, but at the same time letting me go and do it on my own, taking ownership of it. And knowing that if I was stuck in any part of it, I can always go back and ask for guidance and ask for help before I do anything that could jeopardize the process.

Supervisors giving the conduct officers their freedom to engage in authentic practice in the work environment helped the participants learn their roles through peripheral participation, “located in the fields of participation defined by the community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36). Conduct officers must engage in the sociocultural practices of the workplace to reach full participation in the community of practice. Sam and Kenneth also described having agency over their work as a way in which they were able to learn their roles. When giving sanctions to a student who violated policy, Sam shared, “There was a sanction model [at the institution], but I was also given enough wiggle room that if I could justify what I was doing, I would get permission to do it.” Kenneth shared, “Being...given the ability to make decisions [by the supervisor] that were my own that didn’t involve any influence from anywhere else, you know [not the] this-is-how-we-do-it-mentality, really came to allow me to make choices that were going to benefit not only the institution but the students well.”

Participants also described they were able to learn in the workplace by receiving relevant information and context from their supervisors, which in turn allowed them to better understand their roles so they can perform their roles with confidence. Out of all of the conduct officers I interviewed, Sam was the only participant to share that his supervisor created relevant scenarios

or case studies to help Sam learn his role. He said, “So essentially during my one on ones, my supervisor who was the director would say, would give me scenarios. He would play the role of the student, and I would play the role of the hearing officer.” The scenarios and case studies were real-life situations that occurred at the institution. Sam credited his supervisor for asking Sam open ended questions and allowing him to think for himself. During the role play scenarios, Sam said:

Before [the supervisor] told me what the right answer was, he wanted me to go through my whole thinking process in a situation...I was very fortunate to have a supervisor who was not a cookie cutter supervisor. He wanted me to find my own voice and my own way of doing things.

Kenneth described his supervisor’s candidness about institutional politics and unwritten pieces of knowledge that gave context to the role as a way in which he learned in the workplace. This context was shared with the Kenneth to help him better understand why certain incidents in the office took place. This was acknowledged as helpful to performing his job role. Kenneth said:

But I also think [the supervisor] had a really good understanding of the players I guess you would say at [name of institution], and who made the big decisions, and where the big problems were and so I think explaining the institutional history, the politics, and the reason for why we have the policies really kind of helped me understand.

There was a common thread amongst the participants that described supervisors who taught the day to day of the job as supportive to their learning and supervisors who made them feel welcome in the workplace as supportive to their learning. These supervisors created safe spaces for the conduct officers to learn and understand their roles, thus supporting their learning through allowing them to ask questions, make mistakes, and connect their own interests with the

role. As seen in the literature on workplace learning, in the data collected for this study, and from my own personal experience as a full-time student conduct administrator, learning is inhibited in a toxic environment. The reason I chose workplace learning as my topic of research was because my learning was hindered due to feeling unsafe in the workplace. I did not want another conduct officer to experience that same fate. I wanted to add the voices of the conduct officers to the literature to help update training practices so they are more effective and welcoming. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), “conditions that place newcomers in deeply adversarial relations with masters, bosses, or managers; in exhausting overinvolvement in work; or in involuntary servitude rather than participation distort, partially or completely, the prospects for learning in practice” (p. 64). Learning can be hindered if a conduct officer feels unsupported and unsafe to express themselves.

Similar to how participants valued their colleagues in the workplace (seen in the previous subtheme), participants described supervisors who created safe and supportive spaces to learn by giving conduct officers the opportunity to ask questions and to receive positive reassurance from their supervisor. Khиро was offered this experience with his supervisor during “one on ones” (allocated one on one meetings with a supervisor):

Just talking through things, like “Hey, this was my first couple of cases, this is how I did it, I just wanted to get your thoughts if you feel like I’m doing this right.” I want validation to make sure I’m doing things okay and doing things the right way because I don’t want to ever do anything the wrong way.

Khиро went on to explain how these “one on one” interactions were instrumental in “building that confidence” in his own abilities as a conduct officer. Khиро shared that there are times when he finds a student responsible for violating policy and assigns the appropriate sanction(s), but the

student may not agree with the decision by claiming there is no evidence. In these situations, Khiero will reach out to his supervisor to “get clarity” and ensure he is “saying the right things and saying it appropriately.” Khiero shared:

So, I'll have that discussion with my supervisor because I feel like at times students feel like I'm against them. And I'm like no I'm not against you, I'm just saying by the preponderance of the evidence this is what I'm seeing. There's a more likelihood that you are responsible than not.

A few participants described supervisors that welcomed mistakes and understood this as an inevitable part of the process. A supervisor that created this type of work environment where errors were looked upon as teaching moments, instead of detrimental and damaging, gave room for the participants to flourish and learn. When supervisors are able to create an environment of safety, conduct officers will feel comfortable confiding in their supervisors. The supervisor supports learning by earnestly correcting the mistake and the conduct officers will feel even more encouraged to engage in the social practices of the workplace, rather than ashamed and intimidated, thus moving them into full participation in their job role. Charly felt as though the best supervisors were the ones who allowed her to falter without beratement. Instead, her supervisors reiterated the nature of the work and how perfection was unattainable. Charly said:

But I think the [supervisors] that are most helpful are the ones who have created an environment that I didn't feel like if I made a mistake, or I forgot something, that owning that would be the end of the world. The supervisors that...are like we're all human, this is not an easy job, things might get missed or overlooked, or mistakes might be made, but there's always a way to remedy that.

Participants also described supervisors who cared about their employees' lives and future goals and supervisors that built relationships with their staff as helpful to feeling safe to learn in the workplace. This part of the data intrigued me, as I never considered a supervisor's genuine and sincere interest in their employee's future, even outside of the workplace, could make research participants feel safe. It became a very obvious component after many of the participants shared their stories. Through my interpretation of the data, the participants unintentionally described kindness, love, and human decency as the needed values of a supervisor to make them feel safe. Participants did not use these terms directly, but it was interesting to see it shared, in one way or another, amongst all participants. When Sarah was asked how her supervisor supported her learning, and thus created a safe space, she said, "There were a lot of ways in which [the supervisor] supported my learning. I think one of my favorite ways was by asking me what I actually want out of this [job role] and trying to tailor my experience in that role to things I'm actually interested in." Sarah's supervisor listened to her interests and incorporated them into her daily work. At one time, Sarah mentioned to her supervisor that she was interested in compliance. Her supervisor was on the compliance team at the institution and would ask Sarah to join the meetings, knowing this was an area of interest. Sarah recalled:

There would be these meeting every other month with all of the departments across campus who were in one way, or another involved in compliance. And [the supervisor] added me to that meeting list because I had brought it up in conversation that I had previously done a little bit of compliance work in an internship and that I'm still interested in compliance.

When Sarah's supervisor could not be present at the compliance meeting, the supervisor would ask Sarah to go in his place. Sarah said, "If [the supervisor] couldn't make it, he would send me a message and say, "Hey, I can't make it can you sit in on this meeting and take some notes and let me know what's going on?" Nora shared a similar experience. She said, "The director asked me to sit in the faculty senate meeting representing him. You don't get that very often." Nora attributed this to the trust the supervisor had in her. Charly shared this sentiment. She said, "The [supervisors] that have been great are the ones that have noticed an opportunity that might be great for me and be like 'Hey, you should think about this', which I love." In addition to supervisors connecting their staff to opportunities of interest in the workplace, supervisors who showed an interest in the participant outside of the workplace was described as supportive to learning. When supervisors showed they were invested in the participants' lives in a genuine manner, participants felt like a true part of the community of practice. For Khiero, his goals extended beyond the workplace, and his supervisor was always on board. Khiero said:

I love the fact that if I have an idea of what I want to do to develop myself whether its personal or professional, [my supervisor is] always supportive of it. Like I wanted to go back to school [for a doctoral degree], he was completely supportive of it and allowed me to go back as soon as I started the position [as a full-time coordinator], which some supervisors probably would not have done especially that early on.

Kenneth had the same experience as his supervisor encouraged him to think beyond the field.

Kenneth said:

[My supervisor] gave me the greatest opportunity for growth just because he's like "You're going to stop here, but what you should really think about is going to get a law degree." [My supervisor] was like, "You should go get [the law degree] because you

could use it here [in student conduct], but I could see you using it outside of student conduct.”

Kenneth and his supervisor shared a personal connection, as his supervisor was invested in Kenneth’s growth in the field and outside of it. Kenneth talked about the supervisor-supervisee relationship turning into a true friendship. He shared:

[My supervisor and I] had similar philosophies, and personalities, and I now kind of look at [my supervisor] as a mentor and a friend. You always remember the people that support you and everything like that. But he really turned that passion for student conduct and gave me kind of ways to make it my own.

This supervisor-turned-friend relationship is similar to Nora’s feeling about her office being a “family.” She believes a supervisor who encourages laughter amongst staff was a symbol of unity and comfortability that supported her learning by making her feel safe and held:

So, sometimes we have to laugh and find some humor in [student conduct work]. When your supervisor doesn’t allow that, it’s really, it crunches not only your work, but it crunches your spirit too. And then you can’t give the best to your students when they’re at the most vulnerable because you’re also vulnerable.

Conclusion

Participants described learning in the workplace through meaningful interactions with conduct officers that were both intentional and unintentional. Conduct officers did not identify any hierarchy between more formal interactions and unplanned, casual exchanges, claiming both as equally essential. The participants described how they learned in the workplace through having open discussions and working together with colleagues, and through supervisors who shared relevant knowledge and allowed conduct officers autonomy over their roles. Likewise, the

student conduct administrators described receiving support from colleagues and supervisors who were accessible, trustworthy, relationship oriented, and made room for mistakes. Conduct officers also felt supported when the role was connected to their individual interests and when there was obvious care about the conduct officer's personal life outside the office. This theme, meaningful interactions with fellow conduct officers, was divided into two subthemes that described how the participants learned their roles: (a) colleague interactions and (b) supervisor interactions. The conduct officers also described the support they received from colleagues and supervisors in both subthemes.

“Everything that I was doing or wanted to do was always like are we serving our students?”: Navigating The Incongruence Between Personal Values and Established Practices in the Workplace

The former and current conduct officers of this study shared their stories of workplace learning through their lived experiences that shaped the way they approached their job roles. Some of these lived experiences were in direct contrast to the participants' own morals and values. The conduct officers brought their full selves to the workplace and did not blindly follow established practices that were unaligned and iniquitous. Participants shared the need to follow their own principles over following practices they considered immoral for various reasons, including but not limited to, avoiding negative repercussions, advocating for the student, and the desire to take a nurturing approach to their work. The conduct officers in this study learned to create personalized practices in the workplace by observing their colleagues and then combining what they learned with their own intentions, purpose, and values.

As this theme began to present itself in the data, it was interesting to try and pinpoint how the conduct officers learned to approach their work with integrity. Most of them shared it was

engrained in them, a personality trait that was already hardwired into their psyche. It went beyond being given permission to be themselves by their superiors, though this was the case for some participants, it was a matter of showing up with their own ethical standards regardless of what was taught. The workplace is an active, fluid environment, not static and fixed. When the participants witnessed incongruence between their personal values and established practices, they rejected what was taught and changed the system, or approach, to better suit their character and disposition. Lave and Wenger acknowledge conflict and controversy amongst the newcomers and old-timers in a community of practice as commonplace. “Legitimate peripheral participation is far more than just a process of learning on the part of the newcomers. It is a reciprocal relation between persons and practice,” and thus, change is always a constant in the community of practice, even when that change is instated by a newcomer (p. 116).

This theme aligned with the two research questions that framed this study. The first research question sought to elicit the stories of conduct officers and how they describe their learning in the workplace. The second research question attempted to find how conduct administrators describe the support they receive that makes the work environment conducive to learning. As it related to the first research question, research participants described learning in the workplace through observing seemingly immoral or unjust practices and creating a new practice that was more aligned to the participants’ own values and ethics. As participants approached full participation in legitimate practices of the workplace, they saw which practices work and which practices needed to be improved. The participants believed they had a say in their own learning, and thus, they engaged in the sociocultural practices of the work, which is central to workplace learning, and revised unethical practices based on their personal beliefs and principles. As it related to the second research question, participants described their own

“personality” as a supportive factor in creating a safe space for learning to take place. Most participants accredited themselves as supportive to their learning, as they infused their own character and integrity into the work. They relied on their morals to do what they thought was right, creating a safe haven within themselves, which produced a suitable environment for learning. When participants felt supported, even within themselves, they were more apt and comfortable to engage in the social practices and participate in the community of practice.

“I don’t want to see my student at the restaurant, and they know me, and they’re going to spit in my food”: Experiencing an Unethical Practice in the Workplace and Rising Above

Most of the participants experienced a moment in the workplace that made them pause and reevaluate their own idea of best practices. After analyzing the data, I found that learning what *not* to do can sometimes be just as beneficial as any other method of learning. As stated throughout this chapter, learning is not a siloed event. I would also argue that learning is not always going to take place in the most ideal of circumstances. When faced with adversity or conflict, the participants in this study faced it head on. Nora experienced this type of situation and was reminded to treat everyone, even students, with respect. She said, “The way you treat people is how they’re going to treat you, regardless of whatever environment you’re in, whether it’s professional or personal.” She learned this from an incident that happened to one of her colleagues during Nora’s role as a full-time coordinator. Nora said of the story, “This is a funny one but it’s not funny, but it’s funny *now*.” Nora explained that one of her colleagues was known to be disrespectful towards the students. She recalled:

At the time, [the colleague] was living at the student residence life, and for whatever reason, these students found out what car he was driving....and next thing you know, [the

colleague] comes in [the office], he was pissed he was upset, saying that his car got vandalized and they drew a picture of a dick on the hood of his car.

This colorful tale reiterated to Nora her own personal values of treating people well. Nora described learning her role through experiencing unethical or unfair situations and refusing to perpetuate them due to her own moral standards. Nora candidly said of her learning in the workplace: “You know you learn from everyone what to do and what not to do”. She shared that she “even became friends with some of [the students]” during her time as a conduct officer and never had anything like the vandalism incident happen to her. Nora explained, “[It is] just a realization that you know we have to treat people nice. We have a life outside of this office...because I don’t want to see my student at the restaurant, and they know me and they’re going to spit in my food.” Likewise, Charly shared how being rushed by upper-level administrators to adjudicate a case reminded her to follow her own values and intuition in the future. She described an incident where a student was found with magic mushrooms, an illegal hallucinogenic drug known as Psilocybin. This student told Charly that the magic mushrooms were brought to campus for a friend. Charly said:

While the outcome [of the student’s conduct case] probably would have been the same at the end of the day, the pressure from the institution over me.... they wanted such a fast turnaround because of the situation, that I didn’t feel like I gave the student the appropriate process, or a fair process.

The institution had a strict policy against illicit drugs and was harsh in their sanctioning if found responsible for having drugs on campus. This led the higher ups to “pressure” Charly to move at a quicker pace than she normally would have during the investigation. The outcome of the student’s case was expulsion from the university. Though Charly believed the sanction she gave

of expulsion was warranted, she felt that the university's conduct process was unclear, and policies were ambiguous. She said the conduct process at the institution felt "willy nilly," and "there was no real standard." In hindsight, Charly wished she had the opportunity, during the drug case, to collect more evidence and ask more questions despite feeling strongarmed by her leadership team. She said:

For me, I always want that student to feel like they had a fair shot. I'm telling [the student], "You're expelled," but I don't want them to be like, "You didn't listen to me, you didn't hear my side."

Charly learned through experiencing this depraved practice in the workplace because it reminded her to "double down" on her belief that there is never a need to speed up the conduct investigation because it dilutes the fairness and due process for the student. If Charly could do it all again, she would tell her superiors, "Like I get this is serious, but like pause.... Being more assertive with the other players in those situations of being like, 'Give me [the] information, we're going to get there, we don't need to rush this.'"

Similarly, Sarah learned to follow her personal values through her distressing observations in college. As discussed in her introduction at the beginning of this chapter, Sarah was a part of the student conduct review board as an undergraduate student. Her university was harsh on sanctioning and "just literally suspended everyone." This experience was unaligned with Sarah's morals and beliefs. Sarah vowed to be different and show compassion for her students when she had the opportunity to become a conduct officer. Sarah reflected back on this time so that she can be reminded of who she is authentically. She said:

I think just every now and then thinking back to my time at [name of university] and remembering how every student left in tears, like every single student, regardless of

gender, regardless of what year they were in, and just how many problems that caused for them along the way...just thinking about how the trajectories of students' lives have been completely knocked off course by of a decision.

Like Charly and Nora, Sarah learned to understand and perform her role as a conduct officer by encountering a circumstance that directly opposed her own morals and deciding to create her own philosophy of student conduct. Lave and Wenger (1991) acknowledge this need for newcomers to “engage in existing practice” while also acknowledging that newcomers “have a stake in [the existing practices’] development as they begin to establish their own identity in its future” (p. 115). Charly, Nora and Sarah made the work their own, based on their moral compass, thus changing the very fabric of the environment in which learning took place.

Charly experienced similar situations where her morals and the practices of the conduct office were misaligned. Charly worked in several conduct offices that were lacking in their policies and procedures (one of these offices was described in the incident above where she had to rush and expel a student). She was taught the unethical processes but made a point to improve them, even if that meant looking outside the university for assistance. Charly said:

Everything that I was doing or wanted to do was always like are we serving our students? Because at the end of the day while the conduct process, in many ways, is there for the university to keep the community safe... the process is also for the students. They have rights as a student. While they may have made a mistake that doesn't necessarily make them a bad person. So, I don't think they should have to go through a poor process, or a shitty process or whatever it is, or not understand the process. So that was kind of always my framework: is it good for the student?

Charly made a point to clean up the old processes to ensure they were fair for her students.

Similarly, Nora saw what was wrong with her campus' conduct processes and did something about it. Nora left her role as a student conduct officer to lead a department that created student advocacy initiatives. She explained:

But also, what was missing on that campus that our students needed, I went above and beyond and looked at that. And one of those areas was the student advocacy piece, and that is where we looked for grants and looked for opportunities to build [an office for student advocacy] and we did.

“That’s just the way that I do things. It’s my own personality”: Individual Morality and Principles Matter in the Workplace

The incidents described above further underscored the shared concept found in the data: participants chose their personal values over unethical practices seen in the workplace. If the participants were being taught or observed something that impeded on their own personal values and morals, they chose to align with their own character and integrity. Though not all participants reported being placed in environments or situations where they had to choose between their own values and what they were being taught, all participants reiterated that acting in a virtuous and genuine manner at all times was principal. Their personal beliefs helped participants structure their own conduct philosophy, mainly through a nurturing, educational approach to the work. When asked how they came up with this outlook, they all shared, in one way or another, that it was simply their “personality.” Some participants shared this cannot be taught, but rather, it is something innate inside of you. The analytical perspective that framed this study, legitimate peripheral participation, supports the idea that newcomers must authentically participate in the sociocultural practices of the work environment, learned from the old-timers of

the community of practice, in order for true learning to take place. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that “learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind” but rather, learning takes place through co-participation amongst individuals within the community of practice (p. 15). However, Sam argued that some parts of the role cannot be observed or practiced. Sam was asked who taught him how to take a nurturing approach to conduct, and he responded:

I think for me, that is more natural for me. Personally, I don't think that's something that someone can teach you. That's a skill that you just have, and you either do [student conduct work] in an authentic way or you don't. And I think for me the way I have conversations with people...I'm truly interested in hearing about your story.

From this perspective, Sam described what made the workplace a safe place to learn was through brining his full self to the role. By relying on his own instincts and values, he was able to create his own approach to the work, leading him into full participation in his role. Sam believed his own life experience and upbringing, in combination with what is learned in the workplace, was what shaped his attitude and viewpoint towards the work, sharing that in student conduct it was more than assigning sanctions. There may be an underlying reason why the student violated policy and this needed to be explored. Sam said, “There's things below the surface of behavior. It's not always cut and dry.” He shared:

I can't even count how many cases I have heard from students being accused of using marijuana, but they also share with me that they have ADHD. And the medication they take is an appetite suppressant. So, they smoke the marijuana so they can have an appetite so they can eat.

Sam gave this example to highlight how underlying issues may be the catalyst for a student neglecting the policies. This is where the education piece for the student can take place.

Likewise, Khиро spoke to his own “personality” as a determinant of his approach. When asked did someone teach Khиро how to take a nurturing or development approach to conduct, he responded “No. That’s just the way that I do things. It’s my own personality.” Khиро explained further:

The relationship building nature of mine I think has just always been a part of myself. I just want to make sure people feel comfortable. It has been times when I meet with a student and they say, “You made me feel a lot more comfortable because I came in here really stressed, I couldn’t sleep at night, I didn’t know what to do with myself, and now even though I may be considered responsible [for violating policy], I feel comfortable in this situation.” And I’m like, “That’s good, I’m glad to hear that.”

Sarah corroborated this sentiment, and when asked to pinpoint who or what taught her to approach conduct the way she does, in a more nurturing approach, she simply stated, “I think it’s my personality”.

Conclusion

The participants of this study described how they learned in the workplace through the observation of unethical or iniquitous behaviors of their colleagues, supervisors, and institutions. Having a front seat view to the unjust policies and behaviors in their department or at the institution, the conduct officers of this study decided to create their own way of approaching the work, despite what was commonplace. The participants described the support they received in the workplace through their own “personality”, morals, and principles. The conduct officers acknowledge their individuality, integrity, and character as helpful to their learning as they

created a new standard to their work. This theme, navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices, was split into two subthemes. This first subtheme, (a) facing an unfair situation in the workplace and forging a different path, described how conduct officers learned their job roles. The second subtheme, (b) infusing individual morals and beliefs into everyday practice, described how conduct officers received support for learning in the work environment.

“As nerdy as it sounds, going through the [student] code of conduct has really helped me”:

Access to Artifacts in the Workplace

Artifacts in the student conduct field range from office to office. For this theme, artifacts refer to physical items that were made to assist the conduct officers in executing their job roles, whether a paper product or digital. Examples include, but are not limited to, student conduct officer manuals (for onboarding), student code of conduct, judicial database, and sanctioning models. Most of this chapter has discussed learning as a sociocultural practice but with little reference to the artifacts of the workplace that help conduct officers learn. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) approach to learning deviates from simple regurgitation of knowledge, and instead, upholds the idea that to truly learn, one must become a part of a community of practice which “requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community” (p. 101). In addition, Lave and Wenger also acknowledge becoming a part of the community of practice “requires access...to information, resources, and opportunities of participation” (p. 101), which will be discussed in the following subthemes.

Though every research participant reported having access to various artifacts in their respective offices, not every artifact was complete or comprehensive. The participants who had lacking or outdated artifacts still acknowledged having these artifacts as helpful and supportive

to learning their roles. In other words, these participants felt like something was better than nothing. A few of the participants were even tasked with, or tasked themselves with, updating and revising the artifacts as newcomers in their roles. This theme answered the first research question that framed this study: how do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace? Participants described artifacts as a resource they could utilize while engaged in the community of practice (Lave and Wenger refer to these resources as the “learning curriculum”). This learning curriculum “evolves out of participation in a specific community of practice,” and is not meant to be used on its own (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 97). When participants were given opportunities to engage in the social practices of the work environment, they referenced and utilize the artifacts to enhance their learning. These resources strengthened their comprehension of the role, which in turn allowed the conduct officers to authentically participate in the community of practice. It is through this participation that learning occurred.

“Like he was very more like a hands-on person, but the man never wrote anything down”:

Revising Outdated Documents and Manuals

During my first, full-time professional role as a student conduct officer, no manual existed that detailed any of my job duties. Almost everything I learned was through word of mouth. I took it upon myself to make a conduct manual for the office, seeing as my supervisor and colleagues were not incentivized to do so in the years prior to my arrival. It was interesting to find the research participants shared similar stories. Two of the six participants shared there were little to no artifacts available in their first conduct roles. When asked if Nora had access to a manual or document that detailed the job role and assisted her in her learning, she said, “I don’t even think we had a manual.” Nora shared her conduct office did not even have an online judicial database, and everything was done with physical paper. She recalled:

Like I said when I was there, we did everything [by hand]. It was all paper files, you know. Just maybe recently...they moved to [online judicial database], but everything was paper. So, it was just, “This is how we do it, this is what we do, and we print this” [via word of mouth] We had filing cabinets [that carried the student’s personal files] under keypad lock. It was just more of like verbal.

Though Nora did not have access to robust and comprehensive artifacts in the workplace, she described the artifacts she did have access to as a way in which she learned her role. “The key to legitimate peripherality is access by newcomers to the community of practice and all that membership entails” and artifacts are a way to gain this access to the community (Lave, and Wenger, 1991, p. 100). When the artifact supported the social practice of the workplace, newcomers were then able to utilize the artifacts to legitimately participate so learning can take place. Likewise, Sam did not have a manual that contained his job-related duties when he started in conduct. Sam laughed and said, “My supervisor [in graduate school] did a lot of like hands-on learning with me, that was good. Like he was very more like a hands-on person, but the man never wrote anything down.” Sam shared there was a “manual from a [graduate assistant] or so ago that was somewhat relevant” but had a lot of missing pieces and needed updating, and thus, Sam tasked himself with revising it. As he entered into his first full-time conduct role, he faced a similar situation. Sam said:

When I started at [my first full time role] there was nothing. I did a lot of things from scratch. As a matter of fact, one of the things I was charged with was re-writing the [student] code of conduct because it was so old and outdated.... There were a lot of things that were not being done in a way that, one, was legal, two, ethical. And so, essentially

like I brought that work on myself because I raised those concerns, and they were like, “Oh okay, well then you can do it, you can fix it.”

Khiro shared he was also tasked with updating the conduct officer manual that was originally very short and nondescriptive. Khiro has now revised the document, and it is currently much more robust and comprehensive. Khiro shared of the document:

[It] details everything that you need to know as a new coordinator in the office, or a new person in the position, would help them to understand all the procedures...how to use our software in [name of online judicial database], how you compose letters, how you do investigations,...templates you use to send emails to students, just everything you need to know in one document.

Khiro said the new conduct officers now have this “living document” to reference. The newcomers who were hired after Khiro said the revised manual “was extremely helpful.”

“I do find having good records and a system that is accessible [supportive to learning]”: The Utilization of Artifacts to Bolster Confidence in Student Investigations

Most participants identified an online judicial database as a way in which they were able to learn their role. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), “participation involving technology is especially significant because the artifacts used within a cultural practice carry a substantial portion of the practice’s heritage” (p. 101). Sarah found the online judicial database as a way to reference and add context to sanctioning decisions, which in turn helped her participate in the work and learn her role. She said:

I do find having good records and a system that is accessible [supportive to learning]. To be able to kind of look back at what has been done previously. For example, looking at

previous drug cases... “Is this what we actually do [to handle a drug case]? Is there evidence to back up this decision [to assign sanctions]?”

The records help Charly when in meetings with students who have had previous cases violating policy. This helps her give a rationale to her sanctioning choices. Like Charly, most participants identified the judicial database as a tool they were able to consult and utilize to assist in their roles. Similarly, all of the research participants acknowledged having access to a digital version of their institution’s student code of conduct (a list of all policy violations). In particular, Sarah found the student code of conduct made her feel “confident” when engaging in the workplace, specifically during student investigations. Sarah described learning her role through utilizing the code of conduct as it allowed her to authentically participate in her role. She explained:

As nerdy as it sounds, going through the [student] code of conduct has really helped me because a lot of times when I was in hearings with students they would ask questions about the sanctions and like the elements of the charges and things of that sort, or the violations...and because I read [the student conduct of conduct] so frequently, it really helped me to be more confident in my responses to the students. To the point I could say, “Actually if you go to section [X], paragraph [X], it is listed right here, like, off the top of my head.”

Five of the six participants mentioned having some sort of pre-existing sanctioning model in their conduct offices, though it was not a fixed and concrete guideline that had to be followed. Participants reported there was room for the conduct officer’s own discretion in designating sanctions to students. Kenneth was the only participant to describe learning his role through digital “investigation forms” that were unique to his office as helpful (i.e. pre-made letters to

send to a student). With his law enforcement background, he felt confident in his own investigative abilities but “needed the forms” to perform his job role.

Conclusion

The student conduct administrators described learning and understanding their job roles through various resources and artifacts in the workplace. These artifacts included, but were not limited to, online judicial databases, list of policies and procedures, and investigation forms. These artifacts gave the conduct officers an effective way to keep track of their work and verifications that supported their decision-making during student investigations. This theme, access to artifacts in the workplace, was divided into two subthemes that described how conduct officers learned their job roles: (a) revising artifacts and (b) utilizing artifacts to boost confidence.

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the findings of the narrative inquiry study that sought to elicit the stories and insights of student conduct administrators across the nation. This study examined how student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace and how they receive support for learning in the workplace. Six student conduct officers served as research participants, and through their narratives, four common themes emerged: (a) shadowing, reverse shadowing and debriefing, (b) meaningful interactions with fellow conduct officers, (c) navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices, and (d) access to artifacts. Each theme relies on the other for the full initiation of learning to commence. Without meaningful interactions with colleagues and supervisors, the shadowing experience would be less productive. Without the shadowing experience, utilizing artifacts would not be as effective, and so on. All of these themes depend on one another for conduct officers to truly learn and

understand their job roles. It is as if the context of one theme supports and breathes life into the next theme.

The next chapter will begin with a short story of my own experience as a student conduct administrator, followed by a summary of the four main themes of the study and their connection to Lave and Wenger's analytical perspective and the literature on workplace learning. Next, I gave a list of recommendations to assist practitioners in making better work environments that are conducive to learning. The chapter ends with recommendations for future research and my final reflections of the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, INTERPRETATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The stories of the research participants in this study highlighted the idea of workplace learning as a definitive and critical part of an effectual training process for student conduct administrators. However, these stories were not only unique to those conduct officers who were a part of this study. As I interviewed each participant and listened to their reflections, I began to see my own experiences as a former conduct officer mirrored in their narratives. The themes that emerged from the data seen in Chapter 4, and discussed again in the following sections, were all too familiar to my own workplace learning experiences. I decided to start this chapter with an anecdote and narration of an incident that occurred during my time as a newly hired conduct officer as it echoed some of the themes found in the data of this study.

“Are you ready to be suspended?”

The second I heard those words, my heart sank.

In my first full-time, student conduct role, I was excited to learn the ropes. I wanted to support my students through some of their most difficult and vulnerable moments. Being accused of violating policy can be a terrifying ordeal for students, and I wanted to be their confidant. I wanted to let them know that this moment does not define the rest of their lives. They are an important and integral part of the fabric of our community, and they belong. I believed, and still believe, every student should have a chance to redeem themselves, and when I landed my first conduct role, I was excited and ready to navigate these vulnerable times with my students.

During the first couple of weeks at my new role, my supervisor asked me to shadow them during a student investigation. My only responsibility was to observe while my supervisor led the investigation. I went in doe-eyed and alert, paying close attention to what would be expected of me once I was ready to lead my own student investigations. I was led into a small conference room with my supervisor and an unsuspecting student. I sat quietly, taking notes. I do not remember the full details of the case, but from my recollection, the student was not being charged with any violation of policy, but instead, may have simply been a witness. There was no evidence to hold him responsible for violating any policy. After a few exchanges back and forth between my supervisor and the student, I heard my supervisor say: “Are you ready to be suspended?” The second I heard those words, my heart sank. The student looked at me incredulously, and I looked back at him, stone faced. The student was startled and continued the conversation with my supervisor, perplexed and flustered, not understanding why suspension was even being discussed as he had not violated policy. It was clear in that moment that my supervisor was using their power of authority to inflict fear on the student, apparently as a scare tactic that still makes me uncomfortable almost a decade later. After what seemed like an eternity, the conversation ended. The student was not held responsible for violating policy, and I left the room in a daze. In that moment, I made a promise to myself:

You will never be like that. You will never treat another student that way no matter what they are accused of doing. You will treat everyone with the dignity and the respect they deserve. I don’t care if what my supervisor did is considered best practice or if it was their own power trip and hatefulness, that won’t happen with me.

Learning what not to do when it came to student conduct was my biggest teacher. This dissertation was written in hopes that those who train conduct officers will gain more knowledge,

and maybe even more compassion, and apply some of the practices discussed in this chapter within their own offices. I was not given proper training in my full-time student conduct role, and instead, had to rely on my own nurturing disposition and values to create a conduct process that aligned with what higher education is all about: supporting our students. I have left student affairs, and this dissertation is my last ‘hoorah!’ to the field. Maybe I will come back one day, maybe this is goodbye forever. Before this extended vacation or final farewell, I wanted to shine light on the voices of the student conduct officers who have not been extensively researched or examined in the literature. We are truly the glue that keeps our campuses and communities going. Our students deserve our best efforts, and I hope this final chapter inspires the student conduct field to be better and do better. I have confidence in our future.

I chose to begin this chapter with an anecdote about my personal experience in the student conduct field. It served as the basis of my study, as I sought to reimagine and renew the training of student conduct officers through the voices of the student conduct officers themselves. I knew how I was originally taught was unprincipled and riddled with hatred and partiality. I wanted to find a new way and to see how student conduct officers can learn their roles with an ethic of care and decency. In the following sections, I will discuss the overview of the study and give a summary of the findings aligned to the analytical perspective that framed the study, legitimate peripheral participation. I will then discuss how the data collected from the stories of the conduct officers connect to the literature on workplace learning. Next, I will share my recommendations for practice that can be applied to creating workspaces that enhance learning and recommendations for future research. Lastly, I will share a reflection on my research, reiterate my perspective of workplace learning, and give a brief summary of the study.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study was to highlight the stories and voices of the student conduct administrators in the United States. This study explored how student conduct administrators perceive and describe workplace learning, and how workplace learning has allowed them to understand and perform their job role. Two research questions framed the research and data of this study:

1. How do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace?
2. How do student conduct administrators describe how they receive support for learning in the work environment?

To align with the narrative inquiry approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews that were conducted in the summer of 2024. Six conduct officers served as research participants for the study. Categorical analysis was then used to categorize the data (the stories of the six research participants) into cohesive themes that answered the research questions. I looked for potential insights in the data through open coding, identifying and labeling relevant pieces of data, known as codes, that could add richness and depth to the study. I then followed up with axial coding by looking for patterns and consistent concepts amongst the codes. From this data analysis, four themes came forward: (a) shadowing seasoned conduct officers, (b) meaningful interactions with fellow conduct officers, (c) navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices, and (d) access to artifacts. Subthemes also emerged from the data that further defined the overarching themes of the study. For a comprehensive list of the themes and subthemes, see Table 2. below. The following section will describe the findings of the study and connect these findings to the analytical perspective legitimate peripheral participation and the literature on workplace learning.

Table 2. *Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
“See one do one”: Shadowing Seasoned Conduct Officers in the Workplace (RQ1 and RQ2)	“They’ll bless you and you will go off and continue to do this on your own”: Shadowing and Creating Your Personal style “I want to see how you handle it”: Reverse Shadowing and Debriefing to Solidify What Was Learned
“It was the best, just being able to walk down and talk with each of my colleagues”: Meaningful Interactions with Conduct Officers in the Workplace (RQ1 and RQ2)	“Hey, are you free for a quick call?”: Accessible and Trustworthy Colleagues “We’re all human, this is not an easy job”: Supervisors Who Understand the Job Role, Nurture Their Employees and Create a Safe Environment for Learning
“Everything that I was doing or wanted to do was always like are we serving our students?” Navigating The Incongruence Between Personal Values and Established Practices in the Workplace (RQ1 and RQ2)	“I don’t want to see my student at the restaurant, and they know me, and they’re going to spit in my food”: Experiencing an Unethical Practice in the Workplace and Rising Above “That’s just the way I do things. It’s my own personality”: Individual Morality and Principles Matter in the Workplace
“As nerdy as it sounds, going through the [student] code of conduct has really helped me”: Access to Artifacts in the Workplace (RQ1)	“Like he was very more like a hands-on person, but the man never wrote anything down”: Revising Outdated Documents and Manuals “I do find having good records and a system that is accessible [supportive to learning]”: The Utilization of Artifacts to Bolster Confidence in Student Investigations

Summary of the Themes and Their Connection to the Analytical Perspective of the Study

The analytical perspective that served as the framework for this study was called legitimate peripheral participation. It underscores the idea that “the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. This social process includes, indeed subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Learning is situated in the work environment itself, and to separate the two would be diminishing to the learning experience. According to this analytical perspective, learning goes beyond acquiring knowledge through lecture or curriculum, but instead posits that learning is enhanced when the learner is able to participate in the collaborative practices of the community in tandem with the old-timer (Lave & Wenger, 1991). An old-timer refers to a more seasoned practitioner in the community of practice, while a newcomer is the more recent addition to the community of practice who is newly learning their role (the community of practice in this study were the student conduct administrators).

The first theme that arose from the data that described how the participants learned in the workplace was the different phases of shadowing. This theme was separated into two subthemes: (a) the initial phase of shadowing and (b) reverse shadowing and debriefing. The initial phase of shadowing entailed a seasoned conduct officer allowing the newcomer to observe the seasoned conduct officer in all phases of a student conduct investigation, from the preparation of materials to the actual investigation to sending out the final decision letter. A part of legitimate peripheral participation is learning the language of the community of practice and further shares that the goal of the newcomer “is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation” so they can participate fully in the social practices of the work environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 109). One way this was done amongst the participants of this study was through this initial

phase of shadowing and observation. However, to reach full participation in the practices of the conduct officer, the conduct officers in this study also participated in reverse shadowing where they applied what they learned through their observations of the old-timers in the workplace. In reverse shadowing (another way in which conduct officers described how they learned in the workplace), the newcomers led a student investigation, and the more seasoned conduct officer observed the newcomer, thus 'reversing' roles. This allowed the newcomers the opportunity to immerse themselves in the social practices of the workplace, thus enhancing learning. The final phase of the shadowing process was through debriefing, where participants could reach out to a more seasoned conduct officer and discuss any areas of clarification, questions, or concerns.

The aforementioned phases of shadowing answered the first research question, how do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace. Naturally, this led to the second research question, as both questions are intrinsically linked. As I analyzed the data further, I found that all of the research participants described receiving support from their supervisors and colleagues, specifically during all shadowing phases, as an element that made the work environment one that was conducive to learning. Participants shared that supervisors and colleagues that encouraged them to create their own style in student conduct work, beyond basic regurgitation and recitation, made them feel safe, which in turn created a place for learning to thrive. Participants also described receiving support that further helped their learning from those old-timers who were willing to be present and active communicators during the shadowing process, and those who showed sincerity to assist without hesitation.

The second theme that emerged from the stories shared by the research participants was meaningful interactions with conduct officers in the workplace. These meaningful interactions could be informal conversation around the office or structured conversations during planned one

on one meetings. Shadowing was not enough for the participants of this study, as each participant cited interactions with colleagues and supervisors as paramount to learning in the workplace (and since shadowing was already discussed in the first theme, it was not included in the second theme). This theme was separated into two subthemes: (a) colleagues and (b) supervisors. As it related to their colleagues, participants described how open discussion, teamwork and overall collaboration were ways in which they learned in the workplace. The conduct officers also described ways in which they learned through their supervisors. Specifically, they described supervisors that allowed them agency over their own work (similar to what was described in the shadowing theme) and supervisors that shared relevant data and knowledge about the job role. Legitimate peripheral participation is reliant on the environment being a place where engagement and participation of the newcomers in the roles of the community of practice can take place. When newcomers know how to perform their roles, they are better apt at involving themselves in the sociocultural activities of the workplace, which is the foundation for learning.

Subsequently, the conduct officers of this study described how they received support from colleagues who were accessible in the office or via online communication, who were sincere and approachable when a conduct officer needed to ask a clarifying question, and who built relationships of rapport and trust. This in turn created a comfortable environment where learning could flourish, as stressful settings can be the antithesis of learning. Similarly, conduct officers described supervisors who were supportive to making the work environment a place for learning to prosper. These supervisors made it safe to make mistakes without ridicule, created a familial relationship, connected the newcomers' interests with the job role, cared about the newcomers' life outside the office, and allowed newcomers to openly voice their questions. This

is how community is built according to Lave and Wenger (1991), as being a part of a community “does imply participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (p. 98). Community is a key component of legitimate peripheral participation, as newcomers are meant to engage with this community in order to learn.

The third theme that was identified through analyzing the data was navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices in the workplace. This theme was divided into two subthemes: (a) overcoming unethical practices in the workplace and (b) individual morality and principles. Participants described how they learned in the workplace through sticking to their morals and values after experiencing a fellow colleague perform an unethical practice. The conduct officers in this study decided to be a part of their learning, as opposed to being a passive participant, and consult with their own opinions and perspectives to make learning their own. This idea is supported by legitimate peripheral participation as newcomers are a part of the improvement and development of “existing practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 115). According to Lave & Wenger (1991), it is natural to see “conflict” amongst the newcomers and old-timers as they learn to understand one another as “conflict is experienced and worked out through a shared everyday practice in which different viewpoints and common stakes are in interplay” (p. 116). Participants also described how they received support for learning their roles in the work environment through their own personality, disposition and character. This was a slight divergence from the analytical perspective that served as the frame of this study, as one participant described this aspect of themselves as unteachable and innate. As seen in the first subtheme, change is a natural part of the community of practice, as learning “is a reciprocal relation between persons and practice” (Lave & Wenger,

1991, p. 116). However, the second subtheme brought up a new perspective that suggested maybe some things cannot be taught at all.

The fourth and final theme that came forward in the research was access to artifacts in the workplace. This theme was separated into two subthemes: (a) revising outdated documents and manuals and (b) using artifacts in student investigations. The conduct officers described artifacts as a way in which they learned in the workplace, even if they had to create and revise the artifacts themselves. Participants described judicial databases, onboarding documents, sanctioning models, investigation forms, and the student code of conduct as artifacts that helped them learn their job role (these artifacts will be discussed in more detail below in the recommendation for practice section). Artifacts are seen as noteworthy in legitimate peripheral participation, as “knowledge within a community of practice and ways of perceiving and manipulating objects characteristic of community practices are encoded in artifacts in ways that can be more or less revealing” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 102). Artifacts can be used as a tool to help newcomers gain access to the community of practice so they may engage in the sociocultural practices of the workplace, thus boosting learning.

Connection to the Literature on Workplace Learning

There are several definitions of workplace learning in the literature. In this study, I decided to use Sadler-Smith and Smith’s (2001) definition: workplace learning is “a broad term that encompasses many conceptualizations of learning and may be defined in terms of learning for work at work and through work” (Sadler-Smith & Smith, 2001 as cited in Streumer & Kho, 2006, p. 4). Situated learning is seen as a ‘co-participation’ between the newcomer and the work environment (Billet, 2001), as the newcomers navigate the workplace through their collaboration with the old-timers of the field (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As I studied the literature on workplace

learning, I did not find any studies that included student conduct work. Thus, this study sought to add to the scholarship and fill this gap in the research. The data collected in my study aligned with the basic concepts of workplace learning and with studies of work-based learning in various industries outside of student affairs.

The literature described two types of workplace learning: informal learning and formal learning (Billet, 2001; Jacobs & Park, 2009; Streumer & Kho, 2006). This aligned with the stories shared by my research participants, specifically as it related to the second theme of the study that described the meaningful interactions amongst colleagues and supervisors. The word ‘meaningful’ in the title of the theme was used purposefully, as participants did not claim formal or informal interactions amongst their fellow conduct officers as more superior than the other. They found informal conversation in the workplace just as vital as structured and planned meetings. This underscored an important element of my study that emphasized how learning is not an independent act, but instead, a constant and changing experience in all aspects of the workplace that is required for learning to thrive. This was also highlighted amongst the previous research studies on workplace learning, one being Julian Orr’s ethnographic research study on work-related learning amongst Xerox service technicians (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996). These technicians found the workplace far more helpful to their learning, where they actually had a chance to work with the Xerox machines, than any other form of structured teaching or manual. They were able to adapt and become acclimated to their roles through the machines themselves. My participants felt similarly, as they described hands on experience in the workplace as indivisible to their learning.

In addition to Julian Orr’s study on workplace learning, I found other studies on workplace learning that aligned with the data from my study. As discussed in Chapter 2, I found

three themes that appeared amongst the studies found on workplace learning: (a) collaboration between the workplace and the newcomer, (b) relevancy of what is being taught, and (c) supportive and experienced supervisors. One such study was conducted by Lancaster and Di Milia (2014) who sought to examine the training programs of a corporation and how these programs helped employees learn their role. One way in which employees' learning was enhanced was when supervisors and team leads were open and willing to participate in training and were knowledgeable about the training material. This directly aligned with the second theme of my study, where participants highlighted supervisors who were willing to be present and shared relevant information about the job role. I would argue it also aligned with the first theme that emerged from my study, as the only way shadowing, reverse shadowing, and debriefing can take place is if the supervisor (or a fellow colleague) is knowledgeable and informed about the role.

Another study on workplace learning was conducted by Billet (2000) who examined workplace learning amongst five different work environments across different industries. He found that guided learning strategies enhanced employee learning. These guided practices included "questioning dialogues, the use of diagrams, and analogies within an approach to workplace learning emphasizing modelling and coaching" (Billet, 2000, p. 272). This aligned with the first and fourth theme of my study, shadowing and artifacts. Participants described 'modelling and coaching,' as described by Billet (2000), through their experience in shadowing, reverse shadowing and debriefing in student investigations. The conduct officers also identified artifacts as resource they utilized so they could perform their roles with confidence (such as sanctioning models), which Billet's (2000) study identified as 'diagrams'.

In contrast, the second theme of my study, navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices, was not found in the previous literature on workplace learning. Though this theme was not found amongst the previous research seen in other disciplines and workplaces, it was a consistent and common experience amongst the student conduct officers interviewed for my study. This unique finding in the data should be examined more in future studies inside and outside of the conduct field to test for its prevalence and impact.

Recommendations for Professional Student Conduct Administrators

When writing this section, I understood that student conduct work was not meant to be one size fits all. Depending on the institution, the approach to student conduct will be different. The goal of this study was not to make an ironclad and inflexible system for training conduct officers. Instead, this study sought to add to the effectual training customs and traditions that already exist in conduct offices around the nation. With that said, it is imperative that those who train conduct officers review their own teaching and training modalities and objectively measure their efficiency. The antiquated rhetoric of this-is-always-how-it-has-been-done is a hindrance to the advancement of the field. Being closed-minded to change and improvement is not only regressive to learning, but also an unethical approach. This section includes my recommendations for those practitioners who lead and train student conduct officers in the workplace. It also includes my recommendations for ways new and mid-level professional staff members can take agency over their learning. All recommendations are meant to support the training of conduct officers so they may navigate and learn their roles more effectively.

Create Effective Artifacts

Several of the research participants in this study described work environments where there were insufficient or nonexistent artifacts. These practitioners, of their own volition and

through a directive from their supervisor, updated the deficient artifacts to make them more comprehensive and functional. I suggest the creation of effective artifacts in the workplace prior to the arrival of the newcomer student conduct officer. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning happens through “the increased access of learners to participating roles in expert performances” (p. 17). Artifacts are resources conduct officers can use to participate in their roles more effectively, and in turn, become “experts” of their craft. I also suggest the subsequent updates to the artifacts should be done *in tandem* with the input of the newcomer conduct officer and the established conduct officers in the office. I believe the input of the newcomer in constructing and updating operative artifacts can be an invaluable advantage. The lens in which the newcomer and the old-timer see the workplace are different, whereas the old-timer may have blind spots that the newcomer does not and vice versa. In this way, the newcomers and old-timers can use their non-canonical practices and experiences (i.e. what is learned in the workplace) as a way to review and update the canonical practices of the workplace (i.e. pre-written artifacts). The participants in this study found the canonical practices and non-canonical practices as equally beneficial to their learning, as long as the artifacts were informed by the voices and experiences of the conduct officers themselves. I advise against old-timers neglecting the creation and/or updates of artifacts for several years. This inattention and negligence on behalf of the old-timer conduct officer should not be a burden for the newcomer conduct officer to acquire. I suggest updating artifacts on a consistent basis, preferably every summer semester, as artifacts are fluid and everchanging. This gives support to current and future conduct officers in the office to better understand and perform their roles, as they now have a reliable resource they can look to for guidance. Below is a list of the artifacts mentioned by the research participants as beneficial and supportive to their learning:

- **Judicial Database:** The judicial database is a place where all of the alleged violations of policy by students are located. It is a one stop shop that keeps record of all documents related to student conduct investigations, including but not limited to, the incident report detailing the potential violation of policy, outcomes of each case (i.e. responsible or not responsible for violating policy), rationale for dismissing a case or assigning sanctions, copy of the student's testimony/narrative during the investigation, conduct officer's notes taken during the investigation, etc. The rule of thumb I like to follow when deciding which documents need to be uploaded to the student's profile in the judicial database is to imagine someone ten years from now coming back to the case and trying to understand what happened. Each office has different protocols of what needs to be uploaded into the judicial database, and this should be left to the discretion of the supervisors. I suggest each judicial database be accessible online, as this is the typical and most efficient way of communication in the 21st century. Maxient is the database utilized by most of the research participants of this study. I also used Maxient during my time as a conduct officer and it was exceptionally better than the other databases.
- **Code of Conduct:** The Code of Conduct, depending on the institution, is also referred to as the Community Living Standards, Handbook of Operating Procedures, Honor Code, etc. It is a document that includes all policies of a college or institution. Policies include, but are not limited to, hazing, academic integrity, alcohol and drug usage, etc. The conduct officers of this study found the Code of Conduct as a helpful resource that guided their decisions in finding a student responsible or not responsible for violating policy. If the Code is clear and organized, it can support the conduct officers' investigation and adjudication of student cases. I advise this document to be virtually

accessible to all students, staff and faculty of the institution (this is usually a requirement by most institutions). Updates to this document should also be done each summer semester with (a) input from legal counsel, (b) through reviewing other institutions Codes of Conduct via cross-institutional research, and (c) via intradepartmental review of policies that may need to be rewritten, revised, or added. Again, this is not a job that should be handed to a newcomer to do on their own, but instead, should be done collaboratively with all of the conduct officers in the office and spearheaded by the supervisor.

- **Sanctioning Model:** A Sanctioning Model is utilized as a guide for student conduct officers when assigning sanctions to a student. Typically, these models will include sanctions assigned to a range of policy violations, from low level violations of policy (i.e. a written warning given for a first-time violation of playing music too loud in the dormitory disturbing other students) to higher level violations (i.e. expulsion for a student brandishing an illegal firearm and threatening other students). The Sanctioning Model also includes sanctioning guidelines for students who repeatedly violate policy and suggestions on various types of sanctions that can be assigned. This helps bring integrity to the student conduct office, as it helps mitigate the chances that one conduct officer is assigning harsher sanctions than another conduct officer. This can help keep the student conduct process fair and just. I suggest this document be updated at least once a year, by old-timers and newcomers, through (a) reviewing other institutions Sanctioning Models to keep up with best practices in the field, and (b) looking at the data of the recidivism rates amongst students who have been through the conduct process (which may in turn

help give support to certain sanctions that are necessary and helpful to students, while also exposing which sanctions are intrusive and harmful to students).

- **Onboarding document:** An onboarding document is a document created for the newcomer that includes all of the protocols and procedures of the office. This includes, but is not limited to, a list of job duties, how to properly conduct a student investigation, how to upload documents into the judicial database, links to find the Code of Conduct and Sanctioning Model, department structure, etc. The participants in this study found their onboarding documents helpful and supportive to their learning, as they had a written document that showed them exactly how to perform their roles. I suggest this document be updated at least once a year by the supervisor of the office.
- **Investigation forms and letters:** As I've stated before, student investigations are the heart of student conduct work. Students have rights during the conduct process, and some of those rights include being notified of the alleged policy violation and being given a decision on the case. This can be done through a letter template that is already uploaded into the judicial database. An example of an investigation form includes, but is not limited to, a document that a student conduct officer uses to summarize the student's testimony during a student investigation. This form can then be sent to the student to verify its validity and accuracy. Having pre-made forms and templates needed for the student investigation will help the conduct process run smoothly and assists in keeping the conduct process consistent and fair by ensuring the students' rights are always being given. These forms should be updated on an annual basis led by the supervisor and with input from newcomers and old-timers.

Shadowing, Reverse Shadowing and Debriefing with Old-Timers in the Office

The data showed an overwhelming response by participants to shadowing as one of the main ways they described learning their roles in the workplace, specifically when it came to conducting student investigations. The theoretical framework for this study, legitimate peripheral participation, asserts that “social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place,” and as such, shadowing gives conduct officers the opportunity to observe what is expected in the role and practice their own style and approach (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 14). I suggest newcomer conduct officers shadow their supervisors and at least two colleagues in their office (if applicable) to see different approaches to student investigations. This should happen within the first two months of the new conduct officers’ hiring. However, as shown in the introduction of this chapter, shadowing someone incompetent in student conduct work and who has no value in the education of our students will not serve the newcomer who is transitioning into an effective conduct officer. This will be discussed further in one of the following recommendations for practice.

Shadowing should include all steps of the conduct process as defined by the supervisor (i.e. how to utilize the judicial database, how to conduct an investigation, etc.). Even if the new conduct officer has previous experience in conduct work, they may not be aware of the ins and outs of their new office. Once the initial phase of shadowing is complete, a supervisor and at least one other colleague should then begin reverse shadowing. This is so that the newcomer can learn and grow from different old-timers in the field and implement advice from seasoned professionals. Reverse shadowing should take place until the supervisor is comfortable with the progress of the newcomer. Debriefing after a student investigation should always be an option for the newcomer, as each student investigation is different and may require further discussion.

Participants shared that reverse shadowing and debriefing both served as helpful and supportive to learning their job roles.

Connect to the Mission and Vision of the Conduct Office

As I examined the data for this study, I found it interesting that not one participant mentioned the mission and vision of the office as a way in which they learned in the workplace. Most student conduct offices, or at least the institution itself, will have a vision and/or mission statement that serves as the foundation for the operations of the office. Though none of the participants mentioned an office mission or vision as supportive to their learning, participants did acknowledge their own values and morals as informative to their learning, especially when faced with situations in the workplace that went against their core beliefs. Because of this, I suggest supervisors consistently refer back to the mission and vision of the office to give rationales and to add sustenance to the decisions and practices of the office. We all have different belief systems and moral compasses, and having an open discussion about shared values in the community of practice can create a safe space for newcomers and old-timers to develop a deeper understanding of one another and how it connects to the job role.

Since participants found a deep need to connect their own values and morals to the workplace, I suggest supervisors and those who train conduct officers to connect the beliefs of the conduct officers with those of the office to create common ground between the work and the newcomer. One example of this can be done during the hiring and interview process. I recommend asking the candidates about their conduct philosophy and approach to student conduct work. I encourage the hiring team to share with the candidate the mission and vision of the office and to ask the candidate to share how the mission and vision coincide with their own approach to the work. If the values of the conduct officer, the mission and vision of the office,

and the approach to student conduct work are aligned, this can create more buy in from the newcomer as they navigate the workplace, which can help support learning. Lastly, this recommendation assumes that the practices of the workplace are already aligned with the mission and vision of the office prior to the newcomers' arrival. If there are inconsistencies between the foundational principles and the actual practices of the office, this can potentially create a toxic work environment for the newcomer. For example, if a conduct office claims to give sanctions that are developmental to the student as a part of their core principles, but in practice, the office assigns punitive sanctions such as long suspensions for minor policy violations, this may create a work environment that is out of integrity and honesty. This in turn may stifle learning for the newcomer, as it may cause them to feel unsafe and misled.

Access to Open and Nurturing Supervisors, Colleagues, and Mentors

In order to have a thriving workplace that supports learning, I highly recommend recruiting professional staff and practitioners who are committed to creating a safe and healthy environment so learning can take place. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), "learning, as it were, [is] distributed among co-participants, not a one-person act" (p. 15). The interaction between members of the community of practice is where learning thrives (Lave & Wenger, 1991). All of the participants described their fellow conduct officers as one of the most important factors that could either hinder or support their learning. Student conduct work cannot be taught in a vacuum, nor can student conduct work be done effectively on the individual level. Collaboration with colleagues and supervisors who are easily accessible, willing to listen, build relationships of trust and support, allow for mistakes without harsh penalty, and show concern about the lives of their team inside and outside of the office will create a conducive and encouraging environment for learning. Teaching the day to day of the job is the bare minimum.

Learning is an ongoing practice and having supervisors and colleagues that are all in and supportive of one another can make the newcomer feel safe and secure, thus helping them learn.

Newcomer and mid-level conduct coordinators may also find it beneficial to have mentors and peers in the field that may or may not work at the same institution. Only one participant shared having access to a mentor outside of their institution who was supportive to their learning. The other participants of this study did not have access to or did not mention a specific mentor of any kind. Likewise, none of the participants mentioned having access to a group of peers that were supportive to their learning and learning their roles. In this case, accessibility was the barrier. I suggest newcomer or mid-level conduct officers who are in need of more support to find a mentor or peer group. This can be done through joining a professional organization (i.e. Association for Student Conduct Administrators), attending conferences or workshops (i.e. Gehring Academy), or simply emailing a person you admire in the field and asking for guidance. As stated above, Lave and Wenger (1991) underscore the idea of learning as a collaborative effort, one that cannot be done alone. Having colleagues to lean on is imperative to learning the role of the conduct officer. Having new perspectives from other professionals in the field can help refine your own approach to the role.

Ask Your Conduct Officers How They Learn, Tell Your Supervisors What You Need

As a precaution, only using the aforementioned training practices in the workplace may not be beneficial. What helps one conduct officer learn may not be a useful strategy for another. This work takes discretion from those in the leadership positions tasked with incubating learning in the workplace. I suggest those who train conduct officers to simply ask in what ways does the newcomer learn in the workplace. For example, only one participant in this study mentioned a supervisor directing them to record themselves during a student investigation so the participant

could then review the recording and find areas of improvement. Though this did not come up amongst any of the other participants, this particular participant found the approach as helpful and beneficial to their learning. Another method of training that did not come up amongst any of the research participants was the use of literature as helpful to learning. Though no participant identified the literature as a supportive resource, this does not mean it is not a viable method of learning. I suggest supervisors have a conversation with the newcomer within the first two weeks of employment about their preferred method of learning. This can help give the supervisor a foundation upon which to teach, train and evaluate the new employee.

I also recommend newcomer and mid-level conduct officers have agency over their own roles by asking their supervisors questions, sharing their concerns, and giving recommendations for areas of improvement. This gives the supervisor an idea of what is needed to refine and enhance the culture of the work environment. When a conduct officer shares what is needed to be successful in their role, it can create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. This is an ongoing process and should not be regulated to any particular time frame. I must also acknowledge that not every supervisor is well-meaning or supportive. This can be seen in my own personal stories shared in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5. Conduct officers should use their own discretion when working with supervisors who are not a safe space.

Context for the Study

To add further depth to the recommendations above, I wanted to give more context to the lived experiences of the research participants and show how this may have impacted the data. All of the research participants of this study were trained in conduct offices located in the Southern, Midwestern and Northeastern regions of the United States. This study took a narrative inquiry approach, and six research participants were interviewed for data collection. Each individual

participant reported being trained in conduct related work located in one to five different states (some participants learned conduct work in one state while others mentioned learning conduct in several different states). As such, this sample size did not span the entirety of the United States and may not give a full picture of the perceptions of conduct officers across the nation. There are also regional differences in the United States that vary in their politic stances, ethical practices, moral tenets, and approach to communication. This may have affected the data, as student conduct systems, judicial processes, and thus the training of conduct officers, may differ dependent on the geographical region. The specific regions in which all of the research participants learned their conduct role was not included in Table 1. (located in Chapter 4) in order to further protect the identities of the research participants.

Another condition of the study came from my method of data collection. As seen in Chapter 3, the first couple of participants were found through my personal network. I handpicked these participants myself, knowing their prior knowledge of the field and their previous or current roles as conduct officers. These participants then served as key informants and referred me to other conduct officers that may be interested in the study. Because of this, I had one to two degrees of separation from each of my participants. This may have impacted the data, as I may have unknowingly shared similar values and ethics with each participant due to our close proximity and relationship. The themes that emerged from the stories shared by these participants may not have come forward with participants who did not share my similar values, beliefs, and vicinity.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because this was a qualitative study, I would be interested to see a quantitative research approach in order to reach a larger sample size. I suggest using a deductive approach and

utilizing the themes from this study, and themes from other workplace learning research, to see if they are relevant to a wider pool of conduct officers. I would also suggest future research that examines the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) Knowledge and Skills document that serves as a guide and framework for the student conduct profession and its relation to workplace learning. In late August and early September of 2024, I contacted Jeremy Zilmer, Ed.D., the Gehring Academy Chair, and Anton Ward-Zanotto, Ph.D, the ASCA Research Committee Co-Chair. I sent both Dr. Zilmer and Dr. Ward-Zanotto separate emails asking which standards and competencies they utilized for both Gehring and ASCA related workshops, seminars, and trainings. They shared utilizing the ASCA Knowledge and Skills document as well as the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS). I found it fascinating that not one of my participants mentioned any standards or competencies as helpful and supportive to their learning. Even when I asked the participants about anything that helped their learning outside of the workplace, national standards and competencies were not mentioned. When I asked participants directly about standards and competencies, most said they have heard of them, and may have even seen them, but that the competencies were not a way in which they learned their roles. I suggest future research that dovetails national standards and workplace learning to examine the interplay between the two. When reviewing my data, there did not seem to be a correlation, but I would like to see this studied further. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I was not trained in any way with standards or competencies, and this served as the impetus of my study. I wanted to see how conduct officers learned, specifically in the workplace, since national conferences and standards were not given to me as an opportunity to learn my role. Though these conferences and standards do exist, I believe further research into the practicality and the application of the competencies themselves in the workplace could help strengthen our approach

to training. It is great that the standards exist, but if they are not being utilized properly, I wonder if their purpose is merely performative.

Another interesting finding in my study was the similar ages of my participants. Five out of six participants were in the Millennial generation, while one participant was on the cusp of the millennials and Generation X. I would like to see further research on Generation Z conduct officers who are, at the time of this study, in their early to mid 20s. They may have a completely different take on their workplace learning experiences due to their younger age. Lastly, I wonder if institution type is a factor in how student conduct officers learn in the workplace. Each participant learned about student conduct work at four-year public or private institutions, but five out of six of the participants were not employed as a full-time conduct officer at other types of institution, including but not limited to, same-sex colleges, historically black colleges, trade/technical schools, or two year/community colleges. One participant was employed at a Hispanic serving institution. I suggest conducting research that examines a wider range of institutions to add to the depth of the literature and show a different perspective of conduct officers. The specific types of institutions where each research participant learned their roles were not included in Table 1. (in Chapter 4) to further protect the identity of the participants.

Conclusion

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to understand the perceptions of student conduct officers, and specifically, explore how the student conduct officers view their own learning in the workplace. The study examined how the student conduct administrators were prepared for their roles because of their relationship with and collaboration in the workplace. I utilized the analytical perspective legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as a framework for this study. After analyzing the data, it was clear that all of the conduct officers

interviewed for this study saw workplace learning as an essential piece of their training. Learning permeated through their workplaces, and the conduct officers described their lived experiences with workplace learning through four main themes: (a) shadowing a more seasoned conduct officer during student investigations, (b) meaningful interactions with colleagues and supervisors, (c) navigating the incongruence between personal values and established practices, and (d) access to artifacts. All of the conduct officers' experiences coalesced into one overarching assertion: learning and the workplace are indivisible. In other words, there was an evidential declaration found in the data that identified the workplace as an essential element of learning.

This study does not support the idea that other forms of workplace learning, that were not identified in this study, are of lesser importance than what came forward in the data. I acknowledge that every student conduct officer has a different learning style and that opportunities outside of the workplace can be suitable to assist conduct officers in performing and understanding their job roles. However, the focus of this study was to shed light on the workplace itself as a hub for learning, as the workplace has been seemingly overlooked in the literature and research of student conduct administrators. The data revealed student conduct officers used their own preferences and beliefs in combination with what they experienced in the workplace to create their unique approach to the work. Conduct officers rejected the idea of simply replicating exactly what they observed amongst their peers in the workplace, and instead, made the work their own. Whether student conduct administrators were encouraged by their fellow colleagues or supervisors to have autonomy of their work, or by the conduct officer's own volition, each conduct officer made a choice to take a nurturing approach to their work to uphold the integrity of the field and to respect the rights of their students. The conduct officers

acknowledged their colleagues and supervisors, specifically those who were kind, accessible, and informed, as helpful to learning in the workplace, specifically during shadowing and meaningful collaboration. Whether through a quick, impromptu phone call, a shadowing observation, or a scheduled weekly one on one meeting, the conduct officers of this study weighed these informal and formal interactions as equal and vital to their learning. Student conduct administrators also found valuable artifacts in the workplace that made their jobs easier as supportive to their learning, such as online judicial databases and conduct manuals.

It is up to the student conduct field to begin to acknowledge the workplace as an integral part of the training for student conduct officers. Those who lead and train student conduct officers can begin to build workplaces that enhance learning through the creation of essential artifacts, implementing shadowing experiences through observation and collaboration, connecting the mission and vision of the office to workplace activities, hiring competent and nurturing colleagues and supervisors, and allowing the conduct officers themselves to have a say in how they learn. The student conduct field thrives when student conduct officers are properly trained and understand their job roles. It is up to us to create a lasting difference.

Reflexivity

When I first started to analyze the data that came from the interviews I had with the research participants, I found myself compelled to tell their stories in a way that evoked the true essence of what each conduct officer intended to express. To be honest, I found this task a bit daunting. “How could I give these stories the justice they deserve?” I thought to myself. I spoke with my grandmother on the phone, shortly after finishing Chapter 4, and finally told her what I was studying and what my dissertation was about. After explaining how I wanted to ensure future student conduct practitioners are learning their roles properly, how I wanted to honor the

stories of my participants, how I felt a sense of responsibility to help transform the training opportunities for conduct officers, she was quiet for a moment. She then shared, bluntly, “You know, that does not sound interesting at all.” I laughed out loud, and then we both laughed together. From the outside in, this topic, this dissertation, may seem unassuming or as my grandmother shared, not interesting. But I think that’s as it should be. Student conduct work is for those who are passionate about the craft, for those who are passionate about making a difference for our students and for fellow conduct officers. Student conduct work is not for the faint of heart. It can feel like a thankless field, filled with more lows than highs. But it is truly rewarding for those practitioners dedicated to helping our students find their way and those dedicated to creating a new vision for our field that highlights the voice of the conduct officers.

The data reinforced my own thoughts about learning in the workplace. It reaffirmed that the workplace is vital to learning our role as conduct officers. National conferences, standards and competencies are important parts of the student conduct field and should not be overlooked or diminished. However, it is my belief that true learning takes place in the work environment itself. My hope is that those who train conduct officers start to explore the workplace as the foundation for learning. Learning and the work environment are intimately connected. When this concept is understood, all future training opportunities can flourish.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this narrative inquiry study is to explore the perception student conduct administrators in the United States have of workplace learning and how it has contributed to understanding and performing their roles. The study seeks to recount the lived experiences of student conduct professionals.

RQ1. How do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace?

1. How did you enter the student conduct field?
 - a. What initially attracted you to the conduct field? How has this changed over time, if at all?
2. How were you initially trained in your student conduct officer role? How did you learn to do student conduct work?
 - a. How did your masters program prepare you for your role as a student conduct administrator, if at all? (i.e. internship or practicum)
 - b. How did the workplace play a role in learning your role as a conduct officer?
3. What stories can you share (if any) about how and where you learned important lessons about student conduct work?
 - a. Tell me about any stories or situations that occurred in the workplace that may have shaped your learning as a student conduct officer.

RQ2. How do student conduct administrators describe how they receive support for learning in the work environment?

4. How did different types of training (i.e. case studies, roleplay, films, etc.) contribute to your learning in the workplace?
 - a. Please share any examples, situations and/or stories where you were able to participate in learning your role as a conduct officer in the workplace.
5. What stories, examples and/or situations can you share that positively or negatively impacted your learning in the workplace?
6. What would you describe as supportive to your learning in the workplace? How so?

- a. How were materials (such as student conduct manual, onboarding document, judicial database etc.) used to help you learn your role as a student conduct officer?
- 7. Who would you describe as supportive to your learning in the workplace? How so?
 - a. How did your supervisor support you in learning your role? Please share any examples, situations and/or stories in which your supervisor supported you in learning your role.
 - b. How did your colleagues support you in learning your role? Please share any examples, situations and/or stories in which your colleagues supported you in learning your role.
- 8. What factors outside of the workplace contributed to your learning your role as a student conduct officer?

Closing question:

- 9. Is there any other important information you would like to share with me that we have not discussed yet?

Interview Protocol
Semi-structured Interview

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Aaron Thompson, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in Student Affairs Leadership. In this interview, we will discuss your lived experience as a student conduct officer, specifically how you learned/are learning in the workplace. The interview will range from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. With consent from the research participant, the interview will be recorded. The recording will be used for transcription and data analysis. Though I may utilize direct quotes from the transcription in my research study, any identifiable information about the participant will not be included. You may choose to leave the interview at any time, as this interview is voluntary. If you have any questions throughout this interview, feel free to share.

APPENDIX B

EMAIL INVITATION TO POTENTIAL RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Subject line: Seeking student conduct officers for a qualitative research study on learning in the workplace.

Hello! My name is Aaron Thompson (pronouns she/her/hers), and I am a doctoral student in the Student Affairs Leadership program at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research study that will explore how student conduct administrators view their learning in the workplace. The findings will examine how learning in the workplace contributes to how student conduct administrators understand and perform their job roles. Your lived experience as a conduct officer is valuable to this study.

Participants will be asked to participate in a 60 minute to 90 minute interview via Zoom. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. All information shared during the interview will remain confidential. As a reminder, your participation is voluntary and you may leave the interview process at any time.

If you are interested in being a research participant, review the following criteria for eligibility in the study:

1. Individual must have been in a **full-time student conduct administrator position** before or at the time of the interview
2. Individuals must have **one to six years** of experience as a student conduct administrator **in a full-time capacity**
3. Participant must have been employed in at least one work environment where **interactions with other student conduct administrators** took place.

If you meet the above criteria and are still interested, please respond to this email with the following:

1. Name
2. Email
3. Years of experience in the student conduct field
4. Years of experience in student affairs (if different from years of experience in student conduct)
5. Current job title and institution

APPENDIX C

FLIER



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

STUDENT CONDUCT OFFICER RESEARCH STUDY

I am conducting a research study that will explore how student conduct administrators view their learning in the workplace. The findings will examine how learning in the workplace contributes to how student conduct administrators understand and perform their job roles. Your lived experience as a conduct officer is valuable to this study!

✕
✕

 **IF INTERESTED, EMAIL:**
aaronthompson07@gmail.com

JOIN NOW!

APPENDIX D

CONSENT LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT LETTER

The Stories of Student Conduct Officers and Their Learning in the Workplace

Dear Participant,

My name is Aaron Thompson and I am a doctoral student in the Counseling and Human Development Services Department at the University of Georgia under the supervision of Dallin George Young, PhD. I am inviting you to take part in a research study.

I am conducting a research study that will explore how student conduct administrators view their learning in the workplace. The findings will examine how learning in the workplace contributes to how student conduct administrators understand and perform their job roles. Your lived experience as a conduct officer is valuable to this study. The research questions that will guide this study are as follows:

- (1) how do student conduct administrators describe how they learn in the workplace
- (2) what factors do student conduct administrators identify as supportive to their learning in the workplace?

I am looking for individuals who fit the following criteria:

- (1) individual must have been in a full-time student conduct administrator position before or at the time of interview
- (2) individuals must have one to six years of experience as a student conduct administrator in a full-time capacity, and
- (3) participant must have been employed in at least one work environment where interactions with other student conduct administrators took place.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one 60-to-90-minute interview via Zoom. This will be the only interview that takes place. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. If I have any follow up questions or any points of clarity

that are needed once the interview is over, I will reach out to you via email for a follow up session that will be no longer than 30 minutes.

Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to take part or stop at any time.

If there are questions that may make you uncomfortable, you can skip these questions if you do not wish to answer them.

Your responses may help us understand how student conduct officers learn in the workplace. This information can then be used to contribute to enhanced training opportunities for student conduct administrators. Limited research was found that gave voice to conduct officers, and my study seeks to fill this gap.

Research records will be labeled with a pseudonym, chosen by the research participant, that is linked to you by a separate list that includes your name. This list will be destroyed once we have finished collecting information from all participants. Once identifiers have been removed, the collected data may be used in future research without additional consent from the research participant.

If you are still interested in participating or have questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at aaronthompson07@gmail.com. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,
Aaron Thompson

This consent letter was adapted from the Institutional Review Board website.

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Tucker Hall, Room 212
310 E. Campus Rd.
Athens, Georgia 30602
706-542-2100 FAX 706-542-5638
IRB@uga.edu
<http://research.uga.edu/hso/irb/>

Human Research Protection Program

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

August 1, 2024

Dear [Dallin Young](#):

On 8/1/2024, the Human Subjects Office reviewed the following submission:

Title of Study:	The Stories of Student Conduct Officers and Their Learning in the Workplace
Investigator:	Dallin Young
Co-Investigator:	Aaron Thompson
IRB ID:	PROJECT00010314
Funding:	None
Review Category:	Exempt 2ii

We have determined that the proposed research is Exempt. The research activities may begin 8/1/2024.

Since this study was determined to be exempt, please be aware that not all future modifications will require review by the IRB. For more information please see Appendix C of the Exempt Research Policy (<https://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/compliance/hso/HRP-033-ExemptResearch.pdf>). As noted in Section C.2., you can simply notify us of modifications that will not require review via the "Add Public Comment" activity.

Before beginning the work of the project, it is your responsibility as the PI to ensure that all activities and materials are compliant with the HRPP, including without limitation the following policies and other requirements: [Exempt Research Policy](#) (this includes that the consent process must comply with the elements in Appendix B of the Exempt Research Policy), [Investigator Training](#), [Students as Research Participants](#), [Participant Incentive and Compensation](#), [Participant Selection and Recruitment](#), [Deception or Incomplete Disclosure](#), [Research with Vulnerable Populations](#), [Internet Research](#), [HIPAA](#), [FERPA](#), [Use of External Sites](#), [Transnational Research](#), [EITS sensitive data policy](#), [GDPR](#).

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In addition, the PI must ensure full compliance with any institutional requirements related to data, materials, and confidentiality. Please initiate any related NDA – Non-Disclosure Agreements, MTA – Material Transfer Agreements, or DUA/DSA – Data Use/Sharing Agreements here: <https://research.uga.edu/gateway/patents-licensing/material-transfer-requests-confidential-disclosure-requests/>. If you have any questions about these agreements, or if any other agreement (such as an MOU or similar) is required for the project, please reach out to Matt Hall, Assistant Counsel for Research, mattbhal@uga.edu.

All active Exempt research projects fall under the HRPP Quality Assurance Program and may be randomly selected for audit, observation, and other post-approval monitoring. Failure to comply with the above institutional policies or to respond to post-approval monitoring requests may result in findings of [noncompliance](#) and associated corrective action requirements.

A progress report will be requested prior to 8/1/2029. Before or within 30 days of the progress report due date, please submit a progress report or study closure request. Submit a progress report by navigating to the active study and selecting Progress Report. The study may be closed by selecting Create Version and choosing Close Study as the submission purpose.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Jennifer Queen, Quality Assurance Officer
Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia