STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS' UNDERSTANDING OF MOTIVATIONS TO
ATTAIN A DOCTORATE IN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of those who have helped me along my educational journey and to all those who are contemplating this journey.

Acknowledgments

To my lovely wife Lindsey, thank you for being my partner in this journey. Your support never wavered and thus this goal always felt achievable. In these six years, we have had three beautiful boys, changed jobs multiple times, bought and sold a house and still somehow managed to make this dream a reality. This degree is as much yours as it is mine.

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Abstract

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Students are motivated to pursue education for various reasons and understanding those motivations can help administrators and faculty better serve graduate students who choose to participate in doctoral studies. This study analyzed qualitative data in an effort to better understand how student affairs administrators perceived their motivations while discerning doctoral study in the field of Higher Education Administration (HEA). This study used Self Determination Theory (SDT) as a framework for understanding how motivational factors influence students to participate in doctoral education. The results showed that there existed four major themes that described the participants experience with considering pursuing a doctorate in HEA; Professional, Personal and Dual Role Motivations, and Environmental Factors. As a result, the findings suggest that changes in how doctoral education is promoted and encouraged, the importance of the doctorate as a credential as well as creating communities of support can help to increase doctorate representation in the area of Higher Education Administration.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Persistence and attrition amongst doctoral students has long been seen as a major issue for graduate programs. Faculty and their programs invest time and resources into doctoral students only to see them fail to complete the dissertation or drop out of school all together (Geller, 2004; Litalien & Morin, 2015). In order to combat these trends, researchers have suggested that students explore and understand their own motivations for pursuing a doctorate (Darkenwald, 1977; Guerin, Jayatialaka, & Ranasinghe, 2014; Komives & Taub, 2000).

Motivation can be key to understanding why humans strive to achieve goals such as these. It can be assumed that people are motivated by different sets of circumstances in their life (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Factors such as how and where we grew up, the upbringing of our parents, and the socioeconomic conditions that we faced impact our decision making. These circumstances and environmental factors thus have an effect on one's motivation.

The motivation to pursue education is important in that it can help us better understand the priority of education in the greater community. Understanding motivation in educational attainment may help us to better recruit and train individuals in needed fields of study. Guerin et al. (2014) concluded from their study that:

Given the increasing number of people now graduating with Higher Degrees of Research (HDRs) and the changing opportunities for them on completion, motivations that were perfectly reasonable in the past may no longer be so relevant. Second, knowing more about what these students hope to gain from their

studies will enlighten discussions about the changing nature of the PhD as new kinds of doctorates are in the process of being developed. (p. 101)

Their study suggests that higher education, especially doctoral programs, has a responsibility to help guide doctoral students in understanding their own motivations for undertaking a doctorate as well as the type of degree that they pursue.

The United States system of higher education is seen throughout the world as the leader in providing advanced and doctoral education, thus students from around the world choose to study in our higher educational system (Williams, Leahy, de Rassenfosse & Jensen, 2015). There is a need within the higher education community to have a better understanding of graduate education. Gardner (2009) discussed three concerns in regards to graduate student attrition that higher education should pay closer attention to. First, she pointed to the expense of recruiting and retaining graduate students who then attrite. Faculty and program leaders spend a great deal of time, energy and financial resources recruiting prospective graduate and doctoral students only to see them dropout.

Next, graduate student dropout has social consequences to both the individual and the greater community. Gardner (2009) highlights that the success of our doctoral programs has a direct effect on the success of a myriad of professional groups within our society. Doctoral attrition affects institutions through the loss of funds invested in doctoral students who do not matriculate. Our society is deprived of potential leaders and scholars who otherwise could contribute to the progress of our world. Finally, there are also personal effects on those who do not finish the doctorate. Many of these individuals are intellectually capable but for one reason or another are not able to finish. These former students then go forward with a feeling a failure which is hard to overcome.

Darkenwald (1977) discussed two major principles of adult education. “Two cardinal principles of adult education are that programs should be designed on the basis of needs-assessment and that learning activities should be compatible with the needs and learning styles of adults (p. 2). Although this observation was made 40 years ago, it still rings true today. It is important for educators to understand the needs of our adult learners. This qualitative study proposed to understand how the motivational orientations of adult learners, in our case college student affairs professionals, affect their pursuit of doctoral education.

Background of the Study

The background of this study begins by exploring the early origins of the student affairs profession. In the earliest days of the American higher education system, the oversight of the college student experience was primarily left to the faculty and presidents of the institutions (Hirt, 2006). Students were sent to college to gain a thorough education and nothing more. Little attention was paid to the extracurricular activities and services for students. The students, almost entirely men early on, were expected to act as adults and to be on their best behavior. The faculty ensured that students were kept in line. The concept of *in loco parentis*, or “in place of the parent,” governed the relationship between the faculty and their students. The faculty were expected to discipline and safeguard the students, much like their parents would (Smith, 2012).

In the early part of the twentieth century there would come a shift in this governance model. Faculty became more focused on research and teaching and less on the governance of their pupils. The advent of Deans of Men, and later Deans of Women,

cemented the new profession of student affairs. These administrators would take the burden of managing students away from the faculty. Out of this administrative void came the modern model of non-academic administrators who oversaw a myriad of student services and extracurricular activities on college campuses (Komives, Woodward, & Associates, 2003).

The expansion of college student affairs as a profession has been slow over time. Many critics have stated that student affairs lacks the fundamental complexity to be considered a profession, much less an area of scholarly research (Townsend & Wiese, 1991). This criticism is especially true within institutions with a high regard for scholarly research. Yet, student affairs within the larger realm of higher education has yielded a great number of Higher Education Administration (HEA) graduate programs throughout the country. According to ACPA's Graduate Preparation Directory (2016), there were over 130 graduate programs in the area of Higher Education Administration. This large number of programs suggests a large population of adult learners who are interested in the field of higher education administration.

There have been various studies relating to motivation of doctoral students to pursue both research and professional doctorates. Many of these studies have focused on the issue of race (Baness, 2011; Belk, 2006; Humphreys, 2010) while others gender (Hill, 2005; Nakitende, 2012). Studies focusing on specific disciplines and motivation to attain a doctorate have also been completed: Nursing (Graf, 2001; Richardson, 2011), counseling (Hinkle, Iarussi, Schermer, & Yensel, 2014), secondary education (Jablonksi, 2001) and physical therapy (Ruby, 2008), amongst others. In addition, many studies involving the doctorate and motivation have centered on attrition (Geller, 2004; Litalien

& Morin, 2015). This study sought to mirror these studies in the examination of motivation to pursue a doctorate within the specific field of student affairs.

This study had personal attachment for the researcher. My doctoral journey began almost five years ago when I was a finalist for an associate dean position. The job was a dream come true for my family and I. It was a position that I had aspired towards and at an institution closer to both of our families. I was one of three finalists but in the end was not offered the position. I later found out that the person hired was ABD with slightly more years of experience than I had. The person hired was an acquaintance of mine, whom I had a great deal of respect. Hiring her was obviously the best choice.

This experience reignited my mission to further educate myself. Since the early days of my professional journey mentors, colleagues and family members had encouraged me to pursue a doctorate as a means of advancing my career. Those that encouraged me equated a doctorate with professional success. As a result, I too mentally connected the attainment of a doctorate with the fast track of my career. My experience in pursuing higher levels of employment reinforced the attainment of the doctoral credential as requirement for career progression.

Fresh off the disappointment of not being hired for my dream job, I immediately set my focus on reentering graduate school and attaining my doctorate. Within months I was back in the classroom. It was invigorating and I was the most motivated I had ever been in my entire educational journey. The institution I enrolled in was heavily populated with faculty and professionals from within the community college ranks. As we discussed our reasons for pursuing our doctorates, I found that there existed a wide array of reasons why someone chooses to pursue the doctorate. In some cases, students' reasons were

purely professional and financial. Like me, they saw the economic value of increasing their education and therefore broadening their appeal to employers. I also found that some students were pursuing a terminal degree for personal reasons. Some of my classmates were the first in their families to go to college and felt it to be their mission in life to be as educated as they could be.

As I interacted with my fellow students I noticed a difference in how they conducted themselves in the classroom. In my opinion, those who were motivated by personal reasons were much more engaged in the classroom and specifically classroom discussions. I felt, through my conversations and interactions with them, that those who were motivated by the professional and economic reasons saw class and assignments simply as items to check off a list. As I reflected on these differing mindsets, I wrestled with what my true motivations were for pursuing my doctorate. Was I motivated solely by the possible economic and professional returns of my degree? Or, was I motivated by the love of learning?

I felt that these two motivations were competing; one being better than the other. I found myself asking classmates and other colleagues why they were pursuing a doctorate? Many times during my four year journey I asked myself the same question. Sometimes serious and sometimes facetiously. Why are you doing this to yourself? Why put your family through this? Why not quit now? I would have to say that at every point in my own doctoral journey I found that my motivations had shifted. Early on, I was fully focused on the economic and professional impact that the doctoral credential would have on my future. As I moved closer to completion of my coursework, I felt a distinct change

in my motivations. No longer was I focused on the extrinsic but instead felt drawn to completing my degree for exclusively intrinsic reasons.

This personal realization drove this study. I am personally curious as to what motivates someone to pursue a doctorate. So few, especially in Higher Education Administration, choose to partake in this experience. In addition, so many of those that start, never finish. Hence, a key question remained; How can we use motivational orientation to better our field of study and create more successful graduate students and administrators?

Statement of the Problem

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), the field of education graduated 4,071 master's degree students in the fields of Higher Education Administration, College Student Counseling, and College Student Personnel in the 2013-2014 academic year. In contrast, only 579 doctoral degrees were awarded in those fields. These population counts have remained consistent over the previous academic years. The NCES only began disaggregating the academic discipline from the academic field beginning in 2013. These statistics represent an education gap in the field of higher education. The data suggests that only 1 in 4 students who graduate with a master's degree in a higher education administration field will go on to pursue a doctorate. A percentage that low brings into question why so few choose to pursue a doctorate?

Kuh and Komives (1987) pointed out that "the effectiveness of student affairs' contribution to the mission of the academy is essentially dependent on the abilities, skills, knowledge, and values of its practitioner-leaders" (p. 5). Townsend and Mason (1990) predicted that future higher education leaders would feel a need to attain a doctorate in

order to advance in their careers. Higher Education Administration (HEA) doctoral programs, as well as student affairs work environments, can serve to help train and educate these administrators for the changing higher education environment.

Higher Education graduate preparation programs can better set themselves and their graduates up for success by first understanding what motivates administrators to pursue a terminal degree in Higher Education Administration (Komives & Taub, 2000). The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons and motivations of student affairs administrators who were discerning whether or not to pursue a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. The study was centered through a constructionist lens to better understand how these students reflect on their experiences. “What constructionism claims is that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, p. 43).

Previous studies have focused on examining graduates during their doctoral studies. Specifically, there are various studies that sought to better understand attrition rates of doctoral students (Geller, 2004; Litalien & Morin, 2015; Sigafus, 1998). In addition, there has been general research done on the motivations of graduate students to pursue doctoral studies (Darkenwald, 1977), yet, there seems to be a gap in the research specifically in relation to administrators and practitioners in student affairs pursuing doctorates in HEA. Professionals who are contemplating pursuing a doctorate should first spend time reflecting on their short and long term goals to discern how this new degree will fit into their career and life trajectory (Komives & Taub, 2000). Guerin et al. (2015) noted that an understanding of the connection between motivations for undertaking a doctorate, the type of doctorate chosen, and their desired end results should be developed

within the higher education community. Consequently, evaluating the motivations and reasons for pursuing a doctorate can help the higher education community better recruit and support adult learners pursuing doctoral study.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the motivations of student affairs practitioners to participate in a doctorate in higher education administration. This study used Self Determination Theory to discern these motivations for why student affairs practitioners were contemplating a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. The research questions that guided this qualitative study were:

1. What motivational orientations (Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Amotivation) are present during a participant's discernment to attain a doctorate in Higher Education Administration?
2. How has their motivational orientation changed during their discernment process?
3. How do environmental factors impact these motivational orientations?

Theoretical Framework

This study rested on understanding how students perceived their motivations to pursue a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. Self Determination Theory was used to undergird this study of motivation to pursue doctoral studies in student affairs practitioners. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is defined as “an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an ‘organismic metatheory’ that highlights the importance of humans’ evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation” (Ryan & Deci, 2004, p. 6).

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), humans have a natural proclivity toward curiosity and “natural activity”, which they term “intrinsic motivation” (pp. 69-71). They point out that from birth humans are naturally curious and are directed to learn and try new things solely by their internal drive. It is as they grow older that this intrinsic motivation is overshadowed by extrinsic motivation, which they term as activity that is performed in order to obtain some separate outcome. By focusing on SDT, this study shed light on motivational orientations of these adult learners and how those motivations can be enhanced or thwarted to promote educational growth.

Significance of Study

The results of this study can be very helpful in organizing Higher Education Administration (HEA) programs. Wellington and Sykes (2006) point out that by understanding the motivations of students pursuing a doctorate, HEA programs can better develop marketing, curriculum and pedagogy that will contribute to the “influence (of HEA) as a worthwhile and relevant qualification” (p.733). Faculty need to have a better understanding of what factors motivate their students. Knowing these factors can help to create better connections between the type of motivation a student has and the pedagogy employed by the faculty.

Understanding student motivations also helps in designing environments in which learning can be optimized for the students (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Student success within their chosen doctoral field of study can help in lowering attrition rates, satisfaction and time to degree. In addition, a better understanding of motivation of adult learners can help the field grow theory and frameworks that could explain issues such as dropout rates, increase the number of participants in doctoral study as well as supplement the quality of

the doctoral education experience (Boshier, 1971).

As mentioned previously, there is a current lack of focus on doctoral student's motivation prior to beginning the doctorate. Many studies focus on motivation as a contributing factor to attrition and completion, but little research has been done specifically in the area of motivation to participate in doctoral education in the field of Higher Education Administration. This study can contribute to a lack of understanding as to why student affairs professionals pursue a doctorate in HEA.

Assumptions

Students discerning whether to pursue doctoral education must be cognizant of their motivations for doing so. Self Determination Theory argues that prospective students inherently possess motivation be it intrinsic (love of learning, to better oneself) or extrinsic (to be promoted, to increase wages) but also can act without intention, which they term amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This study assumed that participants were truthful and reflective in presenting their motivations. Along with the phenomenological research method, it was assumed that "different categories of description or ways of experiencing a phenomenon are logically related to one another (Akerlind, 2016, p. 116).

Limitations

This study focused on a sample of student affairs administrators. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2016), there are over 135,000 post-secondary administrators in the United States. The study presented only captured a small number of individuals within this larger population. While not necessarily representative of the greater population of administrators, it is hoped that the themes presented within these findings may help to better serve this group of educators. Although this study focused on

certain motivations and their effect on student's discernment to participate in doctoral study, they should not be assumed to be the only motivations that may have been encountered. In keeping with phenomenological study, this study sought to understand the experience of motivation itself, specifically how understanding those motivations may help to better position administrators for participation in doctoral study.

Delimitations

The focus of this study was on the field of student affairs. Student affairs is an administrative subset of the higher education profession and represents the non-academic student support functions of colleges and universities. The information gathered in this study was only applicable to those within the student affairs field. In addition, the data collected should only be used for comparative purposes for students pursuing doctorates in other fields of study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms need to be defined:

- **Adult Learner-** For the purposes of this study an adult learner is defined as a person over the age of 25 who actively pursues learning opportunities both formal and informal.
- **Discernment Process-** The manner by which one considers the risk, rewards and consequences of undertaking a task, in this case participation in doctoral study.
- **Extrinsic Motivation-** Defined by Ryan and Deci (2000) as "the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome" (p.71).
- **Higher Education Administration (HEA)-** "A program that focuses on the principles and practice of administration in four-year colleges, universities and

higher education systems, the study of higher education as an object of applied research, and which may prepare individuals to function as administrators in such settings. Includes instruction in higher education economics and finance; policy and planning studies; curriculum; faculty and labor relations; higher education law; college student services; research on higher education; institutional research; marketing and promotion; and issues of evaluation, accountability and philosophy” (IPEDS, 2016).

- **Intrinsic Motivation-** Defined by Ryan and Deci (2000) intrinsic motivation as “the prototypic manifestation of the human tendency toward learning and creativity” (p. 69)
- **Motivation-** Ryan and Deci (2000) define motivation, “concerns energy, direction, persistence and equifinality—all aspects of activation and intention” (p. 69).
- **Student Affairs Professional-** Individuals who work in the non-academic support services on college campuses. The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines this position as those who “Plan, direct, or coordinate research, instructional, student administration and services, and other educational activities at postsecondary institutions, including universities, colleges, and junior and community colleges” (BLS, 2014).

Study Overview

In 1905, William Harper, then the President of the University of Chicago, foresaw the advent of the study of Higher Education:

In order that the student may receive the assistance so essential to his highest

success, another step in the onward evolution will take place. This step will be the scientific study of the student himself. In the time that is coming provision must be made, either by the regular instructors or by those appointed especially for the purpose, to study the man and woman to whom instruction is offered. (p. 321)

Today, the services provided by college campuses could barely be imagined by previous educational leaders such as William Harper. These services, and the educators who administer them, have evolved and will continue to evolve in the future to meet the needs of future students. Administrators who continue to advance their knowledge and educational status will be best positioned to meet these needs. This study examined the motivations of those administrators who were considering pursuing their doctorate in Higher Education Administration.

In Chapter 2, we will explore the current literature surrounding motivation, Self Determination Theory, as well as the role of motivation on doctoral studies. Chapter 3 will outline the chosen methodology, phenomenology, as well as the data collection and analysis methods.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The proposed study looked at the effects of motivation for student affairs practitioner's participation in doctoral studies. Currently, we see disparity between the number of master's degrees awarded versus the number of doctorates awarded. In the year 2016, institutions conferred 452,118 master's degrees but only 93,626 doctoral degrees. (NCES, 2016). This study sought to better understand this phenomenon by exploring the motivations of members of this group to pursue a doctorate. We first explore the origins of the Higher Education in America, specifically the evolution of the field of Student Affairs. Next we will introduce current literature as it pertains to motivation, specifically motivations within doctoral studies. Finally, we will look into the work of Deci and Ryan and their research findings related to Self Determination Theory. The individual tenants and theories of Self Determination Theory will help to frame the current study so that we can better understand the motivations to pursue doctoral studies.

Higher Education in America

Higher Education in the United States has its origins with the settlement of Europeans in the Americas. As early as the year 1565, education in America, in the form of mission schools, appeared as part of early colonization in St. Augustine, Florida (Urban & Wagoner, 2000). This model would continue as the northeastern part of the United States was colonized by European explorers in the 17th century. In terms of the American higher education model, most historians tie the beginning of this movement to the founding of Harvard in 1636 (Hirt, 2006; Smith, 2012). In this early colonial period, and into the years following the Revolutionary War, institutions were managed by a

President, “serving as the instructor, disciplinarian, librarian, and leader of the college” (Hirt, 2006, p. 3). This meant that essential duties and operations of the institution often fell onto one person.

In loco parentis. These early periods of higher education required both the president and faculty, if any, at the time to serve not only as imparters of knowledge, but also as foster parents looking after the well-being, discipline and care of their pupils. This concept, *in loco parentis* from the Latin, “in place of the parents” would come to dominate the relationship between students and those that oversaw institutions of higher education. The overarching concept of *in loco parentis* would continue as the foundation of what would eventually emerge as student affairs (Hirt, 2006; Nuss, 2003; Thielen, 2003).

In its earliest iterations *in loco parentis* gave great leeway for educators who had students within their care. The concept allowed for educators to control the personal lives of their students by restricting who they associated with and their freedom of movement, not just their academic duties. For all intents and purposes, students had no civil rights when it came to their education (Lee, 2011). Early on the courts often sided with colleges who they viewed had an inherent right to act in place of the parent in all matters. (*People v. Wheaton College*, 1866).

It would be the 1960s before courts would begin to protect the civil rights of students and thus begin the dismantling of *in loco parentis*. In the case of *Dixon v. Alabama* (1961), a group of African American students were expelled for participating in a civil rights demonstration. The courts ruled that the students’ due process rights, guaranteed under the 14th Amendment, had been violated. Student activism such as the

Dixon case would be the beginning of the end of the *in loco parentis* doctrine as courts began to protect and recognize the rights of students (Lee, 2011). Today colleges and universities are seen as what Lee (2011) calls “bystanders” or “facilitators”. Institutions now view students as independent and autonomous adults.

Changes in student needs. As colleges and university populations changed after the American Civil War, so did the need for specialized administrators to deal with these new student needs. As women were admitted there became a need for Deans of Women. The role of the college president grew to become more of an executive or management role and resulted in less time to attend to students. In addition, faculty began to devote more time to the creation of knowledge and less on their responsibilities for monitoring the behavior and well-being of their students. Institutions compensated for this shift in focus by creating specialized positions to handle administrative areas such as admissions, records and registration (Caple, 1998; Hirt, 2006; Thelin, 2003). This led to a shift toward specialized administrators who would oversee the non-academic roles and responsibilities of the institution.

After World War II, students began creating their own extracurricular activities. Social clubs, debate and Greek letter societies had long been a part of college life but new needs of the students called for institutions to again evolve to address them. Institutions began to adopt a holistic view of education in which all parts of the student’s life and well-being were attended to (Smith, 2012). It was also at this time that the *Student Personnel Point of View* (ACE, 1937) and the *Student Personnel Point of View Revised* (ACE, 1949) were published. SPPOV outlined the major philosophical foundations for the profession. It detailed 23 tenants which would make up the basic services and

principles of the profession moving forward. Some of these tenants included concepts such as student orientation, career and vocational advisement as well as student housing and food services (SPPOV, 1937). The revised SPPOV of 1949 added a focus on the whole student including attention to their physical and mental well-being. Most importantly the SPPOV called on administrators to focus on the student as an individual but also as a part of the greater student community (SPPOV, 1949). Conversely, toward the end of the 20th century we would see an additional shift in focus for the profession; a focus on education.

The SPPOV would be followed by *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling, 2004) and again with *Learning Reconsidered 2* in 2006. These two documents would cast greater focus on the role of student affairs administrators as educators in partnership with the faculty. They called for a more integrated focus that was defined as “a complex, holistic, multicentric activity that occurs throughout and across the college experience” (Keeling, 2004, p.5). These publications would come to define the basis of the profession of student affairs by arguing that the profession did more than simply provide services for students, but played a significant role in the holistic learning of their students.

Over time student affairs has contributed greatly to the mission of higher education. The transition of students from dependency toward autonomy has created a need for services and offerings that could not have been dreamt by faculty of the 18th and 19th centuries. As students became more independent the role of educators shifted away from responsibility toward student’s lives and toward a role of facilitator and service

provider (Carlisle, 2017). The following section outlines the service and functions that would coalesce to form the profession of student affairs administration.

Student Affairs: The Profession

As mentioned in chapter 1, the Bureau of Labor Statistics defines Student Affairs Administrators as those who “Plan, direct, or coordinate research, instructional, student administration and services, and other educational activities at postsecondary institutions, including universities, colleges, and junior and community colleges” (BLS, 2014, n.p.). Within this broader definition of the profession we see what Hirt (2006) describes as two basic classifications. There are the function-based areas such as admissions, records and registration, financial aid and housing that make up the traditional areas of student services and date back to early periods of the profession. These areas focus on delivering the basic services that are required in order for the institution to operate. The other distinct group within student affairs are the population-based areas. These areas, such as international students and minority student affairs as well as LGBTQ groups, focus on serving individual groups of students (Hirt, 2006).

Long (2002) provided the following list of the fundamental areas that encompass a student affairs division. The following section outlines those fundamental areas using the two classification types as discussed previously by Hirt (2006).

Function-based areas. The function-based areas mentioned by Long (2002) listed are admissions/enrollment management, academic advising, campus safety and police services, career services, Dean of Students office, disability support services, health and counseling services, housing/residential life and judicial affairs.

Admissions offices, or the more encompassing title enrollment management (EM), focus on identifying and recruiting prospective students for the institution. On some campuses, the EM role is more prevalent in that allows institutions to organize the admissions, financial aid, marketing and student records functions into one strategic unit.

Academic advising focuses on helping students enroll in college courses through a one-on-one consultation. These professionals help students select a major and/or minor, develop a plan of courses corresponding to that major as well as provide initial career counseling. “The academic advisor is a mentor for the student, appreciating the student’s preferred learning styles, identifying the student’s life goals, and promoting campus and community resources” (Long, 2002, p. 17).

Career services administrators have similar focus of that of academic advisors in that they are equally as integral in helping students explore their options for their future careers. This function takes that role a step further by providing students with “information on internships, prospective employers, and current job openings” while also facilitating “resume-writing skills, resume critiques, interviewing skills and strategies for negotiating salaries and benefits”(Long, 2002, p. 19). These administrators serve a vital role in helping students succeed post-graduation.

Housing and residential life offices provide for facilities, staffing and programs for students who wish to live on campus. Although sometimes used interchangeably, the terms housing and residential life can denote two very different purposes. Housing can refer to the physical characteristics and functions of providing housing for students. This include the assigning of rooms, billing of fees and upkeep of the physical spaces.

residential life in some cases refers to the “educational and social programming, conflict resolution and supervision of students and the resident assistant” (Long, 2002, p. 21).

The function of a Dean of Student’s office is pretty similar from institution to institution. On most campuses the Dean of Students is charged with managing the safety and general welfare of their students. Therefore offices such as judicial affairs, disability services as well as counseling and wellness centers generally report to a Dean of Students (Long, 2002). In this, Dean of Students handle a wide array of issues from student conduct to serious mental health issues.

Population based areas. The other area within student affairs deals with functions and services directed at specific groups of people and their associated needs (Hirt, 2006). Long (2002) lists campus ministry, Greek affairs, multicultural student services, and student activities and student unions/centers.

Campus ministry offices work with students in regards to their spiritual development by providing support and programming for different faiths and denominations. “Spirituality and religious beliefs affect the development of students’ identities, but also provide opportunities for self-reflection and reasoning” (p. 17). In doing this, student affairs continues its focus on the development of the whole student.

One specialized group within student populations is that of Greek letter social organizations. Many campuses have administrators who have specific training and backgrounds geared toward working with these students. Greek affairs administrators work with these social groups to maintain high standards of “scholarship, service and leadership” (Long, 2002, p. 21) in order to maintain an active chapter on campus. In

many cases these individuals also work with the residential facilities operated by these groups.

As college campuses have become more ethnically and culturally diverse, institutions have hired administrators in the area of multiculturalism to staff offices specifically devoted to supporting students of ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds. These individuals are charged with both supporting these students as well as providing programs to educate other students in order to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment (Long, 2002).

College campuses are more than just places to learn, they have also grown to facilitate positive learning experiences and student engagement on campus. In many instances this role is provided by student unions and campus centers which have become the “hub” of student life on campus. These multiuse facilities offer an array of services from food, to shopping, to bookstores and post offices. Many of these buildings also house and facilitate the student activities function of student affairs. Student activities professionals work with students to social, cultural and educational programs for the student body. In many cases these professionals also oversee the vast array of student led organizations. (Long, 2002).

Although this list shows the breadth of functional areas within a division, it cannot be construed to be inclusive of every division at every institution of higher learning. Long (2002) points out that just as there are unique characteristics displayed between two-year and four-year colleges, religious affiliated institutions and small liberal arts colleges, there can be vast differences from one institution to the next even for institutions with similar missions (p. 16).

In addition, institutions may create offices and functional areas to meet specific needs that are unique to their institution. For example, institutions that focus on environmental sustainability may have an office within their division of student affairs that focuses on programs and services that educate students on ways to be more environmentally friendly. Institutions without on campus housing may devote resources to a strong commuter student services office. Across institutions, regardless of their size, type or location, it is easy to see similarities in regards to the basics operations and services of a student affairs division.

In a 1985 study, Pascarella found that the general size of the institution had an impact on a student's "social integration with both faculty and peers" (p. 657). The study found that institutions with larger student enrollments and higher faculty to student ratios generally showed lower levels of social integration. Institutions with lower student populations and lower faculty to student ratios on the other hand showed significant positive effects in terms of social interaction. Through this we see that the factors and attributes of the college environment affect those who interact within it.

The environment. The collegiate work environment is unique from other traditional work or organizational environments. At first glance it appears to be a typical hierarchical organization with a board of trustees charged with overseeing the institution and a president presiding over the faculty, staff and students. There is a faculty trusted with imparting academic knowledge to its students and a group of staff trusted with providing programs and services to support the students. John Millett in his book, *The Academic Community* (1977) wrote:

A college or university is purposive, having more or less well-defined objectives in instruction, research and public service to realize. There is specialization of effort in the college or university. We recognize various disciplines and professional fields of study, together with sub-specializations in almost every field. There are also numerous technical specializations needed for the operation of the college or university as an entity, from admission of students, student record keeping, and various student services to the purchase of supplies, the recording of financial accounts, and the maintenance of buildings. (p. 26)

As Millett points out, the higher education institution purposively delineates functional areas. Faculty administer the education and the staff support both the students and faculty. Millett (1977) goes on to point out that the trouble with viewing these institutions as typical is troublesome. In many ways, colleges and universities are organizations within organizations, each with separate cultures and values yet each working to achieve the goals of the institution. Many institutions describe this interdependence in the form of a mission statement or statement of beliefs. Others have referred to it as a social contract, “a statement of behavioral expectations which the community willingly subscribes to for the common good” (Blair, Klepper, & Phelps-Tobin, 1998, p. 39). This social contract thus becomes the guidepost upon which behaviors within the institution are measured and evaluated.

Student affairs divisions serve the institution by administering the non-academic, or outside of the classroom, functions of the college or university. Since its inception, student affairs filled the role of supporting the academic mission by providing services that were typically administered by the faculty. Initially, these professionals oversaw

student's behavioral issues in the form of Deans of Men and eventually Deans of Women. Over time the profession would expand to oversee all aspects of non-academic life on college campuses (Caple, 1998; Hirt, 2006; Nuss, 2003; Smith, 2012; Thelin, 2003). Millett (1977) remarked, "It is almost fair to say that the student personnel staff on a college or university campus is the one group with time, or willing to make time, to listen to students" (p. 204). This view from Millett represents an earlier view of student affairs work, that of a counselor or parent. As the profession has matured, this viewpoint has changed. Today the profession seeks to claim a rightful place as co-educators with the faculty.

To that end, Carpenter (1998) takes the position that, "student affairs work is a profession and that its practitioners must engage in career-long professional education" (p.160). He goes on to point out that informal learning, once the standard for professional development is no longer sufficient to advance professionally. Established professions such as law and medicine give us an accepted model for life-long formalized professional continuing education. Thus, this current study sought to examine and understand the motivations for student affairs administrators to pursue a doctorate, a very formal approach to continuing education.

Professional standards. Although the field of Student Affairs has existed in some form on American college and university campuses since the founding of the colonies, there is still some question as to whether or not the field constitutes a profession. In 1981, Stamatakos argued that although many student affairs professionals aspired to be considered professionals, there lacked significant evidence to justify their claim (p. 204). In their analysis of the literature surrounding student affairs as a

profession, Carpenter and Stimpson (2007) argued that challenges existed that student affairs needed to surmount in order to be considered a profession. “The way forward for excellent service to students lies in professionalism, scholarship and continual professional learning and development.” They go on to say:

The challenges of professionalism and scholarly practice show that simple activity and hard work are not enough, nor even close. Only continuous reflection, commitment, learning and growth are acceptable if we are to be of service to our students and our institutions. We owe our profession nothing less (p. 281).

If the profession of student affairs is to be taken seriously as a professional calling, then standards of professionalism and development are needed.

In an effort to establish universal standards for student affairs units, a consortium of 42 professional organizations within higher education created the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2016). The CAS standards provide requirements for “effective pedagogy and management” (CAS) for 45 different functional areas within student affairs divisions. This collection of materials allows for a consistent framework to be used in assessing and administering these sources across different institutions.

Another form of accountability within the profession involves the oversight of regional and programmatic accreditation bodies. It is the purpose of these independent review organizations to hold institutions within their region or program type, accountable in all areas of the institution including student affairs and services. These groups conduct reviews of institutions using both self-study and peer review and upon completion make recommendations in terms of awarding accreditation to the institution (CHEA, 2015).

Institutions are tasked with maintaining their accreditation and thus use these processes to maintain high levels of accountability as well as to make improvements where needed.

Life Long Learning Connection

In 1961, Cyril Houle, a researcher in the field of adult education, published *The Inquiring Mind*, a book that would later go on to influence a number of areas in the field of adult education. In this book, Houle classified the participants of his study into three groups which described how the participant viewed their own purpose in pursuing continuing education. These groups were, goal-oriented, activity-oriented and learning - oriented. In essence, Houle was articulating the inherent motivational types of adult learners (Houle, 1961).

Houle (1961) understood the connection of a person's motivations with their ultimate decision to pursue education. "If we are ever to understand the total phenomenon of continuing education, we must begin by understanding the nature, the beliefs and the actions of those who take part to the highest degree" (p. 10). In the period that Houle is writing, the 1960s, adults looked at education through informal learning in groups or short continuing education courses. The present study can benefit from Houle's findings by creating the subgroups of motivation through which other studies would build. These subgroups can help us to further delineate types of motivational orientations.

Goal-oriented. This group of students approaches education as a tool or a means to an end. These learners participate in learning activities with a specific goal or end in mind (Houle, 1961). In some instances, these learners may be seeking additional education to move up in a job. For some, it may be returning to the classroom to complete their high school diploma so that they can qualify for employment. Yet, this

motivational orientation is not restricted to professional accomplishment. Houle points out the example of a mother and father who go back to school to better understand and help their child with a learning disability (Houle, 1961). The skills acquired are so that the parents can be more supportive of their child. In this instance, the orientation of the individual, goal-oriented, helps to understand that the individual is motivated by an end result, rather than by an experience.

Activity-oriented. This group of students approaches education for the interpersonal connection that comes with being involved in group learning. Their actions have less to do with the content presented but instead with the relationships formed by interacting with others (Houle, 1961). Houle explains that this group of learners is very similar to that of those who attend church regularly. The social component of the experience is paramount to the learning that takes place or from the credentials awarded. These individuals derive their motivation from the experience rather than by the end result.

Learning-oriented. This final group looked at education not as an episodic experience, but rather a mindset or way of life. Learning-oriented students are motivated by a “desire to know” (Houle, 1961, pp. 24-25). These students are motivated to learn by the satisfaction and love of learning. Houle points out that these students are usually avid readers and are constantly looking for different avenues to absorb learning (Houle, 1961).

Houle’s (1961) study looked at 22 participants who were interviewed to better understand their “purpose” for pursuing education. The three subgroups, goal, activity and learning-oriented, displayed the unique purposes which learners may have approached learning activities. In all three groups, Houle (1961) found that a critical

incident had sparked the individual into action. These “external” or critical events were characterized by:

the recognition of a need or an interest, the will to do something about it, and the opportunity to do so. More important than the external event is the internal process which makes the event, when it occurs, crucial in changing the pattern of life. (pp. 56-57)

Houle’s (1961) view of the external process triggering an internal process is the essence of what this study is seeking. How do these internal dialogues and musings affect a person’s participation in doctoral study? Later researchers would use Houle’s research to build on the area of motivation in particular how motivation affects a person’s pursuit of education.

Malcolm Knowles would follow Houle’s work with his own work on adult education. Andragogy assumes that adults learn differently from children. Knowles (1988) theorized that adult learners: 1) move from a state of dependency toward being self-directed, 2) amass knowledge through their life experiences, 3) their learning needs are related to their social roles and is problem centered, and 4) is interested in immediate use of the knowledge they have gained (Knowles, 1988).

Another theory of adult learning is Self-Directed Learning (SDL). Merriam (2001) defined Self-Directed Learning as “learning that is widespread...occurs as part of adults’ everyday life, and that is systematic yet does not depend on an instructor or a classroom” (p. 8). SDL has three main goals, to develop the learner’s ability to be self-directed, to encourage self-reflection and to enable learners to take action.

Marsick and Watkins (2001) work on Incidental and Informal Learning can be helpful in understanding adult learners. Three basic tenants define informal learning, which includes incidental learning. This type of learning is typically based outside of the traditional classroom setting, is not structured and is coordinated via the learners themselves. Incidental learning is categorized by experiences and lessons learned as a result of some other experience (Marsick & Waktkins, 2001, p. 25). Informal and incidental learning can therefore happen anywhere at any time and in some cases without the learner knowing it is happening. This type of learning opens up many possibilities for students to acquire knowledge outside of a traditional setting. In the case of doctoral students, these informal experiences can help to shape the doctoral experience outside of the classroom as students find ways to incorporate what they have learned in their current work life.

Some people pursue additional degrees and education as part of an inner drive for lifelong learning. Kroth and Boverie (2000) in their study on life mission and adult learning, remarked that “The stronger and more focused that a person's life mission is, the stronger and more focused the learner's self-direction is... Learning may thereby deepen the understanding and meaningfulness of one's life or working purposes” (n.p.).

For many, the pursuit of education throughout their lifetime can be undertaken in many different forms but also for many different purposes. The choice to engage in learning experiences can be driven by a host of factors and issues. Understanding their motivations for doing so can also shed light into their overall thought process.

Motivation

It is important to understand how motivation affects other attributes of degree attainment. In a study by Hoskins and Goldberg (2005), researchers looked at the factors that influence persistence for graduate students in the field of counselor education. Participants stated that program match was an influential factor in their persistence. The two factors within program match were “academic match” and “social-personal match” (p. 179). The academic match referred to the student’s reasons and goals for attaining the degree. Social personal match referred to the relationship between students and their faculty as well as students and their peers (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005). Also, student expectations and experiences were important to persistence. The study supported the idea that doctoral students pursue a terminal degree for either personal or professional reasons. This study is important in that it helps students to examine their reasoning and goals for pursuing a doctorate.

Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, and Abel (2013) examined the relationship between intrinsic motivation to attend college and academic success while also considering the effects of socioeconomic status, gender, GPA and other student characteristics. The study looked at 2,520 students and found that a relationship existed between motivational orientation and academic success. Yet a study conducted by Guerin et al. (2015) looked at motivations to undertake doctoral study as well as to understand how undergraduate experiences with research affected their decision to pursue a doctorate. They pointed out that there is insufficient statistical evidence in regards to the number or nature of motivations to pursue a doctoral research degree. The researchers surveyed 328 “higher degrees of research” (HDR) students and found five areas of motivation for HDR

students. They were “family and friends, intrinsic motivation, lecturer influence, research experience and career progression” (p. 96). In addition, the researchers found that a good match between the student’s motivations for pursuing the degree, type of degree pursued as well as the student’s intended outcomes were important for advancing the higher education profession.

Hinkel et al. (2014) studied the motivations of Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) doctoral students to pursue their doctorate. The researchers used a mixed methods approach to survey 35 current graduate students in a CES program. They found four motivations outlined by their participants; “To be a professor, to establish job security, to become a clinical leader and to succeed for family and community” (Hinkel et al, 2014, n.p.). It is interesting to note the differences in motivations as they pertain to the specific field of study. The participants in this study noted the importance of their CES degree attainment as it related to their gender or race. It could be argued that the motivations for degree attainment are different for different fields of study. The authors go on to suggest that the understanding of students’ motivations may be beneficial in advising students as well as guiding them toward mentor relationships that will help support their progress through their degree program.

Another study conducted by Kemp, Mollory, Pajic, and Chapman (2014) used semi-structured interviews with students from two Australian universities to conduct a thematic analysis of motivation of doctoral students in biomedical research. Their study showed that motivation was displayed in three different orientations for the sample group. The first orientation, termed “Instrumental” (p. 4), focused on extrinsic motivations such as obtaining a reward or avoiding guilt. The next orientation,

“Benevolent Interest” (p. 6), related to students’ pursuit of a degree based on their interest or identification with the research area, specifically in regards to how their research could have an impact on others. Finally, “Innate Interest” (p. 6) pertained to a similar identification with their chosen research area but differed from Benevolent Interest in that the perceived results were beneficial to the individual.

A study on female administrators conducted by Mundy, Kupczynski, and Spillett (2015), looked at the perception of career motivations and success in the field of distance education. Their study examined the thematic results of questionnaires’ distributed to 47 participants. The results showed that participants viewed their motivation as revolving around their interest in the profession, their drive to improve the profession, a sense of a natural progression in their career as well as an appreciation of the potential of the distance education field (Mundy et al., 2015, p. 58). This study also supports the connection between motivation and the doctoral field selected by the student.

Zhou (2014) explored the motivations to persist of six Chinese doctoral students pursuing degrees in STEM fields in the United States. The researcher found through a narrative inquiry approach, that there existed four main motivations for these students to persist; an intrinsic interest in research, a positive view toward doctoral education in the U.S., a perception of high utility of a doctoral degree and a high perceived cost of quitting. Although this research does not deal directly with motivations to begin a degree, it does highlight the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that are present within this experience.

It is clear from the literature presented, that motivation does indeed have an effect on students’ degree attainment. Therefore, it is necessary for this study to approach the

research at hand with a theoretical framework that uses motivation as a way of understanding human behavior. Self Determination Theory was used to undergird this study.

Self Determination Theory

Motivation is key to understanding why people ultimately make decisions and to what ends those decisions are directed (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The present study looks at motivational factors which affect why someone chooses to pursue doctoral studies in higher education administration. Deci and Ryan (2000) chose to explain motivation through the framework of Self Determination Theory. Their work focuses on the conditions that affect human motivation and how that knowledge can help to build social environments that foster and optimize students' development and well-being (p. 68). Ryan and Deci (2000) also suggest that individuals are moved to act for different reasons based on different factors which in turn have different effects and consequences. In addition, they believe that "people will be intrinsically motivated only for activities that hold intrinsic interest for them, activities that have the appeal of novelty, challenge, or aesthetic value" (p. 71).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is defined as "an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an 'organismic metatheory' that highlights the importance of humans' evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation" (Deci & Ryan, 2014, p. 68). The authors of this theory, Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, point to three "innate psychological needs" for self-motivation; competence, relatedness and autonomy. The authors relate these needs to the basic nutrients that humans need to survive. Humans

have psychological needs just as they have biological needs. “SDT conceives of humans as active, growth-oriented organisms, that innately seek and engage challenges in their environments, attempting to actualize their potentialities, capacities, and sensibilities” (Ryan & Deci, 2014, p. 8). Just as in humans, there are necessary conditions for growth in one’s cognitive and psychological self.

According to Deci and Ryan (2000), SDT assumes that humans have a natural constructivist tendency toward interconnectedness and learning. Humans have a propensity toward learning about themselves and the world around them. It is this humanistic curiosity that we see in toddlers and infants who learn to walk, talk and interact with the world around them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT shows that there are certain environmental factors that affect our tendency toward learning. These factors can be exploited to advance learning, or can hinder learning. The three basic psychological needs, competence, autonomy, and relatedness, have been shown to affect motivation both positively and negatively. It is this effect on our environment that in turn affects our motivation (Deci, Ryan, & Guay, 2013).

The three basic needs as prescribed by Deci et al. (2013), competence, relatedness and autonomy are outlined below. Competence is defined as the need for individuals to seek challenges that are outside their perceived limitations. Individuals expand on their competence by expanding on their knowledge and abilities that in turn affect their capacity. Relatedness involves one’s feelings as they relate to feelings of connectedness and belonging. This connectedness leads to one feeling as part of a greater group or society. Finally, autonomy relates to one’s feelings of control over their own decisions

and actions. Individuals should have the feeling that they are in control of their actions that are in congruence with their value systems (Deci et al., 2013).

These needs are acted upon via the idea of self-regulation. Self-regulation pertains to how individuals take in social values and extrinsic forces and transform them into personal values and motivations. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), the three psychosocial needs are affected by three types of motivation, or self-regulation. These are Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation and Amotivation.

Intrinsic motivation is the human tendency toward learning and creativity. It is also the part of human nature that seeks out learning experiences and challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation deals with factors and variables that affect someone toward doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction or joy of completing the task. The locus of causality, the reason behind the why, is internal (Deci & Ryan, 2004).

Extrinsic motivation refers to interaction with an activity that brings with it some tangible outcome, rather than for the inherent satisfaction of the activity as in intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation therefore has an external locus of causality (Deci & Ryan, 2004). The “why” is from outside of the person. Deci and Ryan (2000) point out that humans are naturally endowed with intrinsic motivation, but at some point extrinsic factors take over, thus the need for ongoing maintenance of motivation.

Amotivation is the process by which someone acts to satisfy a need without understanding their reasons or purpose of undertaking the task (Deci et al., 2013). People are more likely to be amotivated toward a task with which they see no value in or with which they do not feel competent to complete (Deci & Ryan, 2015). These three causality orientations, intrinsic, extrinsic and amotivation, present themselves at varying levels

within all persons. Therefore, one cannot be categorized as one of the three, rather certain behaviors can present themselves based on certain causalities.

Self Determination Theory is useful in this study in that it has been shown to highlight the factors and variables within a person's environment that affect a person's ability to motivate themselves and create perceptions of positive wellbeing as well as work against those factors that may prevent or hamper motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2004). Thus, SDT does not seek to explain what causes intrinsic motivation, but rather what conditions "elicit and sustain, versus subdue and diminish, this innate propensity" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70).

Houston (2014) used competence, autonomy and relatedness within SDT to evaluate the PhD student experience as well as the faculty's perspective on the PhD experience. The study looked at how the structure, the environmental factors, of the PhD program helped or hindered the student's feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness. The results of the study outlined recommendations to improve the PhD student experience including the creation of additional opportunities for professional development, creating a stronger sense of community and creating opportunities for students to have autonomy within their academic program (p. 156). This study is important in that it shows how SDT was used to understand both the environmental factors as well as the personal interactions with members of experience (faculty and students) and their relation to feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness.

Cardona (2013) presented a similar study of SDT in relation to doctoral motivation. In this study, Cardona surveyed 36 doctoral students in the Social Sciences and found that students who received support in terms of autonomy, relatedness and

competence were more able to articulate their needs and thus adapt their self-motivated mindset. Cardona showed that using SDT as a way of understanding doctoral student motivation could provide faculty with a new way of seeing their doctoral students. Rather than focus on skill and knowledge building within their programs, they should focus on students “curiosity, interest and confidence, thereby fostering the development of intrinsic motivation towards degree completion” (p. 210).

A study by Sheldon, Garton, Orr, and Smith (2015) looked at the effect of autonomy on the advisor/student relationship. Their study found that “The importance of advisor autonomy support underscores the need to consider not just what the advisor knows and whether the student can access this knowledge but also how well the advisor can mentor the student and help the student to activate his or her own internal resources” (p. 271). In this instance, the need for autonomy is filled by an advisor who both provides support and mentors the student toward self-motivated, or self-regulated, behavior. A study by Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, and Adkison (2011) looked specifically at how feelings of relatedness were effected by participation in cohort learning communities. They found that there was compelling evidence to suggest that a sense of relatedness contributed to their academic preparedness and job preparation (p. 867).

The studies mentioned above allow us to see how previous researchers have used Self Determination Theory to explore and draw meaning from the different experiences and interactions associated with a person’s involvement in an activity, in our case doctoral study. The studies show us that by using SDT, practitioners involved with the planning and implementation of academic programs could improve the success of their students by first understanding their student’s motivational orientations.

Theories within SDT. Ryan and Deci (2014) include four distinct sub-theories within Self Determination Theory. These theories have evolved over time as a result of writing and research within SDT. The four major theories that have arisen from SDT are, Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Organismic Integration Theory, Causality Orientations Theory and Basic Needs Theory. I will briefly summarize them below.

Cognitive evaluation theory (CET). CET states that needs for competence and autonomy are related and that actions such as feedback and rewards are likely to have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation. This micro theory of SDT, focuses on two primary cognitive factors that have an effect upon intrinsic motivation; they are “perceived locus of causality” and “perceived competence” (Ryan & Deci, 2014, p. 11). Locus of causality refers to the effect that an event has on the competence of an individual. An action that has a positive effect on competence will have a positive effect on motivation, whereas negative effects will have a negative effect on motivation. In CET, autonomy and competence are interconnected. Positive feedback can only have an effect on intrinsic motivation when the individual feels that they are in control of their own autonomy and have a high level of competence related to the activity (Ryan & Deci, 2014). CET only focuses on social-contextual variables and lacks a clear connection to relatedness, which Ryan and Deci postulate as needed for an individual to learn and grow. In addition, it only includes activities that individuals find interesting and therefore connected to their intrinsic motivation.

Organismic integration theory (OIT). OIT refers to the effects of external effects on motivation. Ryan and Deci (2014) show motivation via a sliding scale, with amotivation on one end, extrinsic motivation in the middle and intrinsic motivation at the

other end (see Figure 1.) According to Ryan and Deci (2014), external effects are internalized by individuals to the point where those effects are internalized into one's self. External motivation is characterized by four types of effects, or regulations. They are external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation.

These four types of regulation also fall on a continuum within the Ryan and Deci motivational continuum. They range from less to more autonomous. The least autonomous, external regulation refers to common understanding of extrinsic motivation in that individuals are motivated to act by the enticement of a reward or to avoid consequences. In relation to Cognitive Evaluation Theory, external regulation has an external locus of causality (Ryan & Deci, 2014).

As we move away from less autonomy we move toward introjected regulation which deals with the internalization of behavior but for less external reasons. For example, introjected regulation is typically manifested in a person acting to avoid embarrassment or shame. The internal behavior has slightly less to do with the individual and more to do with external controls, i.e., showing embarrassment to others. (Ryan & Deci, 2014).

Identified regulation pertains to behaviors that are more closely resembling self-determination. In this type of regulation an individual act's out a behavior because they identify the behavior as having value or relation to a personal goal. This type of motivation can be characterized as an active choice. The individual has full understanding of their choice in behavior and connects their choices with their values (Deci et al., 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2014). An example of this would be a teenager who chooses not to smoke because they understand the effects that long term tobacco use can have on their body.

Finally, integrated regulation refers to extrinsic motivation in its most autonomous form. Individuals that act with integrated regulation do so with an understanding of how their actions are congruent with their feelings of self and value. This form of regulation is closest to true intrinsic motivation, yet is still extrinsic in that the action is performed because of some external reward or consequence (Deci et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2014). Extrinsically motivated behaviors are not in themselves

very interesting or enticing for individuals therefore in many instances a reward or consequence are offered to spur someone into completing a task. In many cases these rewards or consequences are dictated by a loved one, significant other or person of power. It is therefore the common need of relatedness that is most fulfilled by the internalization of these types of regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2014).

It is important to note that integrated regulation and intrinsic motivation although similar are not the same. Deci and Ryan (2017) point out that the two are distinguishable in terms of time. Those whose behavior are intrinsically motivated are directed through the enjoyment or satisfaction that comes from a behavior or activity being experienced in the present moment. Those that are integrally regulation are focused on goals or outcomes that may be achieved in the future (pp.197-198).

Causality-orientations theory. This mini-theory relates to causality orientations and how they fall along an index of behavior and experience. According to Ryan and Deci (2014), all individuals have three orientations in regards to self-determination that are based on the function of social context and a person's inner resources over time. These orientations are autonomy orientation, controlled orientation and impersonal orientation. All individuals have varying degrees of these orientations.

Autonomous orientation refers to the regulation of one's behaviors based on interest and is in relation to intrinsic motivation. This type of behavior is characterized by a person's "full sense of willingness, volition and choice (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017, p. 20.). Autonomously oriented behaviors are often intrinsically motivated. Deci et al. (2017) point out that in work environments extrinsically motivated behaviors can be

autonomously motivated, but only if they are approached with “authenticity and vitality (p. 20).

Controlled orientation describes a person’s tendencies toward behaving according to values and accepted ways of behaving. In that respect controlled orientation is likened to extrinsic motivation. Finally, impersonal orientation refers to behaviors that are acted out without intention or purpose. In this they are similar to amotivation (Ryan & Deci, 2014).

Basic needs theory. Deci and Ryan (2004) point out that basic psychosocial needs must be met for motivation to be realized. They note that the research on well-being and needs has surfaced in three basic constructs. First, the exploration of needs from within a person, the analysis of a person’s perception of needs satisfaction over time and well-being and needs satisfaction as a function of one’s culture. Other research has explored the process of working toward a goal and achieving that goals and its effect on well-being

Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996) used multiple studies to look at the differences between how people place importance on intrinsic versus extrinsic goals. They found that when attention was placed on intrinsic goals there was a positive correlation in self-actualization, vitality and mood. Conversely, when attention was placed toward extrinsic goals such as financial success subjects presented higher levels of anxiety and depression (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, p. 420). Likewise, Sheldon and Kasser (1998) found in a longitudinal study that “participants ... who had stronger social and self-regulatory skills, as rated by themselves and by their peers, made more progress in their personal projects over the course of the semester (p. 1329). The “self-regulatory skills” that the authors point to are the essence of intrinsic motivation.

The breadth and depth of Self Determination Theory as a theoretical framework allow for a rich exploration of this phenomenon. The embedded metatheories allow researchers to delve deep into an experience by examining motivation along a continuum, as with extrinsic motivation, while also looking at the phenomenon from a macro level as in understanding motivation as autonomous or controlled. SDT unlike other theories of motivation is broad in scope allowing for a more universal application across disciplines.

Self Determination Theory in Doctoral Studies

Self Determination Theory has been used to study various fields within doctoral education. Litalien, Guay, and Morin (2015) used SDT to develop an SDT-based scale that would assess motivation for PhD studies. The resulting scale and its subsequent validation within the two samples suggested that by increasing autonomous motivation (intrinsic, integrated and identified) and decreasing controlled motivation, doctoral students could experience higher levels of well-being and mediate the propensity for dropout.

Much of the research on motivation of doctoral students has focused on persistence, attrition and time to degree. Studies presented by Baness (2011), Garcia (2014), Nakitende (2012) and Richardson (2011) all focus on motivation as a determinate in respect to a subject's experiences within a doctoral program. This study sought to understand motivation prior to beginning the doctoral journey. Guerin et al. (2015) looked at motivations to pursue a doctorate but did so from a global perspective rather than a discipline specific perspective. As mentioned in Kemp et al. (2014), the academic discipline can play an important role in the motivations one has in pursuing a doctorate in that field. This study sought to understand the motivations of student affairs

administrators' motivation for considering participating in doctoral education in a higher education administration program. The singular focus of this study sets it apart from previous studies that looked at motivation of a broad range of academic disciplines and at different points in doctoral progression.

Self Determination Theory provides a useful construct through which we can view motivation within this study. Deci and Ryan (2000) allow for a multifaceted, yet clear organization of the many iterations of motivation. At a high level motivation can be broken into three distinct categories; amotivation, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. We know through research that when a subject pursues a goal for intrinsic reasons there is an increase in positive attributes such as self-actualization and vitality (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996). In addition, within extrinsic motivation Deci and Ryan (2000) provide a framework for understanding the varying categories of extrinsic motivation. This metatheory of motivation allows us to understand regulatory processes that a subject undergoes while transforming extrinsically motivated behaviors into intrinsically motivated behaviors. It is the hope of this study that SDT will help to inform the factors that exist within one's environment that will enhance or thwart their motivation to pursue a degree.

Chapter Summary

This study looks at how motivation affects student affairs practitioner's participation in doctoral education. The current disparity in the number of master's degree graduates and the number of those who enter doctoral degree studies is troublesome. Motivation can be a key in understanding why individuals choose to pursue a doctorate. This study used Self Determination Theory to create a framework for

understanding the contributing factors of motivation for students pursuing a degree. The literature shows that a person's motivation is typically affected either by personal or professional goals. These affects are further identified within SDT in the forms of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation. In essence motivation, as posited by SDT, is a function of social context, a person's inner resources and time. These three aspects interact with each other to inform one's motivation. Chapter 3 will discuss the method for examining the effects of motivation on participation in doctoral studies using the theoretical lens of Self Determination Theory.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand the motivations of student affairs administrators to participate in doctoral education. Currently, the field of education sees a 94% decrease in the number of students who graduate with a master's degree and then elect to pursue a doctoral degree; a decrease of 4,071 to 579 (NCES, 2015). To that end, the field of education, which Higher Education Administration (HEA) is a sub-discipline, historically produces a large number of graduates in the doctoral and master's degrees. It is important for the field of education to better understand motivations to pursue doctoral studies so that we might better position ourselves for higher numbers of participants in doctoral education. The current study used Self Determination Theory (SDT) as a lens for exploring these motivations through a qualitative phenomenological methodology.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to understand motivations within the sample group. Qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals “experience and interact with their social world” (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). Specifically, phenomenology will serve as the primary research method. Phenomenology is interested in capturing the essence of an experience (Merriam, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). This method uses the researcher to describe the lived experiences of the subjects and to seek out themes and commonalities that can help researchers better understand those lived experiences. Van Manen (1984) speaks of phenomenology as the “search for what it is to be human” (p. 2). In phenomenology, it is the researcher's responsibility to describe, rather than interpret, the lived experiences of the sample. Collier-Reed and Ingerman (2013) point out that:

In deciding whether phenomenology can help a researcher answer the question posed in their research, it is important to take care to frame the question appropriately. As the approach is directed towards understanding the relationship between a student and the phenomenon in the world it is important that the phenomenon is one that is able to be clearly articulated and shared by those participating in the research (p. 244).

In the end, the results of a phenomenological study are a “descriptive account of the range of different ways” that the phenomenon is experienced (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013). In keeping with the basic tenants of qualitative research, this study seeks to “uncover the meaning of a situation has for those involved (Merriam, 2002, p. 11).

Phenomenology looks at the experience or perception revolving around an object or action. It is not the action itself, but rather the experience of, and more importantly the description of, the action. In order for a researcher to truly observe a phenomenon, they must first separate, or bracket, their own knowledge or predilections of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher must be open to seeing the phenomenon through fresh eyes. “Phenomenology...

attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience (Merriam, 2002, p. 41).

This methodology allows the researcher to seek out truth not through their own “intuition or perceptions” but instead through observations and investigations of the phenomenon itself without interference from the outside.

Research questions

The research questions that guided this qualitative study were:

1. What motivational orientations (Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Amotivation) are present during a participant’s discernment to attain a doctorate in Higher Education Administration?
2. How has their motivational orientation changed during their discernment process?
3. How do environmental factors impact these motivational orientations?

Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the assumptions of how knowledge is created. It is important to understand the relationship between the “would be knower and what can be known?” (Scotland, 2012). This study takes an interpretist’s view of knowing, in that the researcher is interested in understanding the individual’s behaviors as they exist within that individual’s reality. In other words, how does the subject interpret their own reality? Van Manen (2007) refers to it as “the space of the formative relations, between who we are and who we may become, between how we think or feel and how we act” (p.26).

Moustakas (1998) refers to this knowing as “noema or noesis.” Noema refers to the object being experienced and noesis is the way the object is being experienced. “The noema is not the real object but the phenomenon, not the tree but the appearance of the

tree” (p. 29). The researcher helps the subject to reflect on their own reality and thus interpret or bring together the internal and external perceptions (Moustakas, 1998).

Research Context

The data from this study was collected from current student affairs administrators. These individuals work on college campuses and are therefore situated in an academic setting. Their work environment is thus informed and affected by the pursuance of higher education. Crotty (1998) reminds us that we do not “create” our environment, rather we “construct” it (p. 44). The attributes of that environment are preexisting rather than created by the subject. Therefore, the attributes of that environment are important to this study.

As Glesne (2011) points out, the selection of a research site might not be applicable given the research problem. In the case of this study, the participants were not located at one unique and specific location, but rather were spread out at a number of locations throughout the United States. It can be expected, that given the nature of the population (student affairs administrators) that their environment, being situated most likely on or near a college campus, there should exist a number of similarities.

Population

Student affairs administrators were the research focus of this study. Student affairs administrators comprise the non-academic, developmental aspects of the college and university administration. Over time the field has evolved from a student management to a student development focus (Komives et al. 2003). This focus on education and the development of students through educational experiences has caused many administrators to seek out advanced degrees to meet this need.

This study looked at a group of student affairs administrators who had not yet begun doctoral study but were interested in pursuing a doctorate in the near future. This sample was different from prior samples studied in that the experiences that were being sought out were those prior to enrollment, rather than during studies or post-graduation. The participants of the study were gathered through the use of student affairs professional organizations such as the National Association Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Administrators (ACPA). These two organizations comprise the major professional leadership and development for professionals in the field of student affairs. Both of these organizations, as well as other focus area specific organizations, have substantial outreach programs for individuals contemplating or completing doctoral studies.

Participants

The participants in this study were prospective participants in doctoral studies in Higher Education Administration. The group was unique to previous studies of participants in doctoral studies in that they were discerning a doctorate but had yet to start a HEA program. The participants were asked to look back on their experience in retrospect, but also their experience while in the process of discerning the doctorate. In phenomenology, “descriptions of perception and experience have to be made in terms of their content. To characterize how something is apprehended, thought about or perceived is by definition a qualitative question” (Martin, 1988, p. 145). In this case, the discernment process is the phenomenon being studied.

Participants, approximately 8-10 in total, were solicited through the researcher’s own professional networks within the student affairs profession. Existing *listservs* and

social media groups were used to solicit participants for the study. The researcher utilized his membership in Facebook groups such as “Higher Education Professionals” and “Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity- Higher Education Community” as well as membership in the National Association of Campus Activities South Region listserv and Facebook page.

Participants were required to match the following criteria:

- Participants should be current administrators working in student affairs/student services at a college or university in the United States.
- Participants should be contemplating enrolling in a higher education doctoral program to pursue a PhD. or EdD.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling in order to solicit responses from individuals who were currently experiencing the phenomenon. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to solicit participation from individuals whom he knows display certain attributes or who have special knowledge about the topic being studied (Berg, 1998).

Confidentiality

Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was maintained within the limits allowed by the law. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing identifiable data within the interview transcripts and written responses. This type of data is not relevant to the study and therefore does not need to be recorded. Consent forms and transcript files were kept in a locked file cabinet in the possession of the lead investigator. Records were kept confidential to the extent provided by federal, state, and local laws. Upon completion of the study, all names and email addresses were destroyed.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews, pre-interview surveys, participant review of the data collected, as well as the use of researcher descriptive notes. The primary method used was semi-structured interviews. Interviews are common in phenomenological studies. Phenomenology is interested in descriptions of “themes of perception, intention, time-consciousness, and the origin of experiences and their relationship among experiences” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Since this research methodology focused on the self-reflection of experiences and the perceived objects of those experiences, interviews were an appropriate data collection method.

The semi-structured interview allowed for a predetermined set of questions to guide the interview but also allowed for the flexibility that may come in the exploration of a phenomenon (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Interviews, 8-10 in total, took place via video conferencing through YouTube Live (see Appendix A). The interviews were recorded for later transcription and analysis. A transcribed interview allows for the researcher to create “categories of meaning” that emerge from the separate interviews (Akerlind, 2016).

In order to better crystalize the data (Richardson, 1994), multiple data collection methods were used to verify the data collected through interviews. Participants were asked to complete a reflective prompt (see Appendix B) prior to their interview. This process helped the participant to begin reflecting on the essence of their experience. During the interviews, the researcher kept descriptive notes in addition to reflective notes taken during the data analysis period. In doing so, the researcher welcomed the assumption of the role the researcher plays as part of the topic being researched. While

the bracketing (Moustakas, 1994) of the researchers preconceived ideas and notions relating to the topic will allow for better subjectivity, the reflective notes and thoughts of the researcher were helpful in adding further dimension to the study. Additionally, once participants had completed their individual interviews with the researcher, they were asked to review the transcripts and researcher notes to verify the researcher's findings and if necessary provide rebuttal or clarification.

Data Analysis

In qualitative data analysis, and supported by the tenants of phenomenology, conceptual categories are only established once they have presented themselves in the data. Conceptual categories should not be established prior to interviews taking place (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Moustakas (1994) outlines a three step method for analyzing the data. First, epoche, or phenomenological reduction, which as discussed earlier is the setting aside of preconceived ideas and understandings related to the phenomenon. Second, Moustakas refers to imaginative variation which is the varying of research questions and techniques to identify themes and underlying context. The final step is called "synthesis of meanings and essences". This process involves the "intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole" (p. 100).

In keeping with Moustakas's (1994) method of "synthesis of meanings and essences", interviews, once transcribed, were reviewed for themes using open coding. Open coding refers to reviewing the transcripts for high level themes or contexts that are represented in the data (Berg, 1993). These themes were continually assessed throughout the individual transcripts to look for commonality, frequency and possibly discourse.

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously throughout the collection of data (Merriam, 2000).

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher so that the text of the interview could be analyzed for related content. The qualitative research software MAXQDA was used to analyze the transcripts, pre-interview prompts as well as researcher notes and reflections. MAXQDA allows for the researcher to upload digital versions of the interviews that can then be coded visually on the screen. The software helps the researcher to visualize the coding process through the use of color codes as well as make connections between codes.

The first step was for the researcher to read and reread the data in order to elicit themes and categories that could be formed into codes. Words and phrases were selected from individual interviews that helped to describe the experience of the participants. In some cases, the selections were chosen due to their repetition amongst other participant responses. Other codes may have been selected because they represented an experience that was contrary to the others in the group.

These codes could then be used in identifying portions of the text in which those codes were being expressed. This was achieved by reviewing interviews for a second time in an effort to ensure that all of the transcripts were reviewed for possible codes. Once codes were identified and applied to the text the researcher then began to explore relationships within the data.

Thematic Analysis

Once the data was fully coded, the researcher reviewed the coded segments to elicit themes. These themes were identified by first reviewing the transcript for

identifiable patterns. These patterns could then be connected across participant transcripts to form categories or sub-themes. In MAXQDA, the codes can be grouped into headings which describe the theme. Once all of the codes have been grouped, the themes can be expanded upon. Moustakas (1994) referred to this as thematization, or the grouping of codes into clusters. Once themes and categories were established the researcher could begin to construct arguments, based on the data and related literature, that helped to describe the lived experiences of the participants.

Trustworthiness

Validity is defined as “the extent to which a study is seen as investigating what it aimed to investigate, or the degree to which the research findings actually reflect the phenomenon being studied” (Akerlind, 2012). Validation of data for this study was achieved by participant review of the interview transcripts and researcher notes. Glesne (2011) refers to this as member checking. This is an effort to insure that the researcher has characterized the participant’s responses accurately. Once the interviews were transcribed and the major themes synthesized, each participant was asked to review the findings and to comment on any additions or corrections that were needed. This was in keeping with the idea that in phenomenology, the data is representative of the perception of experience, not necessarily the experience itself (Akerlind, 2012). Thus, the inclusion of participant review of the findings supported the validity of the data collected.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with 5 participants to test the researcher’s methodology and research questions. The pilot study sought to answer the following research questions:

1: What types of motivations do practitioners in student affairs have when they decide to participate in a doctorate in higher education administration?

2: What are the differences between those who choose to pursue a doctorate for intrinsic, extrinsic or other motivating reasons?

All of the participants in the pilot study referenced in some form or another how certain extrinsic factors affected their overall motivation to pursue a doctorate. Yet, all participants described their main motivational orientation for pursuing a doctorate as intrinsic in nature.

The altruistic vision of the value of education and its place in one's drive to better oneself came through clearly in the data. In all areas of life, the research participants saw intrinsic, internal factors as driving their motivation to achieve their goals. The only minor extrinsic factor discussed was the ability of a doctorate to advance them in their career.

The pilot study allowed for the researcher to test the research questions and methodology. This testing process showed that clarification was needed for participants to better understand the research purpose and thus the design of the research questions themselves. Those clarifications are presented in the current study.

Subjectivity Statement

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this research is very closely related to my educational journey. I have long examined my own motivations for participating in doctoral study. In keeping with epoche and bracketing within phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), it is important to state my own views as they relate to the study at hand. I am currently a

doctoral student and although not a participant in this study, I am the principle researcher therefore my own prejudgments must be noted and withheld during the collection of data.

I believe that education is a responsibility of every person. Learning in every form is essential to a healthy and productive life. Learned skills and adaptations are a part of our biological or “organamistic” nature (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Knowledge much like behavior must be learned in order to survive. Thus, it is my belief that those who wish to better themselves and their position in life should do all they can to further educate themselves.

I currently work at an institution of higher learning. My background is in student affairs, and therefore I have a great understanding for the role of student affairs administrators on college campuses. During my time as a student affairs administrator, I was discouraged at the lack of motivation of my coworkers to pursue doctoral studies. Many, I felt, were complacent and simply wished to settle for their current lot in life. While complacent, these colleagues were also quick to complain about their lack of advancement within the organization and greater field. This lack of motivation and ignorance of their own role in their professional advancement guided me toward the study of motivation. I believe that by having a greater understanding of motivation to pursue a doctorate I can better understand how these types of individuals fall into complacency.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology employed for this study. The research method, phenomenology was qualitative in nature and sought to understand and describe the essence of the lived experience of those involved in the phenomenon; in this case the

motivation to participate in doctoral education. The data collection and analysis techniques were discussed as well as connected back to the tenants of the phenomenological research methodology. In Chapter 4 we will report the findings of this study.

Chapter 4

Findings

In this chapter I will discuss the themes as they pertain to the research questions that were elicited throughout the participant interviews. The themes that were distilled from the participant interviews can best be described by four themes; Professional, Personal and Dual Role Motivations and Environmental Factors. These themes help to illustrate the varying motivations which participants hold and navigate while considering pursuing a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. This chapter will discuss each of these themes and their effect on the participant's discernment.

Participant Information

The participants for this study were solicited via two higher education specific Facebook groups. Members of the group either self-selected to participate or forwarded the information to other student affairs professionals who would qualify for the study. A total of fifteen individuals initially volunteered for participation in this study. That initial pool of fifteen was sent the Pre-Interview Prompt (see Appendix B) and of those one was deemed inadmissible for the study and twelve completed the prompt. Those twelve were invited to schedule an interview and of that group eight signed up for and completed the interview. Interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted through use of YouTube Live and were recorded for later transcription. Participants were assigned identification numbers based on when they volunteered to participate. The final group represented different genders, student affairs functional areas, years in the field as well as different geographical locations (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Years in Field	Functional Area
Justin	Male	2	Residence Life
Mike	Male	9	Student Activities
Mallory	Female	9	Student Engagement
Michelle	Female	14	Residence Life
Christy	Female	1	Academic Support
Jennifer	Female	10	Student Conduct
Emily	Female	8	Special Projects
Margaret	Female	7	Academic Advising

Justin is a young new professional working in the area of residence life. He had only been working in the field for two years at the time of the interview. In addition, he was in the process of changing jobs and moving to a college in the Northeast. He was a first-generation college student from a rural county in Mississippi. He worked as a resident assistant as an undergraduate and continued that work into his assistantships in residence life in graduate school. Justin is one of the less experienced professionals in the group. His experience of pursuing a doctorate was not as rich as some of the other participants in the study. As a young professional he still viewed the doctorate as a future goal but had yet to interact with life experiences that would have hindered or slowed his progress.

Mike is a mid-level professional working at a small college in Georgia. He is married with three children and is actively seeking out a doctorate. He works as a Director of Student Activities and has worked in that field for eight years. He has a Master of Science in Higher Education Administration. He has aspirations of one day being a Dean of Students or possibly a Vice President of Student Affairs. Mike's discernment process is heavily influenced by his family life. He is a father of three young children. He is grappling with managing a new job, a large family, as well as his wife

reentering the workforce. He recognizes the struggles he will encounter in this process but is persisting nonetheless.

Mallory recently started a new position as a Director of Student Engagement at a small regional college. Prior to this she worked at both a small liberal arts college as well as a large state institution in Florida. Both of those experiences have shaped how she views the doctorate. At the time of the interview she had just recently been married and was expecting her first child. Mallory is hyper focused on her professional development and is eagerly considering a doctorate. Part of her discernment process is adjusting to life as both a mother and a wife. She understands that her doctoral pursuits will have to be managed in relation to these new life roles.

Michelle is a seasoned professional having worked in the area of residence life for over 14 years. She is heavily involved in her regional professional development organization and is just finishing a two-year term in a leadership role for the organization. She is married and has young children so her consideration for a degree is being balanced by her role as a mother and wife. Like most of the participants her motivation for the doctorate has ebbed and flowed over the years. For Michelle, the timing of the doctorate is an important consideration. She understands that her doctorate will need to be planned in conjunction with other life experiences, for example having more children.

Christy is similar to Justin in that she is new to the profession. She has only been in her position for less than a year. Previously she worked as a counselor in the field of mental health. Christy recognizes her lack of knowledge in her new field and is eager to learn so that she can improve in her job. Her new position in the area of academic support calls upon her background in counseling but still calls for the development of new

skillsets. She is seeking a degree to help “round out” her professional knowledge. Like Justin, her views on the doctorate are not as well formed as some of the seasoned administrators in the group.

Jennifer is an experienced professional in the area of student conduct. She began her career in residence life prior to working in conduct. As an undergraduate she worked as a resident assistant and was on her college’s honor board. Both experiences led to her current position. She is an Assistant Dean of Students at a small college in Pennsylvania. Her pursuit of a doctorate is driven by her love for learning. The academic rigor of the prospective institution was of importance to her. She had already chosen the program that she wanted to apply to. The proximity of the degree granting institution to her current job was an important factor for Jennifer. She did not want to uproot her family to pursue a degree.

Emily did her undergraduate and graduate work in the midwest prior to arriving at her current institution. She works in special projects reporting to the Chancellor of her institution. Although not strictly a student affairs position, a great deal of her current work involved working directly with students in a pseudo-student affairs role. Her doctoral considerations were affected by her family life. At the time of the interview she and her family were considering a move and including possibly pursuing a doctorate as part of their search. Emily was heavily influenced by her previous supervisors who had all been women and all had earned their doctorate.

Margaret works in academic support at a midsized school in the northeast. She earned her Master’s degree in Higher Education Administration with a concentration in Sexuality Studies. She is interested in a doctorate to both be an administrator but also to

teach, hopefully in the area of Women's Studies. Her undergraduate experience working as a teacher aid and facilitator affected her motivation to pursue the doctorate. She too is balancing the needs of her family with her aspirations of completing this degree.

Margaret also described how sibling competition, both of her siblings had earned doctoral degrees, motivated her to pursue her doctorate.

Self Determination Theory

This study's theoretical framework was based in Self Determination Theory (SDT) which chooses to explain human behaviors through multiple lenses of motivation. SDT is defined as "an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an 'organismic metatheory' that highlights the importance of humans' evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation" (Deci & Ryan, 2014, p. 68).

This theory assumes that certain factors or conditions must be present for individuals to be motivated to act. These three basic psychological needs, competence, autonomy, and relatedness, have been shown to affect motivation both positively and negatively (Deci et al., 2013). As mentioned in Chapter 2, Ryan and Deci (2000) noted that those psychological needs are acted upon via the idea of self-regulation, or how an individual takes in social values and extrinsic forces and transforms them into personal values and motivations. The three types of self-regulation are intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation. The participants in this study spoke of a wide range of motivational orientations in relation to their consideration for pursuing a degree.

Introduction of Themes

Once the data was reviewed and analyzed, three categorical themes were determined through the use of open coding. This refers to reviewing the transcripts for high level themes or contexts that are represented in the data (Berg, 1993). This was done by reviewing both congruent and incongruent ideas and comments presented by the participants in their interviews. This included reviewing the frequency and consistency of statements made across interviews. Similar ideas and concepts were grouped together. Once the related minor themes were grouped, broader thematic categories were revealed. These broader categories were directly linked to the research questions. The final categorical themes were:

Theme 1: Professional Motivations

Theme 2: Personal Motivations

Theme 3: Dual Role Motivations

Theme 4: Environmental Factors

This process was in keeping with Moustakas's (1994) method of "synthesis of meanings and essences". In phenomenology, the researcher is seeking to describe the lived experience of the participant rather than interpret meanings.

Professional Motivations

This study centered on participants reflecting on their motivations to pursue doctoral study in Higher Education Administration. It is therefore not surprising that participants discussed their thoughts in terms of their professional lives and experiences. The first theme presented through this section of the interviews was the idea of the effect

a doctorate would have on their career. Mallory discussed how her motivation to pursue her doctorate stemmed from a need to not feel limited in her career opportunities.

I find that the roles that require a doctorate are more appealing to me in the context that I'm in currently, and I don't want to be limited. So I think to some degree even if I remain in a director's position and never pursue an Associate VP or like Dean's role or a Vice Presidential role, I just don't want to ever limit myself... I don't want to get down the road and be like well if I had just done that and so I think it keeps me relevant (Mallory).

Mallory goes on to say in a later part of the interview;

At the end of the day I just don't want to be limited when I get to the point of wanting to pursue a next step. I'm kind of at that crux of almost hitting ten years being in a position where I can start to see myself applying for some of those and being in an environment where I would really enjoy those roles in the way that it's lived here at this institution.

Others mentioned the notion that they needed the doctorate to move to the next step in their career.

I've maxed out positionally (sic) where I can go with a master's. I was just promoted to Assistant Dean of Students and this is the second time in my career that I will have been an Assistant Dean and I know here at my school that the Dean has to have a doctorate and I think across the board if not the Dean then the VP generally now needs to have a doctorate (Jennifer).

Margaret also described the perception that her years of experience may not be enough to get her to the next level.

I think there is something to be said about accomplishing your terminal degree in your field because for me what lies ahead is far more abundant than if I were to try to balance what my current credentials are with the number of years of experience and really hope that that is valued as the terminal degree would be and recognizing that that is an issue in this in this field and in this industry. So, with that I want to be positioning myself to do what I want and to not necessarily regret not being prepared (Margaret).

Some participants described the doctorate as necessary for their future;

Knowing that it's a necessity but knowing that my end goal of hopefully being a VP one day...that more than likely it is going to be needed and if not it's going to severely limit where I need to be (Mike).

Mike goes on to say later;

I mean the biggest reason is to have the opportunity to have more opportunities down the road in my career, but while using that knowledge and expounding on ways to help out and be able to do some things on campus with that knowledge such as leadership development programs or you know just kind of whatever stuff that I may not necessarily know how to do right now but after I get more training kind of be able to develop that. I don't want to be left behind knowing that it's something that needs to be done (Mike).

Mike references a mindset that all of the participants had in common. All participants looked at the doctorate as a foregone conclusion for their professional careers. It was more a matter of when it would be accomplished and less of if it would be accomplished.

Yet, many of the participants indicated that although their particular career path may be unknown, they were committed to the field of Higher Education.

I am trying to figure out if I want to move into a leadership position and as an associate vice president or a vice president, a PhD or an EdD, gives me more credibility. Would it give me more earning power? Would it? I'm not sure what the future path holds for my career but I do know that barring any unforeseen circumstances I'm pretty committed to being in higher education. (Emily).

All but one of the participants described the perception of the doctorate as a credential, or proverbial “hoop” to jump through in their career. Justin spoke of it as a “gate keeper”;

I've always seen it as a gate keeper in order to climb, if you would, the ladder of “success”. Then also to just, being a first-generation college student being from a low-income family for the middle of nowhere Mississippi I've had opportunities to be able to go to college and then I feel like if I stop now before I get that PhD that I am doing a disservice to my family.

Michelle had a similar outlook;

Yeah, I think it's yeah you know I've heard some folks say the doctorate is the new masters; the Masters is the new bachelors. It's a little bit of keeping up with the Joneses and not wanting to be left behind (Michelle).

Michelle, Justin, and Emily all reference the doctorate in terms of a requirement for their career advancement. It can be seen as a hoop to jump through, a box to check or even a rite of passage. Regardless, they all viewed the doctorate as an integral part of their professional future.

In a study by Waters (2015), a group of community college faculty, adjuncts and administrators, explored their motivations for obtaining doctoral degrees. The study found that there existed multiple motivations for the participants. These included personal satisfaction, career advancement and their role helping students. A study conducted in Great Britain by Thorne (1999) looked at the experiences of 217 students and graduates through the use of questionnaires. The study found that for younger professionals, motivation to pursue the doctorate were based more on career mobility and motivations for older professionals were directed more towards personal motivations. To that end, the next section details the second theme of the present study; Personal Motivations.

Personal Motivations

Professional motivations were often balanced by the personal motivations the participants described. These motivations often centered around their attachment to academics. Many of the participants recalled how their love of learning inspired their pursuit of a doctorate.

I really loved my graduate school experience. I love school. I love learning. I read voraciously and I enjoy discussing stuff. I was always the person in grad school who sort of had their head in the clouds and everyone wanted to know “well what are we going to do in practice?” and was like “I don't care I'm just having fun” like you know the big parts, so I loved it and I would like to get back to some of that.

(Jennifer)

Emily described her motivation as pertaining to her love for learning as well. For her it was more about engaging in subject matter that really interested her.

One of the things that I'm really excited about right now is, I have an idea of something that I would like to write about and so and that sort of came together as "like wow this is something that really interests me." (Emily)

The enjoyment of the academic research and writing experience left her with a positive experience upon which to build. In Margaret's interview, she described a previous academic experience that helped to encourage her to further pursue her academics. The enjoyment of the academic research and writing experience left her with a positive experience upon which to build.

In my graduate program, we had the choice of doing a master's thesis or comprehensive exams and my interest in writing, interest in research, sort of just investigating questions led me to choose a thesis option and that whole process of developing the relationship with her (advisor) having that encouragement that I had the skills to be successful in that way, really solidified for me that yes a Ph.D. was going to be in my future when I did not know but it would be in my future. (Margaret)

Along a similar line, Michelle described her involvement in a professional organization as personally meaningful for her;

I think it's personal gains in things. So, for example, two years ago decided to run for the presidency track of our regional association. I had known as a young professional I wanted to do that and it was the right time in the right support and I knew that I would be a stronger professional coming out of that and then I would be able to give to an association that I care deeply for and I've checked most of those or at least have checked most of those as I'm halfway through the

presidency track and so I think that knowing that I'm gonna (sic) be better or stronger at something after completing whatever I put myself out to do has certainly impacted so I'm almost kind of same lines. (Michelle)

Michelle went on to describe her personal motivations for pursuing this degree.

I guess part of my motivation is also not just career driven but I have an interest in serving as a consultant in the area of female bullying of college-age students.

There was not a whole lot about the college age student and so I was like wow that could really be something interesting to explore further so in exploring that research or lack of research I thought wow this is something that we might need to be looking into as a field...I also want to be able to have an impact on girls young women in a college setting and give professionals that work with those young women the tools and the skill set to be able to help them navigate through maybe a bullying situation so you know with my with my hope we're studying that topic I think that I'll be able to do that and then I think you know the topic specifically will help that but then the three letters after the name I think is gonna help me with my years of experience in the field to get me to my career goal that I want to get to.

For Christy, the excitement to continue her education came about when she returned to the higher education work environment.

I was immediately interested in considering furthering my education and from there I've looked into what those opportunities might be and it seems like continuing within the higher education and administration realm is the smartest move. (Christy)

As would be expected with anyone working toward a goal, personal motivations presented themselves as an intrinsic theme in the interviews.

I know I said that I didn't, that I have learned that I don't want it to be a checkbox but it does feel like a giant unchecked box sitting there but on like my personal list of things that I want to do in life. I think I just want to...I want to have my doctorate and so it feels like something that's looming there and that I just I haven't done yet and it kind of looms over me a little bit. (Jennifer)

These responses are supported by the literature in regards to how achievement is a mitigating factor for motivation. Guerin et al. (2015) looked at motivations to undertake doctoral study as well as to understand how undergraduate experiences with research affected their decision to pursue a doctorate. "A major factor motivating individuals to undertake HDR's (Higher Degrees of Research) is a genuine interest in the research topic and desire to contribute to knowledge in the field" (p. 98). Other studies have shown that many students pursue a doctorate in order to become a professor (Hinkel et al., 2014).

Zhou (2014) also noted that students were motivated by their intrinsic interest in research. Personal motivations were also presented in the literature as a motivating factor for those considering a doctorate. Mundy et al. (2015) found that participants viewed their motivation as revolving around their interest in the profession, their drive to improve the profession, a sense of a natural progression in their career as well as an appreciation of the potential of the distance education field (Mundy et al., 2015, p. 58). Kemp et al. (2014) presented Benevolent Motivation as a type of motivation that related to students' pursuit of a degree based on their interest or identification with the research area, specifically in regards to how their research could have an impact on others.

Dual Role Motivations

The participants in this study remarked on how their motivations to pursue a degree were mitigated by their dual roles as both a professional but also as spouses, parents and partners. Mike, who has three small children was especially mindful as to how pursuing the doctorate would fit into his family life.

At my previous institution, they were going to pay for five credit hours of semester so I was going to pay for one essentially one credit hour semester to be in the program. We didn't have as many kids and it was a program that had a lot of flexibility in it. I would have only had to go from building to building rather than driving an hour away so kind of that fit was going to fit a lot more but at this time I knew that I wasn't going to necessarily be there for four or five more years after that so I didn't want to start something and not know if I would finish. I guess my motivation is a little lower now. (Mike)

Mike went on to describe how he is weighing the factors that will affect his pursuit of the doctorate.

Knowing that my wife is going to be teaching this year and I won't be able to do this year because I don't wanna (sic) do too much in one year. Right now, I'm looking at the 2018-2019 academic year to start so I guess you can say right now I'm chilled off because I'm going to be looking over the next year and be prepared to but uh but also, I took the GRE in 2013 so I want to get all the applications in sooner than later because I don't want have to retake the GRE so that's kind of another motivation. (Mike)

Similarly, Michelle talked about how the arrival of a new child and the thought of future children had an effect on her motivation to pursue a degree.

I was like yep definitely put that sucker on hold. We had a 2-year-old and do we want to have more kids I think that those factors all continue to play a role in it um but you know I have some really good friends and colleagues who have shared you're never gonna (sic) be ready so fully ready at least and so you know when you're we think you're most ready just jump in and start doing it so knowing I have built a support system like that makes it a little bit easier and so you know the timing won't ever be perfect but when the timing is better that's when I anticipate jumping into it. (Michelle).

Emily was well aware of how balancing her motherly duties and her doctorate as well as possibly changing jobs would affect her family life.

When I came to this institution I really started thinking about okay I've got a 2-year-old and a 4-year-old it's a lot of emotional and physical energy with them right now. I'm not carting them all over the place, they don't have the same demands that they will in they're older so I kind of started to feel a little more of a sense of urgency and then once I sat down and one of the things I told my husband about this job he accepted is and he has a master's degree and has always said that he doesn't he's down on a school like doesn't really interest him anymore one of the things I told him about this move is okay if we all go the kids and I go and we all come together when I decide to start this program I'm gonna (sic) need your full support and I'm gonna (sic) need you to understand how important it is to me because I've always the whole time I've known him you

know I did my master's degree and I'm always taking classes here and there a little bit by little bit but this is a different kind of commitment and so one of the things I do struggle with is making sure that I have his full buy-in. (Emily)

Mallory was also cognizant of how her family life would affect her future academic plans. She lamented not starting sooner.

Six years went by I could have finished a PhD at that institution and I was single and I still don't know why I didn't do it but it just wasn't the right thing for me and so as I'm at a new institution my third institution they have just launched a new EDD program here that will start in the fall but now I'm married and I'm about to have a baby so like now timing is like terrible. (Mallory)

A study by Cronshaw (2017) looked at the lived experiences of mothers who were part-time doctoral students. The data showed that for the women in the study the process of pursuing the doctorate gave them a sense of “re-awakening” that lead to feelings of confidence and positivity.

Environmental Factors

The participants in this study were asked to describe their work environments in particular how environmental factors may impact their motivations to pursue a doctorate. SDT posits that one’s environment affects their motivation (Deci et al., 2013). Margaret described her environment as very supportive:

Oh it's very supportive I think it's very flexible. I am sort of in a middle management position so I have the benefits of being able to be more in control of my schedule than say those that I supervise. My supervisor who is the director of my unit she was thrilled. I also work in an academic college that really does value

the PhD. So I think even within the academic programs that I work in they have been incredibly receptive and excited that this was something I wanted to do and that I'm starting to take the first steps to initiate. So not only in terms of having like a cheering squad behind me I know that I have that at work but I also have the support in terms of balancing my work and my time and that I think was is what made it seem all the more possible because like I said I want to my attempt is going to maintain my full-time position and start courses as a as part-time as non-degree at first.

The explicit support of supervisors for participants to pursue their doctorate was clear throughout many of the interviews. In many cases, there was institutional financial support for professionals through full or partial tuition remission. Others discussed, in observing others in their division who were pursuing a doctorate, how supervisors allowed for time off to attend class or to leave work early.

Mallory's example showed an awareness of how her future work environment would play a role in her pursuit of a doctorate. She was very interested, when interviewing for her current position whether or not the pursuit of a doctorate would be supported;

Well and I'm glad you asked that because I was just thinking about that exact piece. When I came here and interviewed so many people here were pursuing their doctorate that not only did I want to ask the question of if it's valued but our vice president and our dean could tell me every professional who's pursuing a masters or a PhD or EdD what programs they were in, how close they were. We celebrate those accomplishments. So just in the past eight months we've had two

people complete since I've been here where they get recognized by the vice president at our Student Affairs Council meetings. So there is this very collegiality around there's a community of people who are in it together and I think that that is so important and is very supported here and so that was a huge signal to me that it would be something that I could do and could accomplish and especially now that our Ed.D. program just got approved for an Ed.D. in higher education with an emphasis in student affairs, it is even more supported and so they're really looking and it's designed for working professionals so yeah those are all like positive signals that make me want to pursue it more because I find that my colleagues are being very successful at pursuing theirs and getting support from there's you know supervisors and the whole unit of student affairs. (Mallory)

Along the same lines as Mallory, members of this group described the importance of their relatedness to others at their institution or in their professional circles who were pursuing a doctorate. In many cases, participants could talk about the experiences of others around them who were pursuing, or had completed a doctorate.

Yes, I guess I work with people who have it or in the process. I'm also friends on Facebook with people from my master's program who are pursuing it um and for one of them who does not have kids seemed relatively easy and the other one has two beautiful girls and it seems like it's she really has to think about um how well she needs to do on whatever project versus you know when her girls go to bed like those kinds of choice. (Jennifer)

Similar to Jennifer, Michelle discussed the impact of colleagues at her institution and their impact on her motivation to pursue a degree:

We have quite a few student affairs professionals who have it, it's a degree in leadership studies here, I think is what they call it and there are quite a few what I would consider young professionals in our division who have a degree from the university and I think that they are always encouraging others you know I did it and it was great and I did it with young children or like those sorts of things and I'm talking very positively about the faculty in the program so for me that is helpful to think about pursuing it. I don't know that anybody has ever, I've never heard anybody say you have to get it but I think that folks have certainly identified and been able to verbalize why they got theirs and how its benefit in them in their career and that's always helpful to hear well. (Michelle)

The work environments represented by this group of participants are reflective of the life-long learning ethos that is present on a college campus. As pointed out in chapter 1, “the effectiveness of student affairs’ contribution to the mission of the academy is essentially dependent on the abilities, skills, knowledge, and values of its practitioner-leaders” (Kuh & Komives, 1987, p. 5). Therefore, it is encouraging to see institutions supporting their employees who are pursuing doctoral degrees.

Chapter Summary

This chapter revealed the three themes that emerged from the data analysis of this study: Professional, Personal, Dual-Role Motivations, and Environmental Factors. The study found that there existed varying types of motivations being affected by a participant’s environment and life experiences, both intrinsically and extrinsically in nature. The participants in this study were carefully considering a doctorate and weighing all of the pros and cons associated with that journey. Ultimately, the process by which

prospective students discern the possibility of pursuing a doctorate are affected both by their motivational orientations as well as the environment around them. The next chapter will discuss how having a better understanding of these three them can help to better recruit and retain those pursuing a doctorate.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

This research study used phenomenology to understand how student affairs administrators understood their motivations for considering a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. Participants were asked to describe their experience in regards to their motivational orientations, the factors explored as part of their discernment process and finally the effect of their work environment on their overall motivation to pursue the degree. This chapter begins first by giving an overview of the study itself, a restating of the research questions and finally a discussion of what the implications of the research means for the field of student affairs and the study of higher education.

Review of the Study

This study looked at eight participants understanding of their overall motivation to pursue a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. All of the respondents were employed in the field of student affairs and were currently considering, but not yet enrolled in, a degree in Higher Education Administration. The study used phenomenology which seeks to describe the essence of an experience (Merriam, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the data is not meant to be necessarily inferred upon or interpreted, but rather used to reveal the lived experiences of the participants (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013). The research questions that guided this qualitative study were:

1. What motivational orientations (Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Amotivation) are present during a participant's discernment to attain a doctorate in Higher Education Administration?
2. How has their motivational orientation changed during their discernment process?

3. How do environmental factors impact these motivational orientations?

The research subjects participated in semi-structured interviews which were recorded for later transcription and analysis. Once the researcher had transcribed the interviews, the participants were asked to review the transcripts. This was combined with researcher notes to triangulate, or crystalize, the data (Richardson, 1994). In keeping with phenomenographic research methods, the researcher bracketed his preconceived notions and ideas about the topic to allow for better subjectivity. The interviews were reviewed for themes and later grouped into categories related to the three research questions (Moustakas, 1994).

Discussion of Findings

Research question 1. What motivational orientations (Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Amotivation) are present during a participant's discernment to attain a doctorate in Higher Education Administration?

The study found that there existed within the participant group a number of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for pursuing a doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration. These motivations ranged from career mobility and financial benefits (extrinsic) to personal achievement and academic interests (intrinsic). In many cases participants believed they were acting out of intrinsic interests when in fact they were acting extrinsically. The literature shows us that those who act on goals for intrinsic interest show positive effects in regards to their goal progression, overall mood and satisfaction (Kasser & Ryan, 1993,1996; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). Participants who have better self-regulatory skills are more likely to persist.

The question is, how can faculty and administrators in the field of higher education affect prospective student's motivation in order to enhance intrinsic

motivation? This study suggests that faculty and administrators in both the academic and work environments of these participants can play a role in helping students enhance their intrinsic motivation for pursuing a degree.

Research question 2. How has their motivational orientation changed during their discernment process?

Their process of discerning a degree showed that participants had been considering a degree for quite some time, 2-10 years. Many of the participants had weighed the pros and cons of pursuing the degree including the impact the process would have on their work life, family life and financial well-being. In addition, participants discussed the doctorate, and the time and resources it would take to complete it, as part of a greater plan for their life. The participant's motivations to pursue a doctorate had not necessarily changed over time, rather had been displayed as a mix between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

In relation to the findings from Research Question 1, faculty and administrators can help to encourage doctoral study by helping prospective students delve into their motivations at a deeper level. The interviews showed that for participant's, motivation was a complex variable.

Research question 3. How do environmental factors impact these motivational orientations?

Finally, the participants discussed how their work environment had helped or hindered their consideration to pursue their doctorate. Many of the participants discussed how professional development was addressed primarily through institution based training and services. In some cases, professional development through advanced degrees was

encouraged and in a few rare cases had become a part of the ethos of the department in the form of various administrators pursuing their doctorate.

Participants often looked to others considering, or presently pursuing, a degree for counsel and encouragement. These people were part of either their physical work environment (work colleagues), or digital environment (online). It was clear that continuing one's education was encouraged, as you would expect at an educational institution, but there appeared to be more motivation for those who worked at institutions who took explicit action to promote and encourage those who wanted to pursue a degree.

Relating Findings to the Literature

These findings are consistent with the literature presented in previous sections. Wellington and Sykes (2006) noted that HEA programs could better situate themselves and their future students by first understanding their student's motivations for pursuing the doctorate. This idea was further linked to the theoretical framework of the study, Self Determination Theory, by its founders, Ryan and Deci (2000) by the idea that understanding student motivations will help to better design learning environments that optimize student success.

The themes of Professional and Personal Motivations were presented in the findings. These themes can be connected back to the 1960s and the pioneering work of Cyril Houle. Houle (1961) postulated that there existed three types of adult learners; goal-oriented, activity-oriented and-learning oriented. For Houle, these areas would have fit within his idea that students are motivated to learn based on goal-oriented behavior and learning-oriented behavior. Houle's (1961) activity-oriented behavior is displayed in

participant's comments in regards to how their interactions with others in their environment had a positive effect on their consideration for pursuing a degree.

Kelcourse (1998) called discernment the “art of attention”. For our participants, the discernment process and the factors contributing to it cut across the participants interviews. The findings show that participants were aware of their motivations and explored those motivations as part of their discernment process. It was clear from the interviews that participants believed that they were acting out of intrinsic interests, but in effect were acting within the spectrum of extrinsic motivation (see Figure 1). Deci and Ryan (2000) described behavior that was not purely directed for personal enjoyment and internal fulfillment as extrinsic in nature. Komives and Taub (2000) pointed out that potential doctoral students in HEA could set them up for success by first understanding what was motivating them to pursue a doctorate.

The environment also played a factor in how these students considered their pursuit of a doctorate. The collegiate work environment was described as very supportive of these participants pursuing additional educational opportunities. This is in keeping with Deci and Ryan (2000) who argued that SDT could help foster and optimize student's development and well-being. The environments of the participants were described as supportive of their motivation to pursue a degree in that the environments fostered support for autonomy, relatedness and competence. These three psychological needs are at the heart of Self Determination Theory. When these needs are fulfilled, intrinsic motivation in its truest form can flourish.

Conclusion

This phenomenographic study used Self Determination Theory to describe how student affairs administrators lived the experience of considering pursuing a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. The findings describe the essence of the experience through which participants navigated through their discernment process. The participants talked through their motivations for pursuing their doctorate as well as the internal and external factors that contributed to their thought process.

The findings in this study are reflective of Self Determination theory in that the idea of maximizing intrinsic motivations and decreasing extrinsic motivations can help participants who are considering a doctorate in HEA. The work environments of these participants show that when positive actions are taken to encourage degree attainment amongst employees, prospective students are encouraged as well. This is in keeping with the idea within SDT of maximizing the psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy to maximize the effectiveness of intrinsic motivation.

The overall problem presented in this study revolves around the idea that there should be an increase in the number of individuals pursuing and completing their doctorates in the area of Higher Education Administration. In order to aid in that endeavor, program recruiters can use the findings of this study to better recruit and retain individuals for their academic programs. In addition, divisions of student affairs who wish to encourage employees to further their education through an advanced degree can use these findings to similarly help individuals explore their own motivations for degree attainment, encourage their intrinsic motivations and create supportive environments that show explicit support for individuals pursuing their degrees.

Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to understand the motivations for student affairs administrators considering pursuing a doctorate in higher education administration. In the end, the study presents three interrelated factors that work together to inform one's motivation to pursue this degree. In reflecting on the narratives and themes of this study, there are a actions that can be undertaken to improve both recruitment and retention of professionals into this field of study.

Help professionals discern their motivations for the future. I think that every young and mid-level professional in student affairs has been asked about their future goals and if those goals include a doctorate. The participants in this study seemed to be well attuned to this question. We can aid these prospective students by helping them to highlight the intrinsic motivations associated with achieving their degree. Focusing on this will assist prospective students to be more successful once they begin their degree.

Those working with prospective students through the discernment process, be it mentors, supervisors or program recruiters, can help students by emphasizing the purely intrinsic benefits of pursuing their degree. These include those benefits that are purely internal to the self, be it personal satisfaction or academic achievement. The extrinsic motivations are tempting in that they bring with them the worldly benefits (money, power, prestige) yet have been shown to increase anxiety and depression in participants (Kasser & Ryan, 1993).

Answer the credential question. Is a doctorate needed? As a young profession, we tend to grapple with this question. So many of the seasoned administrators that young and mid-level professionals look up to as role models and mentors have achieved their

professional goals without the attainment of a doctorate. That sends a mixed signal to those considering a degree. Not having a clear standard for higher level administration position leaves up and coming professionals with an unclear path to upper level positions. As a profession, we need to have a clear understanding of how the doctorate as a credential is to be used and valued as a profession.

It is recommended that the profession seriously consider standardizing the credentials needed for upper level and mid-level management positions. A good first step would be to study the held credentials of existing upper and mid-level managers. Some of this data is already gathered by student affairs professional organizations. That data could then be augmented by analyzing current job postings for similar positions to see whether or not institutions are asking for the credential as required, recommended or preferred. The hope is that by standardizing the requirement for the degree, those coming up in the profession will have a better understanding of its role in their own future.

Create cultures of explicit support for doctorate study. Institutions should take measures to not only provide financial support through tuition remission, but also overt support and recognition for those pursuing a degree. Those that are contemplating the degree need to see examples of administrators like themselves not just pursuing a degree but succeeding doing so. It is clear that institutions are placing effort and resources into general professional development yet many of the participants in this study viewed them as not beneficial to their development.

In addition, prospective students should search out support groups within their individual discipline-specific professional organizations. Many of these professional organizations such as NAPSAs and ACPAs have created support networks for individuals

pursuing doctorates. These groups can help to support the SDT need of relatedness by creating networks of support. Participants are eager to share their journey so the more support networks they have the more likely they are to persist.

Future Study

The limitations of this study can be helpful in directing future research in this area. The participant group, although appropriate for a phenomenological study, could be expanded to encompass more descriptions of this experience. Along those same lines, a diversification in terms of gender and ethnicity may yield different experiences than were reported as part of this study. Another area of limitation is the point in time in which the data was gathered; prior to enrollment. This period of time although important to nature of the descriptions requested, is limiting in that it does not allow for a clearer understanding of how motivation could or would change once a participant had begun the doctorate.

Final Thoughts

This study had personal attachment for me. It was born out of both a love of learning but also a frustration with what I deemed as ill placed motivation by my fellow students. I experienced fellow professionals who I believed were acting out of extrinsic motivations and I found through this project that motivation is both a moving and changing target. Many in our field, as well as many others, lament the number of students who fail to finish the doctorate. In addition, there seems to be a lack of common commitment and appreciation for the doctorate as a credential within the profession. This has led to an unclear path for those looking to progress professionally.

I assert that the field of student affairs is a true profession, deserving of the attention and educational study that the other noble professions enjoy. As a profession, we should demand of ourselves the highest of educational standards and that begins by first placing the doctorate as being of the utmost importance for those seeking to be the future educational leaders of our vocation.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Prompt:

This study proposes to understand the motivations of student affairs administrators who are considering pursuing a doctorate in higher education administration. The study uses phenomenology as our research method. Phenomenology seeks to understand and describe the essence of a person's experience in this case the experience of considering pursuing a doctorate in higher education administration. This interview will ask you questions that pertain to your motivations and general thoughts about pursuing a doctorate. In addition, we will explore your current work environment and the factors that affect your motivation to pursue a doctorate.

Thank you for completing the online survey. I hope that it allowed you time to reflect your pursuit of a doctoral degree.

(Interviewer will reference the participant's responses from the pre interview survey)

General Thoughts on Pursuing a Doctorate

1. Tell me about your educational journey up to this point?
2. What factors do you consider when considering pursuing a doctorate?
3. Why are you considering a doctorate in HEA?
4. Can you describe an event or a person that has had an impact on your consideration to pursue a degree?
5. At what point did you begin to consider a doctorate?
6. What are your expectations of your participation in a doctoral degree program?
7. What factors have lead you to consider HEA as your field of study?

Motivation to Pursue a Doctorate

8. How do you define motivation?
9. In general what motivates you to achieve your goals?
10. What motivates you to pursue your doctorate?
11. Has your motivation to pursue a degree changed over time?

Environmental Factors

12. How would you describe your current work environment?
13. How do you interact with professional development opportunities at work?
 - a. Are there professional development opportunities?
 - b. Please describe them.
14. How is professional development through advanced degrees addressed at your work?
 - a. Do you have co-workers who are pursuing advanced degrees?
 - b. What have you observed about their experience?

Closing Prompt:

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your willingness to share your experience and hope that this exercise has been helpful for you. Once I have transcribed your interview as well as my notes I will ask you to review the transcription. This will allow you to clarify anything that was omitted or misunderstood. Again, I thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix B

Pre-Interview Prompt

This prompt will be delivered via Google Docs. The questions below are for reference only.

1. Do you currently work in Student Affairs/Services? (Yes/No)
2. Are you considering a doctorate, either a PhD or EdD, in Higher Education Administration or closely related field? (Yes/No)
 - a. If so, which one? (Open Response)
 - b. Please list any particular concentrations you are interested in pursuing.
(List)
3. Please list your current degrees. (List)
4. In what area of Student Affairs do you work? (Open Response)
5. How long have you worked in Student Affairs? (Open Response)
6. Please share your professional aspirations as they exist today? (Open Response)
7. Describe how pursuing an advanced degree plays a part in your professional aspirations? (Open Response)
8. Please describe your current motivations for pursuing a doctorate. (Open Response)

Appendix C

Letter to Participants

Dear Student Affairs Colleagues,

My name is Matt Binion and work at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi as Director of Student Services and Facilities. I am currently a doctoral student in Higher and Adult Education at the University of Memphis. My dissertation is a study on Student Affairs administrators' motivations to pursue doctoral studies in Higher Education Administration.

My study is looking for Student Affairs administrators who 1) are currently employed in an area of student affairs/student services and 2) who are currently considering participation in a doctorate in Higher Education Administration, or related field. I am looking for colleagues who would be interested in participating in a one-hour interview discussing their motivations to pursue doctoral studies. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to complete an interview prompt. At the conclusion of the interview you will be asked to review the interview transcript and to comment on the researcher's findings.

Please let me know if you would be willing to participate. I can be contacted at Matt.Binion@gmail.com.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Matt Binion

Appendix D

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Study

Student Affairs Administrators' Understanding of Motivations to Attain a Doctorate in Higher Education Administration.

Researcher

This study is being conducted by Matt Binion, doctoral student in Higher and Adult Education at the University of Memphis. The faculty member advising this study is Dr. Jeffery Wilson.

About this Study

You are being invited to take part in a research study about motivations of Student Affairs administrators to pursue a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. The study is designed to collect information that can be used by doctoral programs in Higher Education Administration in recruiting and retaining students to their program.

Participation in this study may allow you to reflect on your own motivations for doctoral study as well as to share how those motivations may aid in your decision to participation in doctoral study.

Informed Consent

Participation in this study will involve 1) a pre-interview written prompt, 2) an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes and 3) a review of the interview transcripts and notes. In order to be considered for this study you must be a current administrator in the field of Student Affairs administration and are currently considering pursuing a doctorate in Higher Education Administration in the future. Interviews will be conducted via video conferencing or phone and will include topics related to your motivations to pursue doctoral study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time. Some of the questions will ask you to reflect on your own experiences and motivations related to pursuit of doctoral study. You have the right, at any time during the interview, to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

All interviews will be recorded for later transcription. Written responses, transcripts and audio files will be stored on an external hard drive and stored in a locked file cabinet in the office of the lead researcher. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep any personal identifying information private.

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions,

concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Matt Binion, at 601-278-0506 or the faculty advisor, Dr. Jeffery Wilson at 901-678-3428. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent

Date