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Student Development Theory and the Transformation of Student Affairs in the 1970s

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Abstract

Student development theory (SDT) is a diverse corpus of academic and popular psychology with real-world application to the maturation of college and university students. It originated during the campus upheavals of the 1960s as part of a collective effort to reconcile restive students to mass higher education and modern technological society. Then, in the 1970s, SDT was implemented and refined by an ambitious generation of student affairs professionals eager for institutional influence and academic legitimacy. By providing an animating moral and intellectual purpose to the bureaucratic sundering of student affairs divisions from academic affairs divisions, SDT abetted a lasting institutional and cultural change in the organization of the modern university circa 1970. As a discourse of therapeutic empowerment, SDT has had an enduring influence on the daily practice of student affairs administration in the five decades since.

Keywords: student development theory; student affairs; university administration; college students; 1970s higher education

Although much has been written about the 1960s-era student protests and campus upheavals that defined a new epoch in US higher education, scholars have yet to devote sustained attention to the less dramatic decade that followed. A common cliché is that 1970s students, in contrast to their 1960s predecessors, reverted from idealism to careerism and from selfless activism to self-centered "meism."[1] An era of protest for peace and racial justice gave way to an era of lifestyle fads, looking out for number one, or simply goofing off.

But such stereotypes are unfair. The 1970s were a time when the needs of students decisively reshaped the mass, research-driven, depersonalized enterprise that Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, had dubbed the "multiversity."[2] The 1970s witnessed a significant diversification of the college-going population, especially

[1] On "meism" and other stereotypes, see Arthur Levine, *When Dreams and Heroes Died: A Portrait of Today's College Student* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980).

[2] Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

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when measured by class and gender, but also by race and ethnicity. Women, minorities, first-generation students, and adult learners all pushed to expand access to higher learning. Policy changes like Pell Grants and Title IX opened the gates further. A new cohort dubbed the "New Students" or the "New Outsiders" hailed from backgrounds with less prior socialization to college life.[3] As the postwar enrollment boom receded, colleges and universities facing a perilous financial climate had every incentive to welcome them. A raft of curricular innovations, co-curricular experiments, pedagogical reforms, and even a few entirely new institutions were launched in anticipation.[4]

It fell to a new generation of student affairs professionals to manage and oversee the reconciliation of a more diverse and demanding student body to the mass university and to modern life beyond. Here was an occupation whose influence and importance were undeniably growing, but whose members also had long felt overlooked, underappreciated, and occupationally marginalized. Between the 1960s and the 1970s, this cohort of administrators pivoted from deep insecurity to an idealistic ambition to remake higher education around the needs of students. Discarding the antiquated paternalism of *in loco parentis*, they recognized contemporary students not as immature charges to be disciplined, but as autonomous—if still developing—adults in need of expert guidance. The profession staked its legitimacy on a new corpus of quasi-academic "student development theory" (SDT), fashioned out of social-scientific disciplines such as psychology and sociology. Practical guidebooks for student affairs professionals were soon filled with academic lingo and references to Freud, Erikson, and other scholars. SDT's advocates had deeply imbibed the 1960s-era critique of technocratic mass society and the counterculture discourse of therapeutic empowerment that arose in response. Embedding new values, precepts, and practices in their daily work, they revolutionized the practice of student affairs administration across the country, and in ways that persist to the present.

This article argues that SDT catalyzed a lasting institutional and cultural change in the organization of the modern university circa 1970. At a time when student affairs divisions were being bureaucratically sundered from academic affairs divisions, SDT infused moral urgency, intellectual excitement, and bounding aspiration into an otherwise mundane administrative restructuring. Over the decade, a newly confident cadre of SDT advocates capitalized on three intertwining trends to consolidate and professionalize newly created or newly reformed student affairs administrations. First, they built on an "academic revolution" that had already empowered faculty in the scholarly disciplines by asserting that their own professional practice likewise amounted to a form of applied disciplinary knowledge meriting institutional influence and respect.[5] Second, they navigated threats of an "academic depression" that

[3]Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1987), 245–88.

[4]Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, Reform on Campus: Changing Students, Changing Academic Programs: A Report and Recommendations (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972); Ann Heiss, An Inventory of Academic Innovation and Reform (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1973).

[5]For the "academic revolution" in higher education, see Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

forced higher education into retrenchment after decades of postwar expansion by aligning SDT with fashionable new management doctrines to meet senior administrators' austerity demands.[6] Third, they used their growing organizational clout to secure a mandate to address the demographic and cultural changes attending the advent of the New Students and the diversification of the college-going population. Crystallized as a self-renewing ideology, SDT helped student affairs divisions to emerge as both a complement and a rival to what today's administrators often tellingly refer to, in tacit acknowledgment of this bifurcation, as the "academic side of the house."[7]

For all the opportunities that the 1970s brought students, it was a trying decade for institutions. Recent historiography stresses the external financial, demographic, and political pressures under which they labored, albeit with far less attention to how universities responded to them internally. John Thelin and Roger Geiger, for instance, both view the decade as a difficult transition between a postwar golden age that ended in the late 1960s and the reorientation and halting revival that commenced in the 1980s. For the "troubled giant" (Thelin) that American higher education had become by 1970, "surviving the Seventies" (Geiger) required coping with tighter budgets, softening enrollments, challenges to legitimacy, new demands for relevance, and a disruptive shift in federal priorities from generous faculty research funding to policies instead catering to students, from Title IX to the precursors of Pell Grants.[8] Christopher Loss's work stands as an exception to this historiographical trend. He has highlighted issues of diversity, identity, and citizenship to chronicle the 1970s "rights revolution" that benefited female and minority students. But he, too, focuses on wider political and social forces, leaving open the question of what institutional adaptations they brought about, particularly with respect to the needs of students.[9]

Gaps persist because internal changes to student affairs and student life remain largely uncharted for the 1970s. A well-developed literature on twentieth-century deans of men, deans of women, deans of students, and the student personnel movement tapers off with the profession's crisis in the mid-1960s.[10] Likewise, the vibrant study of the college-going population, though driven by Helen Horowitz's pathbreaking account of campus life that culminates in the 1970s, attends primarily to earlier

[6]For the "academic depression," see Earl Frank Cheit, *The New Depression in Higher Education—Two Years Later* (Berkeley, CA: Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973), ERIC ED088360.

[7]For one example of the pervasive use of this term, see Darby Roberts, "Academic and Student Affairs Sides of the House: Can We Have an Open Concept Learning Design?," National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, January 2017, https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Viewpoint-Roberts.pdf.

[8]John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 317–41; Roger Geiger, *American Higher Education since World War II: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 217–65. In very much the same vein, see Ellen Schrecker, *The Lost Promise: American Universities in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[9]Christopher P. Loss, *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 165–234.

[10]Michael S. Hevel, "Toward a History of Student Affairs: A Synthesis of Research, 1996-2015," *Journal of College Student Development* 57, no. 7 (Oct. 2016), 844–62; Michael D. Coomes and Janice J. Gerda, "'A Long and Honorable History': Student Affairs in the United States," in *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration*, ed. George S. McClellan, Jeremy Stringer, and Associates, 4th ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 3–23.

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periods.[11] Above all, the dynamics of higher education administration *tout court* have been largely neglected by historians, and left instead to sociologists and policy scholars.[12] When Thelin notes at the end of his study on 1960s student life that "instead of an academic revolution, higher education after 1970 underwent a managerial revolution," he pinpoints one source of the decade's drama and significance.[13] A new frontier for research awaits scholars curious about how administrative culture changed with the times. Certainly the moral concerns that animated college administrators as late as the 1920s, and whose marginalization in the modern university was traced a generation ago by Julie Reuben, returned with a vengeance during the 1960s and 1970s.[14] This is particularly true for student affairs administrators, who engaged in a moral campaign through their professional practice under the aegis of an academic theory.

SDT emerged at a point when a new and largely untold story of institutional ferment begins. To ground that story in the history of ideas, this article draws on three primary-source anthologies of short pieces by organizational leaders, scholarly experts, and practicing administrators in the student affairs profession. Two of these collections focus on the 1960s and 1970s while the third canvasses the entire twentieth century, but with a clear emphasis on these pivotal decades.[15] Totaling roughly 1,500 pages, and compiled with no particular bias or agenda on the part of their editors, they aim to orient student affairs professionals to their own prior history and then-current debates. These anthologies draw heavily from the journals of the field's two major professional associations, NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) and ACPA (American College Personnel Association)—journals that I, too, have consulted and cite. Providing a fuller picture of contemporary professional, institutional, demographic, and policy trends are a handful of task force reports, textbooks, handbooks, and monographs.

SDT was a movement championed by the profession's establishment, not just its up-and-comers. The fifty or so authors cited herein were largely White, largely male, and largely faculty administrators—that is, professors who straddled scholarship and

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[11] Michael S. Hevel, "A Historiography of College Students 30 Years after Helen Horowitz's *Campus Life*," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, vol. 32, ed. Michael Paulsen (New York: Springer 2017), 419–84. A few works on 1970s college life are discussed in Michael S. Hevel and Heidi Jaeckle, "Trends in the Historiography of American College Student Life: Populations, Organizations, and Behaviors," in *Rethinking Campus Life: New Perspectives on the History of College Students in the United States*, ed. Christine Ogren and Marc Van Overbeke (New York: Springer, 2017), 11–36.

[12] For one classic and one recent work within this large literature, see Robert Birnbaum, *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1988); and Steven Brint, *Two Cheers for Higher Education: Why American Universities Are Stronger Than Ever—and How to Meet the Challenges They Face* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[13] John R. Thelin, *Going to College in the Sixties* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 167.

[14] Julie A. Reuben, The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 230–66.

[15] Audrey Rentz, ed., *Student Affairs: A Profession's Heritage*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1994); Hilda Owens, Charles Witten, and Walter Bailey, eds., *College Student Personnel Administration: An Anthology* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1982); and Roy Giroux et al., eds., *College Student Development Revisited: Programs, Issues, and Practices* (Washington, DC: American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1979).

hands-on management, not workaday practitioners. While some were early in their careers and clearly energized by 1960s-era activism, most had attained (or would soon attain) leadership positions in professional organizations and/or their home institutions. Notably, they hailed from a range of schools, from small private colleges to major public flagships, showing that the challenges faced by 1970s-era students were not confined to large, impersonal multiversities. But in every other demographic respect, this cohort of reformers significantly lagged the diversification of the student body whose maturation they bid to oversee. Although initially naive about the particularities of a new generation of students, they founded SDT on universalist claims about human psychology that proved well suited to the expansion of administrative power.

When these authors spoke, they did so with institutional authority and experience. Admittedly, most of their writings were occasional pieces, and individually undistinguished, save for a few landmark works given close attention below. But taken together, they chart the contours of a powerful new discourse holding that academic findings on human development ought to inform, even dictate, the division of labor and the allocation of power within colleges and universities. Their words warrant extensive quotation even if they do not often repay intensive close reading. I therefore juxtapose different sources frequently, often several extending to the length of a paragraph, to show how a chorus of professional consensus arose from many distinct voices. I then turn systematically to critical and minority perspectives to further document the agenda-setting influence of that consensus. The payoff is a set of insights into organizational politics and administrative culture in a quarter of the university that since the 1970s has grown apart from the central, faculty-dominated missions of teaching and research, but where academic knowledge still counts as the coin of the realm.

Student Affairs Divisions

The rebellions against authority that rocked so many campuses between the mid-1960s and early 1970s were often directed against "The Administration." Famously symbolized by the computer punch cards required to register for classes, universities' student services operations exacerbated the anonymization and bureaucratization of the student experience that so many protestors rebelled against. So, too, it was in administrative roles and structures that student activism made a pervasive, durable institutional impact on higher education. Deans of students, who had previously served as either disciplinarians to misbehaving undergraduates or avuncular guides to students in distress, gave way during this period to vice presidents of student affairs (VPSAs). Hired as administrators and managers, VPSAs (or similarly titled senior positions) oversaw an expanding array of services for students rather than interacting directly with them. Deans of students, as advocates and intermediaries, had often been caught in the middle when students attacked administrators. By contrast, vice presidents *belonged* to central administration, and were expected to handle tricky situations with bureaucratic professionalism and arm's-length detachment. As late as the mid-1970s, the typical VPSA was a White male, aged thirty to fifty. Only in the 1980s would the student affairs profession come to be seen as a route for women to advance administratively, including into vice presidencies of student affairs, at a time when

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academic affairs and business affairs divisions remained overwhelmingly the province of men.[16]

More broadly, it was during the 1960s and the 1970s that a new organizational model for providing student services was lastingly established across American higher education. This was one in which VPSAs, typically reporting directly to a president or chancellor, supervised a panoply of mid-level administrative offices dedicated to distinct functions like housing and dining, health and counseling centers, or extracurricular activities. Whereas these offices had grown in haphazard, uncoordinated fashion in the postwar decades, they were now gathered together in a single coherent division instead of reporting piecemeal to various university leaders for idiosyncratic historical reasons. The VPSA was a full-time administrator, expected to show skill in organizing, implementing, and evaluating strategic initiatives, rather than a parental presence who had been co-opted from the ranks of the faculty, as was traditionally the case with deans of students. Circa 1970, about 70 percent of them did still tend to come from the faculty ranks, but most often from a particular place: the school of education, which formed a ready-made conduit for the academic psychology that, as we will see, underpins SDT. (The discipline of psychology itself came in a distant second to education among VPSAs with doctorates.) By 1972 "student affairs" had surpassed "dean of students" in job titles for the first time. Deans of students of course continued to exist as overseers of student behavior, misconduct, and crisis management, but began to report to VPSAs along with other sub-unit directors.[17]

Most importantly, in university organization charts, student affairs divisions were henceforth located at the topmost (cabinet) level alongside academic affairs divisions (led by provosts, and housing academic schools and colleges) and business affairs divisions. Only at 8 percent of institutions surveyed in 1974 did the principal student affairs officer report to the provost; nearly 80 percent reported to presidents or chancellors. Student affairs also dramatically expanded its bureaucratic turf at the measurable expense of academic affairs and business affairs. Counseling and psychotherapy, placement testing, student health, student employment, and financial aid were among the core services that migrated to student affairs divisions from other parts of the university during this time. Residence halls, dining services, and student unions, all enormous revenue sources, were wrested away from business affairs. And since these were budgetarily classified as auxiliaries, student affairs divisions collected and managed revenues from room and board (in the case of housing and dining) and franchise fees (in the case of student unions) held off the books of the general-fund budgets that served core academic functions, often enjoying a good deal of spending discretion. Added to these traditional core functions was a panoply of novel initiatives launched

[16]Everett Chandler, "Student Affairs Administration in Transition (1973)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 396–405; James J. Rhatigan, "From the People Up: A Brief History of Student Affairs Administration," in George S. McClellan, Jeremy Stringer, and Associates, *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration*, 3rd. ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 3–18, with comments on female VPSAs on p. 14.

[17]Burns Crookston and Glenn Atkyns, "A Study of Student Affairs: The Principal Student Affairs Officer, the Functions, the Organization at American Colleges and Universities 1967-1972. A Preliminary Summary Report. Technical Report No. 3," April 15, 1974, ERIC ED095762, pp. 10–20.

specifically to cater to the diverse needs of the New Students: minority-serving and affirmative action programs, programs for veterans, and career placement centers.[18]

By the 1970s, the growing organizational schism between student affairs and academic affairs had become final. Since that time, these twin faces of the university's core educational mission have existed as separate bureaucracies, only coming together at the pinnacle of the university hierarchy. To be sure, this was decades from the student affairs empire-building of the kind that today funds lavish recreation centers, residence halls, food courts, lazy rivers, and other student amenities. But the organizational template for that phenomenon dates precisely to this period. Students' intellectual and personal paths through universities have become largely bifurcated since the 1970s, with the academic curriculum and the student experience having evolved separately since then, both practically and conceptually. For precisely this reason, it is all the more telling that student affairs practitioners cleaved to academic modes of discourse at the very moment that they were organizationally liberated from academic oversight.

The Student Affairs Profession

Turning from the organization of student affairs divisions to the collective, composite discourse of student affairs leaders and thinkers reveals a profession chafing to assume a more expansive role, and drawing on behavioral science in a bid to secure greater legitimacy in the eyes of their academic colleagues. Well before widespread campus turbulence erupted in the late 1960s, such leaders proclaimed that the student affairs profession was suffering from an "identity crisis."[19] Conceding that students tended to get lost in large university bureaucracies, even as they navigated a "revolution in morality" around sex and drugs, front-line student service providers were called upon to solve an ever more complex array of student problems, yet felt institutionally disempowered.[20] Faculty hardly regarded them as partners in educating the whole student or creating a thriving educational community.[21] By its nature as a helping profession, student affairs work tended to select for personalities who were focused on students' immediate practical and emotional needs, who were altruistic rather than detached, and who were doers rather than thinkers. Bold reformers were needed, some said, maybe even a few martyrs in the mold of Clark Kerr.[22] Frankly, the profession needed more "brainpower," practitioners who aspired to intellectual excellence, maybe even some who disliked working with people but who were fascinated by institutions and

[18] Crookston and Atkyns, "Study of Student Affairs," 22–31, 37–39. On the continuation of these trends into the early 1980s, see Johnny Wolfe, "A Study of Current Organizational Structures & the Perceived Impact of Selected Problems of Student Personnel Services in Selected Colleges & Universities," (master's thesis, Western Kentucky University, 1983), https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/3011, 29–35.

[19] Barbara A. Kirk, "Identity Crisis—1965 … ACPA Presidential Address (1965)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 202–9.

[20] E. G. Williamson, "Some Unresolved Problems in Student Personnel Work (1967)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 229–34.

[21] Elizabeth A. Greenleaf, "How Others See Us … ACPA Presidential Address (1968)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 235–44.

[22] T. R. McConnell, "Student Personnel Services - Central or Peripheral?," *NASPA Journal* 8, no. 1 (1970), 55–63.

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how to change them.[23] Yet, two decades after the high-water mark of optimism after World War II, student affairs seemed a "profession stillborn"—without respect, without organization, and without a body of scholarly literature to undergird its claims.[24] The "planless gerrybuilding" of student services, with different functions randomly accreted over postwar decades, did little to bring prominence or coherent institutional influence.[25]

Despair and insecurity metamorphosed into optimism and ambition, however, when student affairs leaders began to imagine new roles for themselves and their profession. The academic prestige of the behavioral sciences offered ready-made remedies for higher education's growing pains, and the college campus an ideal laboratory for experimentation and the implementation of disciplinary findings. The student personnel worker, according to the new perspective, should thus become a "behavioral scientist whose subject matter is the student and whose socio-psychological sphere is the college."[26] Manipulating students as test subjects was avowedly a part of the strategy. Residence hall directors might, for example, survey the scholarly literature, conduct experiments on their charges, and synthesize findings to arrive at "the best possible way to manage group living."[27] More than mere Good Samaritans dispensing practical advice to those in distress, service providers would become experts at moral, ethical, and psychological development.[28] Graduating into philosophically trained mediators of individual emancipation, these newfangled student development specialists needed to don many hats, as psychologists, administrators, human relations experts, counselors, and educators—and shed prior roles as disciplinarians.[29]

Student Development Theory

Student development theory was the rich corpus of applied theory and case studies that arose from the profession's inchoate aspirations for relevance and legitimacy. In *Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education*, a fifty-five-page report released in 1972, a task force of the principal national student affairs organization produced a touchstone for SDT's future evolution. Framed around the challenges not just of higher education but of the entire decade—from "future shock" and "nuclear holocaust" to "Jesus freaks" and "women's liberation"—the report claimed to provide "what students

[23] Mary Evelyn Dewey, "The Student Personnel Worker of 1980 (1972)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 303–9.

[24] James F. Penney, "Student Personnel Work: A Profession Stillborn (1969)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 249–56.

[25] John J. Prior, "The Reorganization of Student Personnel Services: Facing Reality," *Journal of College Student Personnel* 14 (May 1973), 202–5.

[26] Ralph F. Berdie, "Student Personnel Work: Definition and Redefinition … ACPA Presidential Address (1966)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 210-18. The quote is on p. 211.

[27] Kate H. Mueller, "Three Dilemmas of the Student Personnel Profession and Their Resolution (1966)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 219–28. The quote is on p. 222.

[28] Philip A. Tripp, "Student Personnel Workers: Student Development Experts of the Future (1966)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 245–48.

[29] Allen E. Ivey and Weston H. Morrill, "Confrontation, Communication, and Encounter: A Conceptual Framework for Student Development (1969-70)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 262–68.

will need to *survive*" in a world of rapidly changing values and mores.[30] New students with new demands, whether those relating to vocational training, self-fulfillment, or lifelong education, required those who were expert at navigating the intersection of individual needs, institutional structures, and epochal societal forces. Beyond managing the extra- and co-curricular domains, student development professionals had to enter the academic inner sanctum. "It is time for student development functions to become curricular—with no prefix added," and for practitioners to "not just play at being academicians but to actually be academicians."[31]

Contemporary psychology enjoyed the twin advantages of academic respectability and widespread appeal in popular culture, especially among young adults. Its cardinal intellectual promise was individual emancipation from the anonymity and impersonality of modern technological life, a view derived from postwar European philosophy and critical theory. An article like "Existentialism and Student Personnel Work" was hardly unusual in invoking continental thinkers from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Heidegger and Sartre in arguing that students are "unique and sacred beings."[32] Among these intellectuals, the émigré psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, who coined the term "identity crisis," was the most often cited, because he so well captured the existential dilemmas that college students shared with the general public. Erikson's eight-stage theory of psychosocial development—basic trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity—was one variety of a broad set of "stage theories" that provided student development professionals with handy templates for tracking the maturation of the typical American eighteen-to-twenty-two-year-old. Abraham Maslow's famous concept of "self-actualization" likewise stood at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of needs beginning with air, water, and food and moving upward from there. The Swiss child psychologist Jean Piaget, yet another stage theorist, articulated an overarching theory: developmental progress might be deliberately programmed via the disruption of an individual's equilibrium, which, if done carefully and humanely, triggered a reorganization and reintegration of the ego at a higher level of maturity.

Student development professionals valued such theories more for their practical applicability rather than for their intellectual consistency. Although Erikson emphasized the "psychosocial" and Piaget the "cognitive," the two thinkers were seen neither as mutually exclusive nor in tension with one another. One counseling professor conceded that stage theories are "weak" yet nonetheless "instrumental in shaping programs and organizational structures."[33] Taxonomists identified no fewer than five clusters of theory circulating in the student affairs profession by the late 1970s.[34] What they had

[30]Robert D. Brown, *Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education: A Return to the Academy* (Washington, DC: American College Personnel Association, 1972), with quotes on pp. 13–15 (emphasis in original).

[31]Brown, *Student Development*, 42. For context, see also pp. 8, 12, 24–26, 39–41, 46.

[32]Alan M. Dahms and Bernard C. Kinnick, "Existentialism and Student Personnel Work (1969)," in Giroux et al., *College Student Development Revisited*, 40-45. The quote is on p. 43.

[33]Clyde A. Parker, "Student Development: What Does it Mean? (1974)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 406–20, at 419.

[34]Lee Knefelkamp, Carole Widick, and Clyde A. Parker, *Applying New Developmental Findings: New Directions for Student Services* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1978), xi.

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in common was a claim of universal applicability to all students. While some theories were more attuned than others to individual variations—whether by temperament, class background, or ethnic origin—none was systematically attentive to race or ethnicity, or even class and gender, to name the predominant concerns of the literature today. "Identity" was an individual achievement rather than a group characteristic, and one whose cultivation gave student affairs professionals purchase over the undifferentiated entirety of the college-going population. A universal psychology of identity, most all SDT theorists agreed, could solve every student problem.

The two foundational texts of SDT were Nevitt Sanford's *Where Colleges Fail: A Study of the Student as a Person* (1967) and Arthur Chickering's *Education and Identity* (1969). Sanford, a follower of Piaget, grounded his approach on a recognition of the "false … dichotomy between the 'intellective' … and 'the non-intellective,'" institutionalized in the divide between faculty educators and psychological support staff. Only by reconciling the cognitive with the emotional could students prepare for their future roles in a rapidly changing world primed for "either utopia or disaster." College education must be based on a holistic, humanistic psychology, informed by our collective cultural heritage and oriented toward "the planning of a *total* educational environment," not just a cluster of discrete student services.[35]

Chickering, for his part, opened his study by drawing a direct connection between the oppressive structures of society and the oppressive structures of the university. In a telling conflation of the structure of higher education with the structure of the modern economy, he argued that "men [*sic*] themselves have become subjects—subjects to majors, to disciplines, to professions, to industries." Frustration and conflict will persist "until men—not materials, nor systems, nor institutions—again become the focus of education."[36] Whereas Sanford followed Piaget, Chickering applied Erikson's identity theory to the panoply of needs and problems that educators confronted in their daily work.[37] Such problems ranged from the curricular and teaching functions that were the province of the faculty to the practicalities of residence hall design that were the domain of student affairs workers. Hypothesis testing—for example, applying Erikson's theories to the grading of student assignments—could provide fodder for future research and experimentation.[38]

The appeal of works by Chickering, Sanford, and others lay more in establishing vistas and agendas for a would-be academic discipline than in providing detailed practical handbooks to aspiring student affairs workers. But the latter is precisely the direction in which the SDT genre evolved in the ensuing years. *The Future of Student Affairs* (1976) by Theodore Miller and Judith Prince, a handbook on the implementation of SDT, marked the maturation of the field's practice-oriented turn. Eclectic in its endorsement of the theories of Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Maslow, and B. F. Skinner,

[35]Nevitt Sanford, *Where Colleges Fail: A Study of the Student as a Person* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1967), xv-xvi, 5–10. The quotes are on pp. xvi, 8, and xv, respectively. Emphasis in original.

[36]Arthur W. Chickering, *Education and Identity* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969), ix–x.

[37]See Sarah Candon, "The Evolution of Three Student Personnel Perspectives and Their Effect on Professional Preparation Programs" (EdD diss., Columbia University, 1981), 95–99, for comparisons among Erikson, Sanford, and Chickering.

[38]See Chickering, *Education and Identity*, 145–57, on hypothesis-testing.

not to mention various business doctrines like management by objectives (MBO) and milieu management (terms we will encounter later), it reads as a compendium of real-world examples intended to show how theory could be tried in practice—and indeed already was.[39]

Miller and Prince showed in dozens of ways how SDT had graduated from idea to institutional reality. A University Residence Environment Scale used psychometric measures to determine students' optimal living conditions.[40] Bowling Green State University had adapted the famed Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to create an omnibus personality inventory for roommate matching. Virginia Commonwealth held an "On Being a Woman" workshop to discuss "life planning" and "education of self," while Project Greek at Iowa State styled fraternities as a laboratory setting for leadership training. The University of California at Davis launched a "multi-ethnic program," while Alverno College, a Catholic liberal arts college in Wisconsin, introduced "liberal learning in a management context" for the "women of today." The Western Interstate Consortium on Higher Education's seven-step "ecosystem design" process aimed "to produce the most compatible transactions between students and their milieu."[41] An entire chapter in Miller and Prince covered program assessment, to convince central administrators (and, ideally, faculty skeptics) of the rigor, effectiveness, and sustainability of these multifarious experiments.[42] A host of sample organizational charts showed student affairs professionals how they might convince presidents and chancellors to support their work.[43] From coast to coast, from large public research universities to small liberal arts colleges, SDT in a few short years had gained not only widespread acceptance but rapid application in a variety of new and ambitious student affairs program offerings. By the early 1980s, it cohered into a comprehensive administrative toolkit extending to such domains as organizational leadership, professional ethics, legal issues, human resources, and fiscal and facilities management.[44]

Navigating the Academic Revolution

When Christopher Jencks and David Riesman published their highly influential book, *The Academic Revolution*, in 1968, they were referring not to a revolution by students in that tumultuous year, but to a rise in faculty power that had been decades in the making.[45] Capitalizing on this trend, student affairs advocates claimed that any occupation anchored in a university must, in addition to all the other trappings of

[39]Theodore Miller and Judith Prince, *The Future of Student Affairs* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976). See Candon, "Evolution," 113–16, on this work's place in the field.

[40]Miller and Prince, *Future of Student Affairs*, 67.

[41]Miller and Prince, *Future of Student Affairs*, 113–17 (Bowling Green), 76 (Virginia Commonwealth), 120 (Iowa State), 122 (Davis), 129–31 (Alverno), 45 (WICHE).

[42]Miller and Prince, *Future of Student Affairs*, 46–71.

[43]See Miller and Prince, *Future of Student Affairs*, 161, for a good example.

[44]Theodore K. Miller, Roger B. Winston, and William R. Mendenhall, eds., *Administration and Leadership in Student Affairs: Actualizing Student Development in Higher Education* (Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development Inc., 1983).

[45]Jencks and Riesman, *Academic Revolution*.

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professionalization—conferences, journals, national membership organizations, codes of ethics, formal training—ground itself in disciplinary knowledge.[46]

But the advocates of SDT went even further. The logical endpoint of their ambition was a view of student affairs practice that deployed scholarly findings to reshape the faculty's own domain: teaching and learning. One argued that faculty must cease to "play God" in the classroom and give students more responsibility for their own education. Just as student personnel workers treated their charges as autonomous adults, it was high time for "discarding *in loco parentis* in our academic institutional culture."[47] A triad of commentators—notably, from a younger generation than was the norm for these sources—ventured directly onto faculty turf, claiming that professors were themselves desperate for guidance from student affairs professionals on how to connect with the bored and disaffected students filling their classrooms. They lambasted the standard fifty-minute lecture as a "forcible penetration of students' minds," indeed "a form of intellectual rape."[48] (The same authors added in the next breath that student affairs professionals must avoid "evangelical commitment" and take pains to appear "more patient and plodding than aggressive.") It might at least be desirable to blur the distinctions between academics and student services, since, in one critic's view, "faculty have all the power which, quite frankly, they do not deserve."[49]

In the great psychological schism between the cognitive-intellectual and the affective-emotional, SDT cast faculty as responsible for the former, which granted student affairs professionals a wide-open field for the latter. While academics focused on the head, student services would focus on the heart. Such a mission was especially appealing to a rising generation of student affairs professionals who had imbibed the countercultural ethos of the late 1960s and early 1970s. "Relaxation training, Yoga, Zen meditation, and psychoanalytic bodily exercises" should enter the standard repertoire of student personnel work.[50] Existential themes, like the "tragic triad" of "pain, guilt, and death" (this from the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl), must be impressed upon young minds as a corrective to the meliorist doctrine of Maslovian self-actualization.[51] Making meaning for students both enveloped and transcended the academic disciplines:

> We must cultivate a kind of intellectual excellence in the art and science of student development, drawing on such derivative disciplines as psychology,

[46] D. S. Carpenter, T. K. Miller, and R. B. Winston Jr., "Toward the Professionalization of Student Affairs (1980)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 512–21.

[47] King V. Cheek Jr., "The Impact of National Trends in Higher Education," *NASPA Journal* 13, no. 1 (1975), 25–32. The quotes are on pp. 29 and 28, respectively.

[48] Robert J. Nash, Kenneth P. Saurman, and George Sousa, "A Humanistic Direction for Student Personnel (1976)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 460–73. The quote is on p. 465. Their rough ages were determined via a Google search on their professional profiles.

[49] Cheek, "Impact," 30.

[50] James C. Hurst and Allen E. Ivey, "Towards a Radicalization of Student Personnel (1971)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 284–90.

[51] Robert J. Nash and Kenneth P. Saurman, "Learning to Earn Is Not Learning to Live: Student Development Educators as Meaning Makers," in Owens et al., *College Student Personnel Administration*, 84–99. The quote is on p. 94.

> anthropology, sociology, history, literature, and economics. It is finally time that student development educators organize within one conceptual system all of the disparate ideas, common sense, practical experience, and future looking that characterize our profession. We must become not hidebound academicians looking at the world through a single, narrow discipline but comprehensivists.[52]

It was not anti-intellectual, advocates claimed, to challenge the faculty's neglect of students' existential needs, the dry abstractions and "reified ideas" of conventional higher education, or even professors' reluctance to share their innermost feelings. Rather, student affairs work represented the pinnacle and the synthesis of a holistic education. "We must help both faculty and students understand that the head and the heart are not incontrovertibly opposed."[53]

The bid to manage the entire campus environment took SDT's ambitions to spaces outside the classroom and beyond the purview of the faculty: to residence halls, counseling centers, student unions, and recreational areas of all sorts. Proposals for "milieu management" and "ecosystem management" deployed behavioralist lingo to modify "all the stimuli that impinge on the students' sensory modalities."[54] Once "control of destiny becomes a problem of selecting spaces for consciousness to occupy," then not only the students' mental health and emotional affect, but also their cognitive and information-processing capacities, could be deliberately and programmatically enhanced.[55] The benefit would be nothing less than the "power to make men and women free," and thus a chance to "explicate the ideals of liberal education in a way never possible before."[56] A Campus Design Center could even be established to conduct questionnaires, polls, needs analyses, and observational studies on student behaviors and consumer preferences so as to reshape their environment, and thus their intellectual maturation, in the preferred direction.[57] Naturally, this was a power that could not be entrusted to just anyone, but, next to the president, the principal student affairs officer seemed the most logical choice. Uniquely among senior administrators, the VPSA's remit encompassed the entire physical campus.[58] Here we come upon the maximalist endpoint of the profession's ambition. For all the distaste they voiced against 1960s-era social engineering, student development theorists had given up none of the desire to manipulate social interactions among the students they oversaw.

Managing the Academic Depression

Even as they challenged the limits of the faculty's primacy over education, SDT's advocates sought patronage from senior administrators who were in a position to either

[52] Nash and Saurman, "Learning to Earn," 98.

[53] Nash and Saurman, "Learning to Earn," 84–99, especially 94, 97–98.

[54] Daniel Wilner et al., *The Ecosystem Model: Designing Campus Environments* (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1973), 5–19, with quotations on p. 6.

[55] James H. Banning, ed., *Campus Ecology: A Perspective for Student Affairs* (Cincinnati: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1978), 28.

[56] Banning, *Campus Ecology*. The quotes are on pp. 20 and 19, respectively.

[57] Banning, *Campus Ecology*, 40–43.

[58] Burns B. Crookston, "Milieu Management (1975)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 448–59.

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grant or deny resources to growing student affairs organizations. Initially, it was a tough sell. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time when fears of an academic depression forced institutional leaders to adapt to changing economics and changing demographics. Diagnoses of the "cost disease" afflicting higher education date to this time, when ever-escalating expenses put even the strongest institutions under financial hardship.[59] Yet amid the new climate of austerity, promising new management doctrines gained rapid favor as a tool to cope with chronic resource constraint. Their most influential variant, management by objectives (MBO), was developed by Peter Drucker in the 1950s and later (re)popularized by George Odiorne and others. MBO was avidly adopted by student affairs professionals to burnish their credentials as effective bureaucrats in the eyes of senior administrators as well as the outside public.[60] With their own roles in flux, they seized upon MBO to graduate from the soft skills of individualized student emotional support to claim to their superiors they were ready to make hard administrative and political choices, act with analytical detachment, and meet external accountability imperatives from legislators and policymakers.[61]

MBO, put simply, attempted to replace the traditional command-and-control hierarchy of bosses and supervisees with an overarching commitment to centrally determined common objectives: recruiting more minority students, for example, or aligning co-curricular programs with specific academic goals. Middle managers were liberated to show their own initiative in implementing these goals. Front-line workers enjoyed latitude to enact their daily tasks with independent judgment and creativity, and their supervisors enjoyed a more detached role in strategic oversight. In theory, petty office politicking was sublimated to higher aims that were derived from shared values and transparent to all. *MBO Goes to College* (1975) showed how popular the trend had become. Its twelve elaborately scripted lessons showed how university administrators could implement MBO in daily practice, even if its prescriptions remained almost entirely devoid of content specific to higher education.[62]

Leftist critics within the student affairs profession charged that MBO was hardly an anodyne bureaucratic toolkit. Rather, it insinuated a "subtle political procedure meant to maintain and strengthen the distribution of power as it currently exists."[63] On this view, front-line practitioners, while nominally liberated from intrusive supervision under MBO, had little say over how their organizations' objectives were formulated and weighed against other values. In the same measure, interpersonal skills in serving students' emotional needs were devalued, as power gravitated more to "mechanical-style

[59] Earl F. Cheit, The New Depression in Higher Education: A Study of Financial Conditions at 41 Colleges and Universities (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971); William G. Bowen, The Economics of Major Private Universities (Berkeley, CA: Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1968).

[60] James Harvey, "Administration by Objectives in Student Personnel Programs," *Journal of College Student Personnel* 13, no. 4 (July 1972), 293–96; Candon, "Evolution," 134-36.

[61] O. Suthern Sims Jr. and Charles E. Kozoll, "A Case for Management by Objectives for Student Development Services," *NASPA Journal* 12, no. 1 (1974), 44–50.

[62] Arthur Deegan and Roger Fritz, *MBO Goes to College: Management by Objectives* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1975).

[63] Kenneth B. Saurman and Robert J. Nash, "MBO, Student Development and Accountability: A Critical Look," *NASPA Journal* 12, no. 3 (1975), 179–89. The quote is on p. 179.

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people with obsessive needs for precision, orderliness, [and] discipline."[64] At its worst, MBO made student personnel workers "political pawns caught in a chess game" that they were fated to lose to managerial bean-counters.[65] One antidote to complicity was an avowedly anti-authoritarian approach. Student affairs needed a few "institutional apostates"—like the crusading consumer-rights advocate Ralph Nader—to "resist the blandishments of those who would make us 'efficiency experts.'"[66] "Any role less than philosopher-activist will probably consign us to a professional oblivion we rightfully deserve."[67]

A progressive variant on MBO was matrix organization, which dispensed entirely with the hierarchical, one-dimensional organizational chart. Each administrative unit, whether in academic affairs, student affairs, or business affairs, was instead to be situated on a two-dimensional grid to facilitate interactions across an institution, not just with near neighbors by discipline or function. As in MBO, unit directors enjoyed great latitude in implementing institution-wide objectives, but more loosely, collaboratively, and spontaneously under the flexibility of a matrix structure. A key corollary was the softening, if not complete erasure, of the boundaries between core academic programs and auxiliary student services. Humanities, behavioral sciences, and sociology departments might be intermixed with student development, minority affairs, and community services offices, all to promote the goal of holistic student growth. Placing a professor on a plane of "mutual organizational equality" with a student affairs staffer was sure to cause consternation, but that was the point. For in order to meet the objectives of the institution, it was critical to break down the "disciplinary license" (read: academic silos) that cloak vested interests under the guise of disciplinary integrity and departmental autonomy.[68]

Matrix organization was not just an abstract vision. It had provided an actual blueprint for the University of California at Santa Cruz when it was founded in 1965 as an avowedly experimental, holistic, student-centered public research university. The two dimensions of the UCSC matrix were residential colleges, where students and faculty shared both social and intellectual bonds; and academic boards of studies: loose, interdisciplinary, collaborative alternatives to traditional departments. But after the enthusiasm of the pioneer generation subsided, Santa Cruz by the late 1970s reverted to a conventional bifurcated structure through a reaggregation process that assigned faculty to academic departments and placed student affairs professionals under a traditional vice chancellor.[69] There were other, smaller-scale experiments, such as an

[64] Saurman and Nash, "MBO, Student Development and Accountability," 184.

[65] Saurman and Nash, "MBO, Student Development and Accountability," 180–81.

[66] Saurman and Nash, "MBO, Student Development and Accountability." The quotes are on pp. 183 and 187, respectively.

[67] Saurman and Nash, "MBO, Student Development and Accountability," 187.

[68] David T. Borland, "Aggressive Neglect, Matrix Organization, and Student Development Implementation (1977)," in Giroux et al., *College Student Development Revisited*, 198–207.

[69] Dean McHenry, "Academic Organizational Matrix at the University of California, Santa Cruz," in *Academic Departments: Problems, Variations, and Alternatives*, ed. McHenry (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), 86–116; George von der Muhll, "The University of California at Santa Cruz: Institutionalizing Eden in a Changing World," in *Against the Current: Reform and Experimentation in Higher Education*, ed. Richard M. Jones and Barbara L. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1984), 51–92.

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abortive "hub-and-spoke" matrix variant at the University of Southern California, but few of these managerial innovations were fated to last either.[70]

At a time when management fads were gaining wide currency across academia, MBO and matrix organization did at least develop student affairs professionals' collective political savvy. Schemes for a "post-bureaucratic" workplace that dispensed with organizational charts in favor of "ad hoc networks of problem-solving teams" echoed the most influential management gurus of the day.[71] Such ideas provided a useful halfway house between the technocratic systems theory of the 1960s, which had threatened to reduce student services to numbers and cogs, and the idealistic aspirations of the "Me" decade. At their most radical, calls for a new "administration of innovation" flipped both the social-engineering ethos of the 1960s *and* the corporate-style austerity push implicit in MBO for avowedly countercultural purposes: to free creativity, to remove fear, to increase trust, and to abolish "coercive, persuasional, and manipulative efforts to pump up motivation" that backfired by tempting students to misbehave.[72] Most of these visions and schemes would never come to pass; they served better as motivational fodder for internal consumption within the profession. But this did not preclude other, more grounded strategies. The key to securing real-world administrative influence, as we will see momentarily, required a return to practical problems.

Welcoming the New Students

Besides venturing into the educational precincts dominated by the faculty, and currying favor with the managerially minded administrators who were their bosses and patrons, SDT's advocates had to secure a claim to their core constituency and raison d'être—students. This entailed a major intellectual pivot. As we have seen, the signature ambition of SDT as a body of theory was its bid for universal applicability: to encompass the social-psychological maturation of every student, and indeed every human being, in a carefully plotted series of developmental stages. This was SDT's great political strength, as a ready-made doctrine for managing the entirety of student life at large, anonymous institutions. But at the same time, it was a critical weakness, since SDT failed, initially at least, to account for the tremendous diversification of the student body during the very decade that it was being created, refined, and put into practice. The influx of New Students with nontraditional needs thus presented a golden opportunity for revitalization, and for an embrace of diversity that would deepen in decades to come.

K. Patricia Cross, a onetime dean of women who became a dean of students, then a research scientist at the Educational Testing Service, and finally a professor at Harvard

[70] James R. Appleton, Paul L. Moore, and John C. Vinton, "A Model for the Effective Delivery of Student Services in Academic Schools and Departments," *Journal of Higher Education* 49, no. 4 (Jul.-Aug. 1978), 372–81.

[71] Alvin H. Lipsetz, "Student Personnel Work and Organization Development," *NASPA Journal* 11, no. 2 (1973), 36–40; see also Burns B. Crookston, "An Organizational Model for Student Development (1972)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 291–302; and Robert Birnbaum, *Management Fads in Higher Education: Where They Come From, What They Do, Why They Fail* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

[72] Terry O'Banion, Alice Thurston, and James Gulden, "Student Personnel Work: An Emerging Model (1970)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 269–83. The quote is on p. 275.

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and Berkeley, had been among the first to paint a portrait of the New Students starting in the 1960s.[73] Such students were distinguished more by academic underachievement, and specifically low standardized test scores, than by any other measure, including race, sex, and socioeconomic status. The typical New Student ranked in the lowest third of college-goers and was "Caucasian" with a blue-collar father, often from a "Whitetown" that resembled an African American ghetto.[74] Such students sought educational credentials for instrumental reasons rather than academic curiosity, or even the feigned curiosity of the typical middle-class college student. They preferred television to reading, tools to numbers (if men), and (if women) "sewing to memorizing long passages." They disliked intellectual puzzles or moral ambiguity but had a respect for traditional hierarchies that, Cross claimed, bordered on the authoritarian.[75]

New Students were, in short, populist in their attitudes and aspirations. They thus constituted a frontal challenge to a meritocratic university ethos founded on academic competition and educational credentials. As Cross argued, "The concept of *academic* talent as *the* talent worthy of cultivation and encouragement [was] too narrow to provide a base for the development of a new education for the egalitarian age."[76] And it was not just working-class White students. Space also had to be made for racial and ethnic minorities, women, and part-time adult students, especially part-time adult women with workforce aspirations after raising young children.[77] With a baby bust forecast for the 1980s, active recruitment of New Students made not just political and moral but also financial sense to cash-strapped institutions.

It was left to subsequent scholars to clinch the case for SDT. Although New Students, Cross's followers claimed, were reportedly hampered by self-defeating psychological behaviors, it was traditional academic culture that had to change to accommodate them. Plagued by the "constant threat of failure," many of these students became passive or sullen in the face of challenge. Often "decidedly non-intellectual in nature," they had "difficulty with viewpoints … that differ," exhibiting a "low tolerance for ambiguity."[78] But precisely because New Students tended to respect authority and hierarchy, they were quite amenable to expert advice and even intrusive guidance, if often hesitant to assert themselves and ask for help. For this reason, student affairs professionals were ideally positioned to step forward as authoritative guides to complex campuses where faculty could not or would not.

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[73]Two other touchstones on the New Students are Frank Newman et al., *Report on Higher Education* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971); and Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, *New Students and New Places: Policies for the Future Growth and Development of American Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

[74]Cross drew from the findings in P. Binzen's Carnegie-funded study, "The World of Whitetown: Neglected Blue-Collar Communities," *Carnegie Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1970), 1–3. See references to Binzen's article in K. Patricia Cross, "New Students and New Needs in Higher Education," Center for Research and Development in Higher Education (US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, DC, 1972), ERIC ED061909.

[75]K. Patricia Cross, *Beyond the Open Door: New Students in Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971), 13–16. The quote is on p. 159.

[76]Cross, *Beyond the Open Door*, 16.

[77]K. Patricia Cross, "Our Changing Students and Their Impact on Colleges: Prospects for a True Learning Society (1980)," in Owens et al., *College Student Personnel Administration*, 132–42.

[78]Knefelkamp, Widick, and Parker, *Applying New Developmental Findings*, 110–11.

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In such circumstances, SDT provided a "common language" that could be expanded to encompass the needs of a diversifying student population. Precisely because so many New Students were adult learners, and had already navigated the mature adult world of work and family, these older students had already progressed beyond many of the stages of classical SDT that corresponded to late adolescence and young adulthood.[79] Such students already commanded skills that typical middle-class eighteen-to-twenty-two-year-olds lacked, whether in managing multiple priorities or setting and fulfilling long-term goals. SDT could be thus reconfigured to incorporate the findings of *adult* development research and thereby encompass a whole new range of personality types, accommodating each one to the structures and the culture of higher education.[80] The reward, according to advocates, would be nothing less than the ability to "individualize mass education."[81] Here was the germ for SDT's later embrace of many other dimensions of student diversity. But before that aspiration could be put into practice, its advocates had first to contend with their own internal critics.

Consolidating an Orthodoxy

Even though it gained rapid and enduring recognition as *the* cardinal program of the student affairs profession, SDT had its detractors from the outset. Cross noted that the "power base" for vice presidents of student affairs was too narrow to begin with, and in danger of contracting further amid the belt-tightening of the 1970s, when core academic functions were prioritized over ancillary student services. She thought it was too early to found an entire doctrine of applied behavioral psychology on a scholarly literature that had yet to engage systematically with the problems of eighteen-to-twenty-two-year-old collegians, much less nontraditional New Students. Faculty as often as not saw right through the "fake goal" of seeking intellectual respectability by aping academic jargon and scholarly citation styles.[82] Another critic felt that the profession would be better served by a return to its traditional and well-respected role as a provider of specific services to meet concrete student needs. While the ideal of "service" might seem vaguely degrading, the best hope for student affairs' future relevance might be to double down on the traditional pastoral roles of counseling and support rather than adopt stylish psychobabble.[83] Organizationally, too, the concept of student development had proven hard to implement. Abortive efforts since the late 1960s to launch formal "offices of student development" were dismantled when they failed to pacify campuses in the face of simmering student discontent.[84]

[79] L. Lee Knefelkamp, "Faculty and Student Development in the 80's: Renewing the Community of Scholars (1980)," in Owens et al., *College Student Personnel Administration*, 373–91.

[80] Rees Hughes, "The Non-traditional Student in Higher Education: A Synthesis of the Literature (1983)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 575–92.

[81] Adrienne Barna, James R. Haws, and Lee Knefelkamp, "New Students: Challenge to Student Affairs (1978)," in Owens et al., *College Student Personnel Administration*, 123–31. The quotation is on p. 129.

[82] K. Patricia Cross, "Student Personnel Work as a Profession," *Journal of College Student Personnel* 14, no. 1 (Jan. 1973), 77–81. The quotes are on pp. 78 and 81.

[83] James J. Rhatigan, "Student Services vs. Student Development: Is There a Difference? (1975)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 438–47.

[84] James C. Hurst et al., "Reorganizing for Human Development in Higher Education: Obstacles to Change," *Journal of College Student Personnel* 14, no. 1 (Jan. 1973), 10–15.

By the late 1970s, the tenor of criticism had subtly changed. The problem now was that SDT had become *too* influential, not that it was insufficiently so. Its proponents made naive promises, one analyst wrote, that were untethered to available resources or organizational constraints—or worse yet, SDT was adopted as a strategy to build organizational clout rather than actually helping individual students with real problems.[85] Within the profession, its ascendancy stifled internal debate on alternative ways of approaching student affairs work: SDT had become the "preferred answer" to every question, a theory adopted by "acclaim" rather than by empirical hypothesis testing. One critic deemed it a "restraining rather than stimulating force in the field."[86] As a proactive strategy to succeed the reactive scramble to stay ahead of student rebellions, SDT at the very least had to be supplemented by a return to meat-and-potatoes management training, whether in budgeting, planning, program evaluation, or leadership development. While matrix-like flexible organizations harbored great promise, "ad hocracy" would never replace bureaucracy, or the core skills and competencies that would lead to lasting organizational power and professional influence.[87]

The feminization of the student affairs profession in the 1980s heralded another serious intellectual challenge to SDT, but one that strengthened rather than weakened it as a discourse. Writing in 1989, Marvalene Hughes, a prominent scholar-administrator and former ACPA president, argued that SDT's foundational opposition between the cognitive and the affective had reinforced a gendered division of labor whose eradication was long overdue.[88] Drawing on contemporary feminist theory, she contended that cognitive mastery rewarded stereotypical masculine traits such as "competition, aggression, ambition, independence, and analytical behaviors," whereas SDT prioritized feminine values of "tolerance, compassion, human empowerment … supporting, nurturing, providing service, promoting advocacy, ensuring justice and equity, and encouraging affiliative behaviors." Cognitive rationality and the pursuit of objective truth were already associated with the masculine (professorial) role. This had left the affective, emotional, subjective development of students increasingly in the hands of women.[89]

The solution for Hughes was not somehow for aspiring female professionals to prove their worth by adopting the aggressive managerial ambitions of masculine leaders. Rather, it was to clear a space for the feminization of education throughout institutions of higher learning. Achieving "sex role balance" would emancipate people of both genders, ensuring everyone could express the "full range of human values and emotions." It would enable not only women to develop cognitive mastery and indulge leadership ambitions, but also men to express their emotions and adopt an altruistic service orientation.[90] In an ever more complicated world, values and practices centered on tolerance

[85]Kathleen C. Plato, "Student Development as Policy: Strategies for Implementation," *Journal of College Student Personnel* 18, no. 6 (Nov. 1977), 518–21.

[86]Kathleen C. Plato, "The Shift to Student Development: An Analysis of the Patterns of Change," *NASPA Journal* 15, no. 4 (1978), 32–36. The quotations are on pp. 33, 34, and 32, respectively.

[87]William L. Deegan, *Managing Student Affairs Programs: Methods, Models, Muddles* (Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1981), iv, 6–7, 13–16.

[88]Marvalene S. Hughes, "Feminization of Student Affairs (1989)," in Rentz, *Student Affairs*, 660-73.

[89]Hughes, "Feminization." The quotes are on pp. 661 and 663, respectively.

[90]Hughes, "Feminization." The quotes are on pp. 661 and 670, respectively.

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and compassion would be vital to the refurbishment of universities' core educational mission. Relegating such values to student affairs work while leaving the rest of the academy uninterrogated and untouched was a recipe for failure—but a problem for which a reformed SDT could offer compelling solutions.

By the late 1980s, SDT reigned supreme as what some critics called a "quasi-religious" orthodoxy over some fifty thousand student affairs professionals across US higher education.[91] The profession's leading organ, the *Journal of College Student Personnel*, renamed itself the *Journal of College Student Development* in 1988. Practitioners had assumed the trappings of the proper academic disciplines whose status they sought as a means of gaining credibility with faculty and administrators. Boasting what one analysis called a "properly incomprehensible terminology," SDT made claims and adopted vocabulary designed for building budgets, securing administrative positions, and styling student services professionals as coequals alongside the faculty, even as skeptics claimed that it failed the tests of a true academic theory—logical coherence, generalizability, testability, and predictive power.[92] George Kuh, later a leading architect of the learning outcomes assessment movement, criticized SDT for providing the "illusion of exerting control over" the inherently "unpatterned" process of young adults' intellectual, emotional, and social maturation.[93] Yet there were hardly any alternatives left to fall back on. Calls to return to the midcentury student personnel perspective, to reclaim a selfless service ethic, and to jettison academic pretensions and revert to commonsense approaches—these were voices in the wilderness by the late twentieth century.

Conclusion

Today's SDT textbooks serve as curriculum for graduate programs whose alumni populate burgeoning student affairs divisions that often command large auxiliary budgets and cabinet-level influence. They also provide content for professional development workshops both in-house at colleges and universities and on the national conference circuit.[94] While SDT's prior fascination with Erikson and Piaget and the crisis of modernity was of a piece with its time, its entire intellectual arsenal has since been restocked with more current theories of identity and social justice. The embrace of diversity has become SDT's guiding ethos, just as its claims to universal human applicability in a mass university setting had furnished its original rationale. The profession has long since broken with the stage theories focused on universal psychosocial or cognitive attributes to embrace the heterogeneity and multiplicity of demographic backgrounds and learning styles among the college-going population. Social identity theories, typically with an avowedly nonlinear conception of student development, have filled their place. One textbook, *Contested Issues in Student Affairs* (2011), spans the

[91] Paul A. Bloland, Louis C. Stamatakos, and Russell R. Rogers, *Reform in Student Affairs: A Critique of Student Development* (Greensboro, NC: ERIC Clearinghouse, 1994), 7.

[92] Bloland, Stamatakos, and Rogers, 7–13, 28–33, 80–87. The quote is on p. 7.

[93] George D. Kuh, Elizabeth J. Whitt, and Jill D. Shedd, *Student Affairs Work, 2001: A Paradigmatic Odyssey* (Alexandria, VA: American College Personnel Association, 1987), 45.

[94] Ursula Delworth and Gary R. Hanson, *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), now on its fifth edition (2011).

profession's philosophical and historical origins to contemporary challenges of social justice, student mental health, inclusive learning environments, and—tellingly—the proper design of organizational structures to promote these broader goals.[95] Another, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2016), extends even further into current academic discourses with brief introductions to critical race theory, Black feminism, intersectionality, postcolonialism, poststructuralism, and queer theory.[96]

The protean nature of the field continues to strike some scholars as a sign of weakness. SDT has been labeled a "low-consensus field" plagued by a sustained gap between theory and practice, between hypothesis formulation and empirical testing, and, most especially, between "the importance of social justice" and "theory proliferation [that] on its own does little to promote consensus about knowledge."[97] Yet the recurrent nature of these debates, decades since these same critiques were first made, is a powerful indicator of SDT's self-renewing capacity. Rather than becoming identified with a specific academic theory, organizational form, occupational credential, or institutional locale, SDT as a body of ideas and practices has become commandingly influential as a free-floating discourse of therapeutic empowerment that now permeates student affairs bureaucracies in colleges and universities across the country.

Thanks to SDT, student affairs divisions emerged as the institutional locale where attention to the "whole student" retreated after the idealism of the 1960s dissipated and faculty continued their turn toward research and other forms of disciplinary professionalism. As this article has argued, it expanded through concurrent engagements with a variety of constituencies along the new organizational frontier between student affairs and academic affairs. First, its advocates recovered from their professional identity crisis by inhabiting new bureaucratic structures. Then, they engaged core questions of learning, teaching, and character education once monopolized by the faculty; responded to senior administrators' financial and organizational worries by co-opting new managerial doctrines; and lay claim to be the best-positioned university officials to socialize waves of new students to modern college life. Finally, they met internal professional critics by institutionalizing new variants of SDT to keep up with changing values and changing demographics. Whether or not SDT qualifies as a true scholarly discipline, the enduring influence and ongoing reinvention of this body of learning attests to the supremacy of academic knowledge even in the university's decidedly nonacademic precincts. For five decades, SDT has animated student affairs practitioners and professionals far more effectively than lifeless organization charts. It was in large part through their efforts that the university of the 1970s reconciled students to the modern university after a protracted period of instability and questioning.

[95] Peter M. Magolda and Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, *Contested Issues in Student Affairs: Diverse Perspectives and Respectful Dialogue* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2011).

[96] Lori D. Patton et al., *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

[97] Vasti Torres, Susan R. Jones, and Kristen Renn, "Student Affairs as a Low-Consensus Field and the Evolution of Student Development Theory as Foundational Knowledge," *Journal of College Student Development* 60, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2019), 645–58.

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