DIGITAL BAGGAGE: THE DIGITAL IDENTITY OF ENTRY-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

DIGITAL BAGGAGE: THE DIGITAL IDENTITY OF ENTRY-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

presented by Lucas Gorham,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of educational leadership and policy analysis, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

The people responsible for getting me to the point of completing this culminative degree began well before I stepped foot into the Methodist church with my Cohort 9 classmates that first summer semester. My parents saw the value in a college education even though they had never attended themselves. The true cost of college was a mystery to us, and, at times, I was unsure whether I would be able to attend. Instead of moving away to college I decided to work full-time at the hometown grocery store and go to community college using the A+ Scholarship program. At that time, the program fully paid for 2 years of community college tuition. If not for my high school counselor telling me about it, I do not believe I would have been able to afford to attend. Fast forward a few years when I told my store manager/uncle that I wanted a raise because I earned my associate's degree and he told me no. At that moment I made the decision to continue my education at a 4-year college. To this day, I believe if my uncle would have offered me even 50 cents more an hour, I would not have considered continuing my education or significantly delayed attending.

Scholarships, loans, and money from my parents supported me through my bachelor's degree at Missouri Western, where I found my passion for student affairs and working in higher education. There I met my mentors, Kristi Schulte and Stan Sweeney, who got me excited about working in higher education. Once I graduated, I worked as a hall coordinator at Mizzou for 2 years. This experience solidified my interest in higher education as a career field, so I continued on to UMKC to earn my higher education administration master's degree. Fast forward some more years and Kristi Schulte is encouraging me to apply for the Mizzou EdD program. These folks contributed to my

educational journey and I appreciate each of them for it. Other families who I would be remiss if I did not mention include The Gorhams, The Watts, The Starkebaums, The Crutchfields, The Wisdoms, The Seeks, The Essigs, and The Peis.

There are three special women who I must acknowledge as they have shaped me into the person I am today and supported me through this educational journey. My mother, Mary Watt, who is my pilar of support in most anything I set out to accomplish. Her warmth, kindness, understanding, and family-first focus are traits that inspire me to be a better person every day. My wife, Alissa Pei Gorham, is the most thoughtful person I know. She is always the first person to recognize others for their accomplishments, shower them with praise, and offer help without question. She is *the one* - my life partner. She is the mother to our amazing daughters, Bella and Caroline. Alissa keeps the family on track, on time, and on point. I appreciate my family for allowing me to spend many nights and weekends away to pursue this degree. I hope my daughters see the value of higher education and know I will support them in their future endeavors unendingly. Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to the late Bell family matriarch, my grandmother, Carroll Bell. Grounded in faith while leading with love every day of her life.

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ABSTRACT

This case study examined the personal and professional social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals at the four campuses in the University of Missouri System: the University of Missouri, University of Missouri – St. Louis, University of Missouri – Kansas City, and Missouri University of Science and Technology. Bounded by the profession of student affairs, I focused on how entry-level student affairs administrators used social networking sites and the implications of certain types of usage on their careers and their effectiveness in the field of student affairs. Findings suggested that most entry-level professionals do not enter student affairs ready or willing to engage university communities on social media platforms and their respective campuses and graduate programs are not preparing them to do so. Without much institutional or professional direction, other factors influenced their decisions regarding social media use including personal and professional experiences, communities, and the university environment.

SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION-IN-PRACTICE

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Every year, over 7,000 student affairs professionals attend NASPA's annual conference held in destinations across the United States (NASPA, 2019). The conference provides opportunities for student affairs professionals to develop through presenting content, attending sessions and pre-conference workshops relevant to their work, participating in networking events, and many more. Many professionals look forward to the opportunity to gain a fresh perspective on their work in student affairs and refocus efforts on how to best serve college students. At the 2015 NASPA Annual Conference taking place in New Orleans, LA, however, attendees were faced with the reality of how social media can influence their experience as a student affairs administrator - not just through social media interactions with students, but also through social media interactions with the very colleagues they serve alongside.

Inappropriate comments, seemingly posted by higher education professionals during the 2015 NASPA Conference, were posted on an anonymous, location-based application known as *Yik Yak.* The Yik Yak platform, in particular, is very hard, if not impossible, to easily and quickly moderate due to posting anonymity. The comments on Yik Yak were similar to those that student affairs professionals typically discourage college students from making when using anonymous applications like this one (Fabris & Supiano, 2015; Thomason, 2015). Thomason provided a sample of the anonymous posts that he referred to as being on the "lighter side," assumed to mean less vulgar or inappropriate, among them included:

- This NASPA conference has been fun. Interesting sessions, good conversations. I've also had sex every day, so maybe that's the secret [to] conference happiness?

- It was really nice meeting NASPA attendees last night. (Note that Yik Yak gives users the opportunity to "Add a handle," which displays just above the comment. It this particular post, the handle was *atthestripclub*).
- SugarBaby (mid-level) seeking Sugar-Mentor. Primary needs: 5 star hotel, conference wardrobe, dinners & 1 purchase at NASPA silent auction. Willing to be arm candy & assist with presentations.
- I really hope I can navigate bourbon street with courage tonight.
- SA folk, you are so much better than this anonymous shit on an app we tell our students not to use. Own your comments. @BrittCDuron (Thomason, 2015)

These posts prompted NASPA to issue a statement regarding the hypocrisy of these anonymous, negative posts (Figure 1).

Figure 1. NASPA Twitter Response to Conference Yik Yak Posts

Source: NASPAtweets. (2015, March 24). We've released a statement on the messages being posted on Yik Yak during #NASPA15: [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/naspatweets/status/580382430978248704

I share this incident to set the stage for critical conversation around how student affairs professionals use social media in their professional lives and its impact on other people and the profession.

Background

Roughly 72% of Americans use social media to connect with others, share information, absorb news content, and entertain themselves (Pew Research Center, 2019). With many of these users accessing social media daily, social media has fundamentally changed the way people obtain information and communicate with one another. Social media has given individuals the opportunity to more widely share their opinions, and bring awareness to social, political, and personal causes (Amsource Technology, 2017) with social networking platforms like Facebook and Twitter. People can post pictures and videos to express themselves through applications like YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram. The LinkedIn platform, designed for business and career professionals, is changing how people are networking for jobs and retooling the traditional resume document with an online profile used to display pertinent skills and work experience (https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/111663/what-is-linkedin-and-how-can-i-use-it). With its wide use globally, it is not surprising that student affairs professionals are using social media.

With social media penetrating almost every aspect of our lives, student affairs professionals must keep up with technology and understand how students and new professionals engage on these platforms in order to best serve these specific populations. If we continue to lag behind in our efforts to integrate social media use into the profession without providing guidance in digital identity development, incidents much

like the one that happened at the 2015 NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) Annual Conference will continue.

Social Networking Site Use in Student Affairs

The use of social networking sites (SNSs) in student affairs has grown over the last 10 years (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016) as student affairs functions have expanded (Bowen, 2013; Cabellon & Junco, 2015). Scholarship surrounding the use of SNSs by student affairs professionals has focused on the use of digital technology by student affairs professionals (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016); digital identity development and digital decision-making (Ahlquist, 2016a, 2016b); strategies for digitally fluent senior student affairs administrators (Kolomitz & Cabellon, 2016); and social media guidelines and policy (Pasquini, 2016; Pasquini & Evangelopoulos, 2017). These studies provide great insight into the digital revolution taking place in student affairs. However, with a few exceptions, research is limited regarding digital technology use by student affairs administrators (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016). It is within this body of literature and context that I introduce my study. To be clear, this is not a study focused on how entry-level student affairs professionals communicate with students through social media. Instead, the purpose of this study is to understand how entry-level student affairs administrators use SNSs and the implications of certain types of usage on their careers and their effectiveness in the field of student affairs.

Guidelines in Student Affairs

The leading associations for the field of student affairs have taken notice of the role technology must play in the lives of professionals. In 2010, ACPA-College Student Educators International (ACPA) and NASPA identified 10 professional competency

areas for student affairs professionals (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The original competency areas were: (a) advising and helping; (b) assessment, evaluation, and research; (c) equity, diversity, and inclusion; (d) ethical professional practice; (e) history, philosophy, and values; (f) human and organizational resources; (g) law, policy, and governance; (h) leadership; (i) personal foundations; and (j) student learning and development. In 2015, members of each association reviewed and provided feedback on the 2010 competencies. As a result, several changes were made to the competencies, including renaming the "equity, diversity, and inclusion" competency to "social justice and inclusion," renaming the "advising and helping" competency to "advising and supporting," and combining the "ethical professional practice" and "personal foundations" competencies into one competency called "personal and ethical foundations." Lastly, "technology" was introduced as a new competency, solidifying the importance of integrating technology in student affairs work (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

The technology competency outlined foundational, intermediate, and advanced outcomes in the areas of data use and compliance, online learning environments, technical tools and software, and digital identity and citizenship. The digital identity and citizenship outcomes largely focused on the student affairs professional as a role model for reputation cultivation and professional engagement in virtual spaces (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). These outcomes are most germane to this study and their addition reflects the need to better understand how professionals are engaging with social media.

Recently, there have been a number of situations that have sparked debate among student affairs professionals about their use of SNSs on campuses, at conferences, and in Facebook groups created for student affairs professionals. Unlike the Yik Yak platform in

the example shared at the onset of this section, the Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals Facebook group (n.d.) has a number of expectations for community posts and group membership. This private Facebook group has over 36,000 members as of May 2022 and it is described as a

> space where SAPros share, learn, grow, and laugh together. We encourage our members to be authentic when sharing their thoughts, experiences, and ideas. While holding those things to be true, we also acknowledge that this is a group where you might engage in critical dialogue or have your opinions challenged. That may not always be comfortable, but we ask you to lean into that discomfort! (Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals Facebook Group, n.d)

Pre-qualifying questions assured that members worked in or around student affairs before they are approved to join the group. There are community posting guidelines that address the use of language that targets individuals, groups, or specific identities; posting "etiquette," including removing posts or turning off comments once someone responds to your post; excessive discussion posts; and limits to personal promotion. Yet, these guidelines are unique to this particular group, and sometimes contested by membership.

For example, a blog post from Dr. Ann Marie Klotz (see Appendix A) entitled "An Open Letter to the Student Affairs Professionals Facebook Page Members," received much criticism for her perceptions of those who posted within the community and a pointed response from one of the group's moderators (Messmore, 2016). Klotz deleted the content of her original blog post; thus, I am relying on Brian Boughton's "cut and paste" of her blog post content to the Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals Facebook Group (see Appendix A). Dr. Klotz referred to the Facebook group as a

"dumpster fire" that gave unhappy people the ability to "showcase their brokenness." Furthermore, it was a place where members attacked and judged others, creating a "mob-like mentality." These words could have emotionally influenced group members who struggle with mental illness or further perpetuated silencing members with marginalized identities (Messmore, 2016). At the same time, whether one agrees with Dr. Klotz's perspectives or not, they point to other concerns that may arise with the proliferation of social media use.

More recently, a meme posted by the creators of a satirical higher education Twitter account (HumanOfHigherEd, 2019) sparked controversy amongst higher education faculty and staff. The meme seemed to suggest that faculty and staff celebrate when students depart campus for the summer (Figure 2).

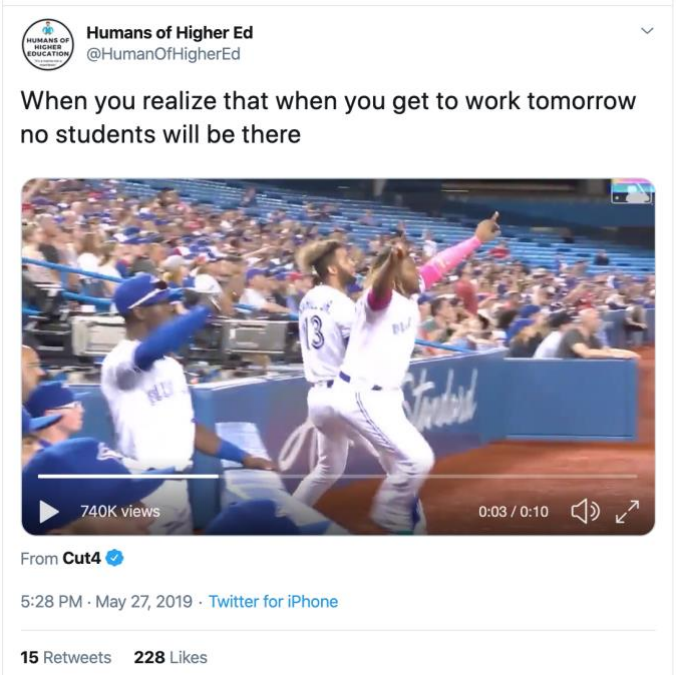

Figure 2. HumanOfHigherEd's Tweet Celebrating the End of the Semester

Source: HumanOfHigherEd. (2019, May 27). When you realize that when you get to work tomorrow no students will be there [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/HumanOfHigherEd/status/1133137942489309191

This post generated multi-thread debates and highlighted how disagreement amongst faculty and staff can play out on Twitter. What perceived younger higher education professionals seemed to interpret as a light-hearted post about down time and rejuvenation at the end of a semester, others criticized:

- "<— that feeling when folks who work in higher ed don't realize many institutions continue to educate and engage students all 12 months. It might be a bit quieter, but I am so glad that our students still show up, get involved, and make progress toward their goals!" (*with the arrow at the beginning of the post pointing toward an "embarrassed person" emoji*) from @willsimpkins, Vice President for Student Affairs at Metropolitan State University of Denver, as shown on their twitter profile
- "This original tweet by @HumanOfHigherEd is pretty gross.
  I don't know what kinds of humans they claim to speak for, but the humans I meet in this sector truly care about students and don't see them as a nuisance." from @BBurnsEDU, Executive Director of University Innovations Alliance, as shown on the company's team page (http://www.theuia.org/team)
- "Celebrating the departure of students in summer is a trope. The idea that staff wellbeing requires distance from students, dependent on "summer break," is privilege itself and ignores the hard work of staff and faculty educating year round." from @saragoldrickrab, Founder of the Hope Center for College Community and Justice in Philadelphia and Professor of Higher Education and Sociology at Temple University, as shown on http://saragoldrickrab.com

The response from these three individuals fueled debate around multiple topics including

"satirical memes, perceived shaming, bullying, self-care, nuance and an 80-hour work week" (Stoller, 2019, para. 1). Further, another tweet (Figure 3) in this thread conveyed a potential consequence of not being considered for a job due to posting on social media:

F*igure 3.* Dr. Goldrick-Rab's Tweet Regarding a Potential Social Media Consequence

Source: saragoldrickrab. (2019, May 29). Getting notes from colleagues from all over the country who are saying "well, now we know who NOT to hire." Which makes me so sad, because people just tanked themselves by spreading lies about a literal tweet. That's all it took. All that patting on the back, undoing hard work. [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/saragoldrickrab/status/1133852272495091714

Despite the aforementioned examples, and although ACPA and NASPA (2015) declared the importance of technology competence within student affairs, direction from the profession about use is limited; yet, there appears to be a need for further guidance. As social media plays a role in campus curricula and services offered, campus-level policies and evidence-informed best practice guidance from professional associations become necessary so that they can be leveraged as resources and to manage social media as a potential threat (Pasquini & Evangelopoulos, 2017). The NASPA Yik Yak, Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals Facebook group, and Twitter meme examples give immediacy to the exploration of digital identity and the importance

professional guidelines and institutional policy surrounding the use of social media in student affairs.

Problem of Practice

Universities and colleges are slow to implement policy regarding appropriate social media use. A 2015 study found only 17.7% of institutions in the Carnegie Classification data file have accessible social media policies (Pomerantz et al., 2015). Of those social media policies, 80.3% had one policy guiding the institution, 11.1% had policies for one or more campus departments within the institution, and 8.6% had policies for both the institution and for one or more campus departments. Moreover, in cases where there were multiple social media policies, they lacked cohesion at the departmental, divisional, and campus levels (Pomerantz et al., 2015).

Some student affairs professionals may look to SNS users external to their institution to question best practices, receive feedback, or gain personal support and advice. However, without definitive guidance in this area, leaders have to consider whether institution-level policies are needed, given the implications of social media use and how it may impact the institution. When social media policies and guidelines are unclear or non-existent, staff members tend to post using their own discretion or their own perception of institutional and professional context (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). This can leave the staff member vulnerable to disciplinary action or scrutiny from colleagues if their perceptions regarding posting guidelines are not in line with those of the institution, particularly if the staff member is left to guess the institutional standpoint related to usage. In addition, questions remain about who moderates behavior on these platforms and where does institutional authority come into play if staff members'

postings become problematic.

Without much institutional and professional direction, student affairs professionals are left to their best judgement to navigate social media. Coupled with the assumption that those newest to the profession are digital natives (Prensky, 2001), they are likely active in these spaces and their usage may have implications for their status in the profession, for good or ill. These issues are compounded as digital technology is not sufficiently integrated into graduate program curricula and ACPA and NASPA professional development opportunities surrounding digital identity[1] are insufficient (Cabellon & Junco, 2015).

Furthermore, the current generation of entry-level student affairs professionals likely frequent the same social media platforms as the college students they serve. Due to closeness in age, the modeling role they often play, and societal orientation with the students with whom they work, entry-level student affairs professionals' digital identity could influence how college students portray themselves on social media. While role modeling appropriate social media behavior for students is important, entry-level student affairs professionals also have the opportunity to educate college students on digital identity development through programming and, at times, policy adjudication related to inappropriate use of social media. With (a) university social media policies lacking across the nation (Pomerantz et al., 2015); (b) evidence of a number of questionable social media interactions among student affairs professionals, despite guidance about the importance of technology as a competency within the profession; and (c) the lack of mentorship and professional development related to social media usage, it is imperative

[1] Digital identity is a method of presenting oneself online through the construction of personal and professional personas conveyed through online digital platforms including SNSs (Ahlquist, 2016b).

to better understand how early-career student affairs professionals use social media.

This study has the potential to inform professional development in this area that could have lifelong implications ranging from enhancing the ability to connect with students and constituents as digital leaders to making a mistake on social media that could lead to negative professional consequences, including termination. Because professional and institutional guidelines are unclear and there are potential consequential implications for how early-career professionals use SNSs, understanding entry-level student affairs professionals' digital identity and how they use SNSs is warranted.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media. Specifically, the primary research question guiding this study is: How do entry-level student affairs leaders describe their digital identity?

Entry-level student affairs professionals are new professionals with 5 or fewer years of full-time working experience (Cilente et al., 2006; Coleman & Johnson, 1990; Fey, 1991). Contact with college students happens in their daily work and most entry-level professionals are part of the same Millennial generation (Dimock, 2019). By definition, they have also had fewer years of professional experience in the field compared to more seasoned administrators.

Also, there is a gap in the literature surrounding the use of social media by young student affairs professionals. Although scholars have conducted research about student affairs professionals' SNS use, they have focused on how more senior student affairs professionals should utilize SNSs (Ahlquist, 2016b; Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016; Kolomitz & Cabellon, 2016; Pasquini, 2016; Pasquini & Evangelopoulos, 2017). In fact,

I have been unable to identify any literature to date that has placed the entry-level student affairs professional at the center of inquiry. As they represent the future of the profession, it is important to know more about this generation of professionals. My research can address this gap by providing insight into how entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media to interact with students, with each other, and with their larger institutional population and beyond.

My investigation is informed by a similar study about senior-level student affairs professionals (Ahlquist, 2016b). However, unlike Ahlquist, I am focusing on entry-level student affairs professionals. In so doing, collectively, the two studies will provide a more complete picture of social media use in the profession and will highlight generational differences and other factors that influence how student affairs professionals engage in social media platforms.

Conceptual Framework

Research conducted by Ahlquist (2016) guided my study. I conducted a case study bounded by the profession of student affairs, focusing on entry-level student affairs professionals. I used and built upon the models that emerged from the findings of her study about the digital identity of senior student affairs officers. Ahlquist's research provided a holistic perspective on the social media use of 16 senior students affairs officers and suggested a "personal yet strategic approach [to social media] for digital identity, relationship building, and digital leadership in student affairs" (p. 36). From the research, she developed a *digital decision-making model*. Below, I describe in more detail how I incorporated fundamental aspects of Ahlquist's model.

Digital Decision-Making Model

The digital decision-making model is designed to help senior student affairs professionals personally explore their digital identity or to help educate others on digital identity (Ahlquist, 2016a). The model features a four-pronged approach meant to guide student affairs professionals through a reflection on their digital identity and social media use and includes a set of guiding questions for each area or "prong."

Figure 4 illustrates the four prongs derived from the social media experiences of senior student affairs officers who participated in Ahlquist's (2016b) study, including technology tools and strategy, user engagement, digital contribution, and intended purpose. The model is "fluid and flexible enough to guide one through a reflective digital identity exercise for social media use" (Ahlquist, 2016b, pp. 37-38) and can illustrate how a user can be strategic, personal, and meaningful on social media. This model is the guiding proposition of my study and informed my online questionnaire and participant interview questions.

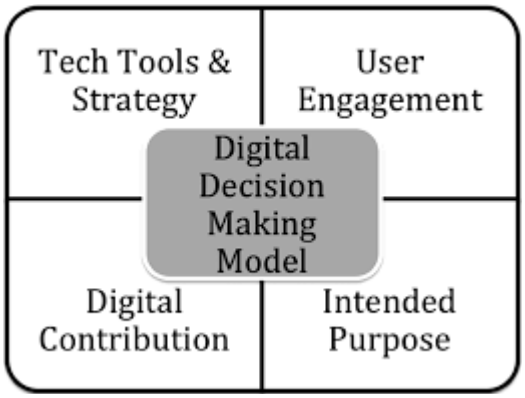

Figure 4. Digital Decision-making Model

Source: Ahlquist, J. (2016b). The digital identity of student affairs professionals. *New Directions for Student Services, 155,* 29–46. doi:10.1002/ss.20181

Tech Tools and Strategies

The purpose of the questions related to technology (tech) tools and strategies is to give student affairs professionals the opportunity to reflect upon which platform(s) to use and how to use them, when and how often to use the platform(s), and if "digital mentors" are available on their respective campuses. Gathering similar data for my study allowed for a deeper dive into the most-used platform(s) of entry-level student affairs professionals for additional insight.

Ahlquist (2016b) asked four questions of her participants when exploring their digital identity related to technology tools and strategies. The rationale and methods that study participants used to incorporate social media into their professional lives informed the reflection questions in this area, as was the case for the other three prongs (Ahlquist, 2016b). The tech tools and strategies questions helped them to consider which platforms to use, what their posting strategies might be, and where to find guidance when exploring and choosing platform(s):

1. What social tools are you currently drawn to, and which ones do you have questions and concerns about?
2. Knowing what social media applications your students are on the most, which platforms make sense for your presence as a student affairs professional?
3. What human resources do you have on your campus, especially students, graduate students, and new professionals, who could be your digital mentors, guiding your adoption and exploration of tools?
4. Can you imagine yourself logging on in the early morning, at lunchtime, or in the evening to engage with your campus community? (p. 38)

Unlike Ahlquist's (2016b) study, I assumed potential participants already used multiple social media platforms daily to interact with students and colleagues, thereby eliminating the need for me to ask some of Ahlquist's questions (i.e., questions one through three). Because of my particular participant population, I asked a variation of question four in my online questionnaire to gain a better understanding of when entry-level student affairs professionals engaged their campus community online.

User Engagement

The purpose of the user engagement questions is to help professionals identify ways to engage students and other university constituents through various social media platforms. This area has a particular focus on setting boundaries with students and supervisees (Ahlquist, 2016b). In Ahlquist's (2016b) study, for example, all administrators expressed comfort in connecting with students and other professionals on Twitter. Some professionals were less likely to connect with these groups on Facebook because they chose to keep their connections personal on that particular platform. I gathered similar data to better understand how entry-level student affairs professionals are connecting with students and other professionals on social media.

Ahlquist (2016b) asked four questions to explore participants' digital identity related to user engagement. These user engagement questions led participants to consider their audience(s) and their comfortability connecting with them on social media:

1. Who are the main audiences with whom you want to engage in your position and in your profession?
2. What is your current comfort level when engaging with students on social media? What about your colleagues, supervisees, national, or international contacts?

3. What resources do you have globally for connecting with other professionals, and how have you balanced connecting with current college students on social media?
4. Who will you connect with, or not connect with, on each social platform? What are the benefits for connecting with those you do allow into your network? (p. 39)

I asked a version of questions one and two on the online questionnaire. Those two questions informed with whom entry-level student affairs professionals want to engage in the profession and their comfortability engaging with each group. I used questions three and four in the individual interview to better understand professional resource utilization, how they balance connecting with current college students, and with whom they will and will not connect with on social media.

Digital Contribution

The purpose of the digital contribution questions is to highlight the digital content that student affairs professionals post (Ahlquist, 2016b). In Ahlquist's study senior student affairs officers made various types of posts, including the appreciation and celebration of others, event promotion, holidays, sharing news or information, and replying directly to others. I gathered similar data to discover more about the content that entry-level student affairs professionals post on social media.

Ahlquist (2016b) posed four questions to explore digital identity related to digital contribution. These questions prompted participants to consider how their personal and professional values play out in a digital space:

1. Think about the value you hope to contribute to your campus and profession. How does this live out digitally?
2. Are there certain topics, experiences, and/or people you will not post about?

3. What is your comfort level in posting about your campus? Is this supported strategically in offices such as university relations?
4. How can you incorporate your personality and personal life into your social media presence? (pp. 39-40)

All these questions were important for me to explore in the individual interview. In conjunction with analyzing social media posts of the participants, the answers to these questions provided rich information about how entry-level student affairs professionals describe their digital identity.

Intended Purpose

The intended purpose questions in Ahlquist's (2016b) model encourage student affairs professionals to think deliberately about how to engage on social media. Social media is an opportunity for instant engagement on platforms and for real-time sharing of information with the campus community (Ahlquist, 2016b). Are professionals using their social media platform(s) for marketing, or, as Ahlquist (2016b) found, is social media engagement a "significant meaning-making tool" (p. 40)? I collected similar data for my study to discover the reasons why entry-level student affairs professionals engage on social media.

Ahlquist (2016b) asked participants four questions to explore digital identity related to intended purpose:

1. What are the values that draw you to the work you do? Are these values present in your approach to social media and your digital identity?
2. What is an outcome you are currently intentionally working on in your position?
3. Have you identified student affairs role models you can look to who are

demonstrating intentionality on tools like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram?

4. How does intentionality currently factor into your digital identity? On which platform can you apply a deeper purpose? (p. 40)

Similar to the digital contribution questions, all four of the intended purpose questions were important to ask in the individual interview. The answers to these questions provided rich information about how entry-level student affairs professionals described their digital identity through their intentional engagement on the platform(s).

The digital decision-making model outlined above, including the questions Ahlquist (2016b) posed as part of the model, informed the interview questions and other data gathered in my study. I provide more details about the analytic process in the Design of the Study section.

Design of the Study

Informed by the digital decision-making model, I conducted an embedded exploratory case study (Yin, 2003) to answer my research question. I have purposely selected this design to align with the methods Ahlquist (2016b) used in her study. In so doing, I am better able to determine whether the framework and model that emerged from her study have broader application to a different population—early career student affairs professionals.

The heart of the proposed study is to understand *how* entry-level student affairs leaders describe their digital identity. The *how and why* line of questioning is important, as Yin (2003) pointed out that these questions are "more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research strategies" (p. 6) compared to a research question that may be asking *how many* and *how much,* which

are "likely to favor survey strategies or the analysis of archival records" (p. 6).

> As defined by Creswell (2007), case study research:
>
> is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case *description* and case-based themes. (p. 73, emphasis in original)

My study explored a bounded system over time, more specifically the phenomenon of social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals. I used multiple methods of data collection to triangulate the data sources, including an online questionnaire (see Appendix B), individual interviews (see Appendix C), and participants' posts on one social media platform. Within the boundaries of the case study (the profession of student affairs), I sought to describe a case that is intended to answer my research question.

Setting

The University of Missouri System (UM System) is comprised of four campuses located in the state of Missouri: the University of Missouri, University of Missouri – St. Louis, University of Missouri – Kansas City, and Missouri University of Science and Technology. The University of Missouri, located in Columbia, MO, was founded in 1839 as the flagship institution of the UM System. What began as the School of Mines and Metallurgy (MSM) located in Rolla, MO, the Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T) was founded in 1870. In 1963, the UM System was formally established to also include the Kansas City and St. Louis campuses (University of Missouri System, 2022a). The UM System has extension offices in every Missouri

county and collectively serves 75,000 students amongst the four campuses (University of Missouri System, 2022b). This study includes participants from each UM System campus. Next, I provide a brief overview for each campus and attempt to provide as much parallel information as possible. Each campus website includes different information and varies in depth of content, so I am providing as much context as possible from the university websites.

University of Missouri

The University of Missouri is a 4-year public institution and one of 66 universities in the United States that is a member of the Association of American Universities, a designation that helps the institution attract top faculty and students along with external funding for academic research (About Mizzou, 2019a). Student enrollment exceeds 30,000 students, with more than 300 degree programs and is one of six public universities in the United States to have a law school, medical school, and veterinary medicine college on the same campus (About Mizzou, 2019a). The largest of the UM System campuses, the university's:

> distinct mission, as Missouri's only state-supported member of the Association of American Universities, is to provide all Missourians the benefits of a world-class research university. We are stewards and builders of a priceless state resource, a unique physical infrastructure and scholarly environment in which our tightly interlocked missions of teaching, research, service and economic development work together on behalf of all citizens. Students work side by side with some of the world's best faculty to advance the arts and humanities, the sciences and the professions. Scholarship and teaching are daily driven by a commitment to public

> service — the obligation to produce and disseminate knowledge that will improve the quality of life in the state, the nation and the world. (Mission & Values, 2021)

The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs leads the division and reports to the University of Missouri Chancellor/UM System President overseeing the following functional areas; Residential Life, MizzouRec, and the Disability Center (Student Affairs, 2019d). Along with the Division of Student Affairs areas mentioned above, there are several areas organized under the Dean of Students' authority, also within the Division of Student Affairs, including Student Accountability and Support, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Off-Campus Student Services, Parent and Family Relations, Student Media, and Engagement and Activities (Student Affairs, 2019d). Also within the Division of Student Affairs are a few areas organized under the Director of Student Health and Well-Being's authority, including Student Health Center, Counseling Center, and Wellness Resource Center.

Missouri University of Science and Technology

Missouri S&T was one of the first technological institutions in the United States and the first located west of the Mississippi River (Missouri S&T, 2022a). Missouri S&T is a rural, public institution with 101 degree programs (Missouri S&T, 2022b) and 7,645 students enrolled based on a fall 2020 enrollment report (Missouri S&T, 2020). The mission of Missouri S&T is to integrate "education, research and application to create and convey knowledge that serves our state and helps solve the world's great challenges" (Missouri S&T, 2022b).

The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs leads the division and reports to the Missouri S&T Chancellor. They oversee the following departments and functional areas:

athletics and recreation; care management; career opportunities and employer relations; student well-being; Leach Theatre; Office of the Dean of Students; residential life; parent and family relations; dining and hospitality services; student accessibility; student health services; student involvement; and the testing center (Missouri S&T, 2022c).

University of Missouri – St. Louis

Founded in 1963 and located in suburban St. Louis County, the University of Missouri – St. Louis (UMSL) has 9 schools and colleges (University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2022a) and 15,205 students enrolled based on a fall 2021 enrollment report (University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2022b). UMSL's mission is:

> As the metropolitan, land-grant, research institution serving the most diverse and economically important region in Missouri, the University of Missouri–St. Louis delivers exceptional educational, research and engagement experiences that inform, prepare, challenge and inspire. (https://www.umsl.edu/proud/index.html)

In addition, the Vice Provost for Student Success & Academic Innovation leads the division and reports to the University of Missouri – St. Louis Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2022c). Oversight for the functional areas of Student Affairs is split between the Associate Vice Provost and Dean of Students and Senior Director of Student Affairs. The areas organized under the Associate Vice Provost and Dean of Students' authority include career services, health counseling and disability access services, student advocacy & care and the Veterans Center, and student conduct & academic integrity. The areas organized under the Senior Director of Student Affairs' authority include the Millennium Student Center & event services, residential life and housing, the Recreation & Wellness Center, new student

programs, and the Touhill Performing Arts Center (University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2022d).

University of Missouri – Kansas City

Originally founded as the University of Kansas City in 1933, the University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC) now enrolls over 16,000 students and offers 125 academic areas of study. The most racially and ethnically diverse of the four System campuses, 40% of the student population identify as mixed race, international, or as a member of a minoritized group (UMKC, 2022a). UMKC identifies as an urban research institution with a mission to:

promote learning through the discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge of public value across a broad spectrum of disciplines and fields of study. UMKC celebrates the individual and embodies diversity and inclusion by intertwining these goals with innovation to enable transformational impact aimed at bringing cultural, social, health and economic prosperity to the metropolitan, regional and global communities we serve. (https://www.umkc.edu/about/mission.html)

The Vice Provost for Students Affairs/Dean of Students works closely with the Provost (UMKC, 2022b) to lead the following functional areas: student engagement and involvement, student support and multicultural affairs, counseling, health, testing, and disability services, student conduct and civility, residential life, and student auxiliaries (UMKC, n.d.).

Social Media Guidance

The UM System does not have a social media policy or set of guidelines. It does have a set of collected rules and regulations that speaks to employee personal conduct, which would most likely be enforced if a social media violation occurs:

> The personal conduct at all times of any employees of the University shall be of such a nature as not to bring discredit upon the institution. Conduct contrary to this policy will result in the termination of such employees' connection with the University.
>
> (https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/rules/collected_rules/personnel/ch330/330.010_personal_conduct_of_employees)

Each campus does have social media guidelines and/or policies listed on their Marketing and Communication or Brand Identity websites for employees who administer university social media accounts, but only the University of Missouri has a dedicated webpage for personal social media use (https://identity.missouri.edu/apply-the-brand/social-media/personal-use-of-social-media/). To my knowledge, there are no social media guidelines specific to the Division of Student Affairs at any system campus, although they may be informal and not codified and/or departments within these divisions may have policies or guidelines.

Participants

Study participants are entry-level student affairs professionals who work in the field 5 or fewer years at one of the four UM System campuses. The structure and functional areas of each student affairs division varied between campuses with some common functional areas situated outside of student affairs. For example, neither the

Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity nor the MU Career Center fall under the reporting structure of student affairs at the University of Missouri, but these offices are common functional areas in student affairs at other institutions (Long, 2012; UNESCO, 2002). For this reason, I chose to cast a wider net and recruit professionals in these common functional areas of student affairs. Individuals who participated in the study work in student affairs at their respective institution or in a functional area that is typically considered student affairs (Long, 2012; UNESCO, 2002), including career development, residential life, multicultural affairs, wellness initiatives, testing and accessibility services, and campus activities.

I used convenience sampling to recruit participants via gatekeepers, institutional colleagues, and direct communication with potential participants. I collected data from the study participants using an online questionnaire in advance of interviews. These data provided descriptive information about the participants to help guide the interview process, as well as initial insights into participant demographics (see Table 1), social media usage, and social media management.

Table 1:

Participant Information

Participant Pseudonym & Pronouns	**Gender**	**Race/Ethnicity**	**Student Affairs Functional Area**	**Number of Years in Student Affairs**	**Social Media Platform Analyzed**
Willow S. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	3 years	Instagram
Vega T. (she/her/hers)	Woman	Hispanic or Latino/a/x, White	Career Development	3 years	LinkedIn
Chris B. (he/him/his)	Man	Black or African American	Residential Life	2 years	Twitter
Laura T. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Campus Activities	0-12 months	Twitter
Quincy J. (he/him/his)	Man	Hispanic or Latino/a/x	Multicultural Affairs	2 years	LinkedIn
Rachel D. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	1 year	LinkedIn

Kali H. (she/her)	Woman	White	Wellness Initiatives	0-12 months	Facebook
Carlitos C. (he/him/his)	Man	Hispanic or Latino/a/x	Residential Life	5 years	No Social Media Platform Analyzed
Alex S. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	2 years	LinkedIn
Emma S. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	0-12 months	LinkedIn
Tibet S. (he/him/his)	Man	White	Residential Life	3 years	Facebook
Phillip F. (he/him/his)	Man	White	Career Development	2 years	LinkedIn
Dana W. (she/her/hers)	Woman	Native American or Alaska Native, White	Testing Services	1 year	LinkedIn (No posts found)

Each of the four University of Missouri System institutions were represented in the study. The largest number worked at the MU, followed by the UMKC and Missouri S&T. The smallest number of participants worked at the UMSL. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents self-identified as men and 62% identified as women. Sixty-two percent of respondents were White, followed by 15% Hispanic or Latino/a/x, 8% Black or African American; 8% who identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x and White, and 8% identified Native American or Alaskan Native and White.

In the online questionnaire, participants were asked to identify the social media platform they were most active on in their professional role. The answer to this question identified the social media platform I would use to analyze participant social media posts. In the interview, I confirmed that platform and ended up changing the initial platform identified by five of the participants, based on further conversation about social media use. Nearly half of participant social media engagement happened on LinkedIn which is not surprising given the number of career development professionals in the study and their charge to engage employers and educate students on the platform.

Participant Recruitment

Merriam (2009) described a case study as a bounded system for analysis or "fencing in" of the phenomenon of study. As previously noted, the study was bounded by the phenomenon of being an entry-level student affairs professional (defined as having 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience excluding time as a graduate, teaching, or research assistant) who engaged with social media. The phenomenon was embedded in the University of Missouri system.

The case boundary for my study is different from Ahlquist's (2016a) study. Her participants were senior student affairs officers and the participant group was not limited to one university or university system. Ahlquist's (2016a) study included three additional case study boundaries: "(1) used social media sites daily, (2) interacted online at least once per week with students from their campus, and (3) utilized more than one social media site" (p. 6). I initially included these three additional case study boundaries in my study and used a case study criteria survey to determine whether individuals met the criteria. However, I changed the criteria early in the recruitment process because it was difficult to identify enough participants to reach data saturation.

I eliminated Alquist's three additional case study boundaries from my study and, instead, asked for this information via the online questionnaire. This information was still important to collect to particularize participant social media use, but it was not germane to my research question. Excluding them as case study boundaries allowed me to gain a richer understanding of entry-level social media use in and outside of the profession.

I used convenience sampling to recruit participants via gatekeepers, institutional colleagues, and direct communication with potential participants (see Appendix D). In

May of 2020, I emailed University of Missouri Student Affairs leadership including the Vice Chancellor; and Dean of Students; and the Associate Vice Chancellor of Inclusion, Diversity, & Equity to introduce my study and request recruitment assistance. In the same month, I sent individual emails containing a study recruitment message to the director of each unit within the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Missouri (and other groups designated in the study design section above) with a request to forward it to potential participants.

After my initial outreach and an additional request in June 2020 to student affairs leadership to encourage unit directors to share my participation request with potential participants, I identified only one individual who met the case study criteria. In September 2020, I explored each unit's website related to the criteria for the study for individuals who held a title considered entry-level including hall director, recruiter, coordinator, and advisor (Burkard et al., 2004) and emailed the recruitment message directly to them. This outreach did not produce additional individuals who met the case study criteria. As stated above, I updated participation criteria by removing case study boundary questions related to daily use of social media and frequency of social media interaction with students. In November 2020, I again emailed potential entry-level student affairs professionals with the updated criteria and identified four additional study participants (see Appendix D).

I was concerned that with only five study participants, I would not reach data saturation for the study. I then decided to increase the number of universities in my study and began recruiting at the other three University of Missouri System institutions. In February of 2021, I conducted the same recruitment process used at the MU for Missouri

S&T, UMKC, and UMSL (see Appendix E). I was able to recruit nine additional individuals who met the revised case study criteria. I stopped recruitment with 13 participants.

Data Collection Tools

I used three methods of data collection to triangulate the data sources: an online questionnaire (see Appendix B), individual interviews (see Appendix C), and participants' posts on one social media platform. Next, I detail these methods.

Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire (see Appendix B) contained 16 questions derived from Ahlquist's (personal communication, November 15, 2017) original online questionnaire (see Appendix F). I received the questionnaire from Ahlquist directly. After adaptation, I used my questionnaire (see Appendix B) to gather demographics, social media usage, and social media management information.

I used several questions from Ahlquist's (personal communication, November 15, 2017) original online questionnaire, modified three of the original questions, and added eight questions. I changed Questions 3, 5, and 11 from the original questionnaire to reflect a clearer title for the participant's supervisor title, replaced "ethnicity" with "race" given the category choices in the original questionnaire, and asked participants to share which social media platforms they are most active on in their professional role compared to those they find most important, e.g., they believe Twitter is important to use but are more active on Facebook.

Three questions from the online questionnaire came from the digital decision-making model reflection questions (Ahlquist, 2016b), including Question 4 from the tech

tools and strategies prong and Questions 1 and 2 from the user engagement prong. Adding these questions decreased the number of questions (see Appendix C) in the interview protocol and allowed me to add additional important questions to the survey. For example, I included questions asking participants to identify the pseudonyms and gender pronouns they wanted me to use throughout the study, weekly engagement with students, frequency of the social media use in their professional role, audience engagement, comfort level of engagement with that audience, proficiency in social media platform, and platforms utilized outside of professional role.

Once participants agreed to participate, I sent the questionnaire via campus email, and left the survey open for 21 days. I sent up to two weekly reminders to participants who had yet to complete the survey. I also informed individuals about consent in the recruitment email and indicated that they could agree to consent to participate by responding to the first question on the instrument (see Appendix G).

Individual Interviews

I scheduled individual interviews with 13 participants ranging from 26 minutes to 53 minutes in length. In light of COVID-19, interviews took place via Zoom (https://umsystem.zoom.us), a virtual communications software, in a quiet location in my house. I conducted interviews from June 2020 through May 2021.

Although Ahlquist's (2016b) digital decision-making model reflection questions informed my interview protocol, I used a semi-structured interview protocol so that I had flexibility in interview question wording, question order, and allowed me to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). The protocol included 16 interview questions including

a set of questions for participants who did not use social media in their professional role (Appendix C).

I audio and video recorded interviews via Zoom using my personal laptop and had them transcribed by www.temi.com, an online transcription service. Once the company returned the transcriptions, I viewed the recording, checked the transcriptions for errors, updated accordingly, and added them to the case record.

Social Media Posts

Making meaning of entry-level student affairs professionals' experience on social media is at the core of my research. The ability to collect and analyze these data provided great insight into how they used such tools. Merriam (2009) described the advantage of analyzing an online data source as a "computer-mediated communication" (p. 156); it allowed me to understand how participants' situate themselves in an online environment.

Specifically, I collected social media posts made by each participant on one predetermined social media account from October 1, 2019 through April 30, 2020. It is important to note that data collection for this study took place during the global pandemic crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak (NPR, 2020); however, only a small portion of the social media data were from the timeframe when the U.S. media began to cover the pandemic regularly. I intentionally collected participant social media posts for this 7-month timeframe, to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the findings of this study.

I gathered data from the social media platform that participants identified in the questionnaire as the one on which they are most active in their professional role. I chose to ask about the social media account on which they are "most active" instead of the platform they found "most important," because a professional could identify a social

media account as being important, but uses it very little or not at all. This was different than Ahlquist's (2016b) approach. Ahlquist analyzed data from the platform participants identified as "very important" or "important" to their work professionally. All her participants identified Twitter. In addition to Twitter, participants in my study identified LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook as the platforms on which they were most active.

Before social media analysis began, I needed to "friend" or "follow" each participant on the chosen study platform if it was not "public," meaning it had restrictions that would prevent me from seeing their social media engagement. I informed participants that I needed access for a minimum of 45 days after the individual interview to ensure I had enough time to retrieve the necessary data. After that timeframe, the participant could choose to "unfriend," "block," or make no change in our social media connection. I acquired participant approval for me to "friend" or "follow" them as part of the informed consent process. The case record contained data from social media posts as well.

Data Analysis

This section will discuss the analytical strategies used for the online questionnaire and data obtained from the interview questions and social media content. The data obtained from the online questionnaire provided descriptive information about the participants to help guide the interview process, as well as initial insights into participant demographics, social media usage, and social media management.

Creswell's (2009) qualitative research data analysis approach guided my data analysis. While this approach "suggests a linear, hierarchical approach building from the bottom to the top" (p.185), Creswell described the process as more interactive in

application with interrelated analysis stages that may vary in order. This nonlinear, dynamic process is how I analyzed the data, as analysis took place simultaneously with data collection and afforded the opportunity to organize and refine data as the study progressed (Merriam, 2009). I took the following steps to validate the accuracy of the information as described by Creswell (2009) once raw data were collected.

Step 1: Organizing Data.

I organized individual interviews and social media post transcriptions (Creswell, 2009) to prepare for data analysis. I used Zoom to record participant interviews on a personal laptop and an online transcription service, www.temi.com, to transcribe the interviews. I documented each participant's social media posts in a social media log (Excel document). Finally, I used NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software, to create a case record, bringing together transcribed interviews and social media posts for analysis (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

Step 2: Reading Data

Once I prepared data for analysis, I read it to gain a "general sense" of the information collected and reflected on what it meant (Creswell, 2009). I began to make general comments and notes throughout this process and began to interpret the information, tone, and use of the participant's ideas (Creswell, 2009).

Step 3: Coding Data

I used open coding to identify data useful to the study (Merriam, 2009) which allowed for construction of categories and a description of the participants (Creswell, 2009). I recorded general thoughts and information in NVIVO for each interview and social media log included in the case record. I conducted inductive analysis using

emerging codes, but kept the conceptual framework (Ahlquist, 2016a; 2016b) and extant literature in mind to inform the analysis (Creswell, 2009).

Step 4: Generating Setting Descriptions and Themes

Merriam (2009) stated, "a case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. Conveying an understanding of the case is the paramount consideration in analyzing data" (p. 203). Specific to case studies, descriptions and themes (or categories) help construct a narrative to convey analysis findings (Creswell, 2009). I constructed a *description*, or detailed rendering of the study participants' social media experience as entry-level student affairs professionals, that allowed for the generation of themes through coding (Creswell, 2009). More specifically, I reviewed all codes and then determined how they were related to each other to determine the themes.

Step 5: Interrelating Themes and Descriptions

Once coding themes emerged, I wrote a narrative to represent the findings that included a detailed discussion of themes with multiple participant perspectives and quotes (Creswell, 2009). I visualized the findings to complement the narrative and created a table (Table 1) that provided an aggregation of participant demographic data (Creswell, 2009).

Step 6: Interpreting the Meaning of Themes and Descriptions

A final interpretation of the data took place to make meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). I interpreted the data using codes that emerged from my inductive analysis process, but kept the conceptual framework (Ahlquist, 2016a; 2016b) and extant literature in mind (Creswell, 2009).

Positionality

As with all research, my positionality and potential influence on the case narrative is important (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). I identify as a White, cisgender, heterosexual man and understand my race and other identity characteristics are important to consider throughout the research process. Most of my visible identities (White, male, able-bodied) are in the majority and have the potential to influence how participants saw me as a researcher, as they may have identified differently. I also recognize the privilege in many of my identities and am aware these identities may have influenced how participants answered questions or interacted with me as a researcher. To further describe my positionality related to my digital decision-making process, I answered the interview questions (see Appendix C) I asked participants.

I worked in student affairs for approximately 9 years at two University of Missouri System institutions between 2006 and 2016. I was a full-time Residence Hall Coordinator for the University of Missouri Department of Residential Life from 2006 to 2008. I graduated from UMKC's Higher Education Administration Master's Program, where I also worked part-time from 2008 to 2010. At UMKC, I served the Office of Student Involvement as the graduate assistant for leadership programs my first year and transitioned to the graduate assistant for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Ally (LGBTQIA) Programs & Services my second year. Upon graduation, I worked outside of higher education for about a year and then returned to the University of Missouri Department of Residential Life as the Leadership and Educational Resources Advisor from 2011 to 2016. I most recently worked in academic affairs as the Career Services Coordinator for the University of Missouri

School of Health Professions.

I am personally and professionally active on several SNSs including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. I visit each platform almost daily and tend to post or "like" content a few times each week across platforms. Because some of my study participants also worked at the University of Missouri or in career services at other UM System institutions, I personally knew three of the participants. I did not exclude these individuals from the participant pool, but acknowledge including them in the study presents potential for me to interpret their data differently. Having a relationship with these individuals, I had greater context about what they share because I have known them longer than other participants.

I tend to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn for different purposes, although intended use does overlap between platforms, as I sometimes connect or follow the same people or organizations on more than one platform. I use Facebook and Instagram primarily to stay in touch with family and friends in my personal network. I "like" and comment on posts and communicate through Facebook's messaging system to have conversations, make weekend plans, or individually chat with friends and family. I currently do not "friend" college students at my institution on Facebook or Twitter until after they graduate from their undergraduate program. I prefer to keep my personal life and professional life separate, both online and off, and I consider students a part of my professional work. However, as I mentioned above, I do use LinkedIn to connect with college students at my institution to share pertinent, career-related information and model appropriate use of a professional social media platform. LinkedIn is also where I connect with individuals in my professional network who can provide insight into my work as a

career services professional, including recruiters and career services professionals at my university and at other institutions.

I use Twitter to gain information about people and topics that are both personally and professionally of interest to me. I do "like" and re-share content often, but post infrequently. I describe this as my "catch all" platform for news and updates. I follow sports journalists, professional athletes, politicians, *meme accounts*, thought leaders in higher education and beyond, news outlets, politicians, businesses, restaurants, musicians, television shows, actors and actresses, Dr. Josie Ahlquist and other social media researchers, and people with whom I may or may not have a personal connection.

Overall, I believe I have a foundational level of understanding in the digital identity and citizenship area of the technology competency as outlined by the *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). I have an understanding of digital tools, resources, and technologies used to advance student learning (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), but have not fully ventured into the application and facilitation of technology associated with intermediate and advanced outcome levels.

I can demonstrate awareness of my own digital identity and do, through presenting on the impact of social media and job searching as a way to educate students about responsible social media use. I sometimes engage (or share my thoughts) in digital learning communities or personal learning networks, but tend to be more of a social media *lurker*, or passive observer of information without revealing much about myself (Techopedia, 2019). I do, however, gain a lot from what I observe from these communities and networks, including programming ideas, career-related content to share

with students on my professional LinkedIn profile, or innovative practices in career services.

If I do engage with these communities or professional networks, I am typically asking questions versus responding to them. For example, I have posed a couple of question in the National Association of Colleges and Employers (https://www.naceweb.org) community discussion forum to connect with other professionals who serve students interested in a non-clinical career field. I am beginning to gain an intermediate level of technology competency in the area of digital identity and citizenship as I "like" or share career-related content on my LinkedIn profile and promote my profile to students as an additional way for them to obtain career-related content. Although I do not care much for using Instagram, I found myself on it more and more because that is where my partner posts pictures of our children.

While ACPA and NASPA (2015) solidified the importance of using technology, I believe universities are still trying to figure out the role of social media as a communication and engagement tool with students. It is also important to understand the social media use of professionals in the field, particularly when professionals are using non-university accounts to engage with one another to educate and show disapproval. Disagreements and condemnations on social media seem to come when professionals in the field perceive others as not living up to the espoused values set forth by professional organizations like ACPA and NASPA. The NASPA Yik Yak, Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals Facebook group, and Twitter meme situations exemplify how disagreement can play out in a complex, very public way.

Social constructivism informs my worldview, and is often an epistemological

approach used in qualitative case study research (Creswell, 2009). As a social constructivist, I assume that people want to understand their daily lives and seek ways to navigate complex situations. This approach positions the research participants' perception of a situation at the center of the study, so I can learn as much as possible about the complexity of their interactions with others. I acknowledge that my own experience and context will shape the interpretation of data. To mitigate personal bias in my interpretation, I will be cognizant of my positionality as a researcher (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). My primary responsibility is to interpret the meanings *others* have about the world and will be mindful of how my experiences shape my interpretation.

Trustworthiness

To make sure the proposed research is trustworthy, I used a variety of techniques. Gibbs (2007) suggested extensive documentation of case study procedures, including a detailed case study protocol and the creation of a database. In this spirit, I kept a methodological journal to document my procedures. I triangulated data sources, as noted previously, which strengthened the credibility and dependability of my findings.

I also utilize member checking to make sure that I accurately portrayed participant findings. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcript during a 2-week period after the transcription was available. Specifically, I invited participants to verify that the individual interview transcripts were accurate and asked if they had additional information to share related to their interview responses. Most participants did not respond to this request. Those who did respond affirmed removing filler words and acknowledged the transcript was reflective of our conversation. Kali H. shared the transcript had typos and that I used "real" when I should have used "reel." Laura T.

responded to ensure that I would not share her social media handle or actual name in my research. I confirmed that I would not and, if I did refer to her experience, I would use the pseudonym she provided in the online questionnaire. No additional insight was gained from this outreach.

Limitations

As with all research, my study has limitations. Readers may find transferability of my research limited based upon who participated and the functional areas of student affairs in which they worked. The 7 month (October 2019 through April 2020) social media post collection period may be limiting given the short period of analysis, truncated due to the changes in higher education due to the pandemic. While there were several student affairs functional areas represented in my study, six of the 13 participants worked in career development. My study may show an overrepresentation of student affairs professionals on LinkedIn, given its common practice for career development professionals to use this platform to educate students, but may not be as popular in other student affairs functional areas. Additionally, participants could have deleted social media content posted during the collection period because they did not want it to be seen.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following definitions provide a common understanding of language used throughout the study:

Digital identity – Digital identity is a method of presenting oneself online through the construction of personal and professional personas conveyed through online digital platforms including SNSs (Ahlquist, 2016b).

Digital immigrant – Individuals not “born in the digital world” (Prensky, 2001, p.

1), but have adapted to new technologies.

Digital leadership – Digital leadership is the ability to lead and influence constituents in virtual spaces.

Digital native – Prensky (2001) coined the term, digital native, to describe the generation that has grown up with digital and social technologies their entire lives.

Entry-level – Entry-level student affairs professionals have 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience (Cilente et al., 2006; Coleman & Johnson, 1990; Fey, 1991). Entry-level position titles encompass a wide range of professionals within student affairs (Burkard, et al., 2004) including hall director (e.g., residential life); recruiter (e.g., admissions); and coordinator (e.g., career services, LGBTQ services, multicultural affairs, service learning). There are also several advisor positions including those in titles such as academic advisor, student organization advisor, financial aid advisor, and first year experience advisor.

Millennials – As characterized by Dimock (2019), millennials were born between 1981 and 1996.

Senior student affairs officer – The senior student affairs officer (SSAO) is the administrative leader who provides direction to the student affairs division (MacKinnon & Associates, 2004). Position titles can include associate vice president, dean, provost, vice chancellor, vice provost senior vice president, and vice president.

Student affairs professional – Student affairs professionals serve the needs of college and university students outside of the classroom (MacKinnon & Associates, 2004). Functional areas of student affairs consist of advising, administration, counseling, and management (Love, 2003). For this particular study, the participants worked in

student affairs at their respective institution or in a functional area that is typically considered student affairs (Long, 2012; UNESCO, 2002), including career development, residential life, multicultural affairs, wellness initiatives, testing and accessibility services, and campus activities.

Social networking sites (SNSs) – SNSs are online, electronic communication platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, that individuals can use to connect with others (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison & boyd, 2013).

Significance of the Study

In this section, I will discuss the significance of the study for the extant scholarship and current and future practice in student affairs.

Scholarship

Social networking sites continue to integrate into the fabric of higher education institutions. College students, faculty, and staff in their respective academic and social circles use them. However, research has been limited regarding digital technology use by student affairs administrators (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016). Some scholars have focused on how senior student affairs professionals should use social media platforms (Ahlquist, 2016; Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016; Kolomitz & Cabellon, 2016; Pasquini, 2016; Pasquini & Evangelopoulos, 2017), but beyond this study, the entry-level student affairs professionals' use of social media has not been explored in depth. By placing the entry-level student affairs professional at the center of my research, we have a better understanding of how this professional group describes their digital identity and the factors that influence social media use. Study participants also shared how and why they connect with students on social media. However, further research is needed to determine

how entry-level student affairs professional social media use influences student development and students' use of social media.

Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model was designed to help professionals explore their digital identity. This study confirmed that Ahlquist's model did allow for participants to explore their identities, which was the goal of the study. The digital identity of two career stages in the field of student affairs have now been examined: the entry-level and senior student affairs professional. This framework should continue to be examined with other student affairs professionals including mid-career professionals or in certain functional areas (e.g., residential life professionals, greek life professionals). In addition, deeper exploration regarding the digital identity of particular populations is warranted, including intersections of identity. Lastly, future researchers can build on my work and the concept of digital baggage —as this study is the first of its kind, it can inform future studies to expand the knowledge of this topic.

Practice

The findings in this study demonstrate the need for entry-level student affairs professionals to further explore their digital identity and how to incorporate social media into their role in student affairs. Given their low-to-no professional engagement on social media, most participants are not meeting the foundational outcome proficiency standards in the digital identity area of the technology competency as outlined by the *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) including (1) demonstrating awareness of their digital identity and engaging students in responsible social media use, (2) promoting services and events and engaging students in them, (3)

engaging in digital learning communities, and (4) incorporating social media into their work.

Learning about and demonstrating these foundational technology competencies should take place in student affairs graduate programs. The study has implications on curriculum design in student affairs or higher education master's programs. Findings provide empirical evidence that graduate preparation programs can use to educate future professionals about technology competencies. I recommend that graduate curriculum, either in formal coursework or within assistantship and internship experiences consider asking students to participate in the following: conducting a self-assessment of proficiency in technology competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015); using Alquist's (2016) digital decision-making model to reflect on digital identity; completing an assignment that addresses the factors that influence the social media use of student affairs professionals; and developing skills to interpret university policy surrounding social media or to appropriately engage in social media as a professional. With the increasing rate that technology integrates into higher education, the course content should be scholarly and relevant for a course on current issues in higher education. This research would also be applicable to a course focused on leadership in higher education, particularly if the curriculum had a focus on digital leadership or the ACPA/NASPA professional competencies.

Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model guiding questions can serve as a tool for graduate students to reflect on their own social media use and how they see themselves as a digital leader through class discussion, personal reflection, or course assignments. Research findings can also provide insight as to the knowledge and skills

needed to avoid the problems social media usage may cause for them as professionals and for the profession in general. For those already in the profession who have come from graduate programs without an emphasis on social media use, professional development at conferences becomes important and the study findings can inform conference presentations on navigating social media as an entry-level professional and professional development workshops on creating or assessing their digital identity in the profession.

With the addition of the technology competency to the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), the profession has required those in the field to have the skills and knowledge to integrate technology into their work. Social media policy and guidelines for the participants in this study were non-existent and only one campus directly addressed personal use of social media. Each campus does have guidelines for employees who administer university social media accounts, but these professionals are engaging students differently as a university, department, or office. There is an opportunity for the system, each campus, or division of student affairs to provide guidelines and training for individual employees who have or want to have a professional presence on social media. Guidelines and policy should not only outline what *should not* be done on social media but should also include what *could* be done with resources and examples. Training could include relevant policy and guidelines, a digital identity exercise (Ahlquist, 2016), identification of goals for professional social media use, types of social media content to share based on functional area, how to approach social media and controversial topics, and an in-depth training on LinkedIn for those who are still considering a social media platform.

SECTION TWO:

PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

SECTION TWO: PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Those participating in my study are early career student affairs professionals. Although each professional has a department and institutional context, I am interested in the social media use of individuals who are members of a particular profession—student affairs. Thus, the organization in which my study is situated is the student affairs profession. The case for this study is the phenomenon of social media use among entry-level student affairs professionals.

Consistent with other research, I define entry-level professionals as those who have worked 5 or fewer years at a college or university (Cilente, et al., 2006; Coleman & Johnson, 1990; Fey, 1991). To understand their social media use, I explored their daily social media use, their online interactions with students and colleagues on their campus, and the different social media platforms they used. However, before investigating the phenomenon in detail, it was important to contextualize the student affairs profession, which is the organizational setting for participants in the study. To do so, I examined the profession's organizational history that includes the development of standards and competencies related to the purpose of the study, provide an organizational and leadership analysis, and identify implications for the profession for conducting this research.

History of Student Affairs

The student affairs profession has its beginnings later in the 19th century, in large part due to the rapid growth in student enrollment after the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 established the land-grant university (Schuh et al., 2017). This allowed for the construction of new universities or the expansion of existing ones, which led to an influx

of students and a greater need for student oversight (Schuh et al., 2017). Also, with the faculty's waning interest in serving the developmental needs of students outside of the classroom (Hevel, 2016) and growing research expectations born from the German model of higher education (Long, 2012), the early stages of the student affairs profession was underway. Two of the first positions charged with providing students with a more holistic experience included the dean of women, and in response, the dean of men (Schuh et al., 2017). These deans served *in loco parentis,* or in place of parents, as they viewed students as immature and in need of strict supervision (Long, 2012).

Northwestern University, however, took a different approach to overseeing students. The emergence of the student personnel movement, championed by Walter Dill Scott, challenged the idea of overseeing students as children and focused on serving the students' individual needs through industrial psychology (Schuh et al., 2017). Northwestern University elected Scott as President of his alma mater in 1920. After two years as President, he dismissed the deans of women and men and reorganized the administrative staff into what would become the Personnel Office (Biddix & Schwartz, 2012). This office addressed enrollment management issues, assessed student satisfaction, aided in post-graduation job placement, and classified and interviewed new students entering the university (Biddix & Schwartz, 2012).

Scott's work surrounding personnel psychology and higher education influenced the American Council on Education's (1937) landmark publication, *The Student Personnel Point of View*. This publication reinforced the idea that university administration should pay particular attention to the experiences and individual needs of college students (Schuh et al., 2017). While *The Student Personnel Point of View* boosted

the student personnel movement, its momentum was largely stifled due to the Great Depression of 1929 and, a related decrease in university attendance (Schuh et al., 2017).

It was not until after World War II that higher education enjoyed substantial growth from 1945 to 1970, termed the "golden age" (Schuh et al., 2017; Thelin, 2004). To slow the labor demands of veterans returning home from the war, the GI Bill was passed in 1944 (Schuh et al., 2017). This bill incentivized veterans to attend college by allowing the government to offer money to further veteran education (Schuh et al., 2017). The GI Bill proved successful, as total student enrollment at universities increased by 80% within 10 years of the pre-World War II era (Thelin, 2004). In 1949, a revised version of *The Student Personnel Point of View* proposed a comprehensive list of student services that represented 33 functional areas of student affairs (Long, 2012). This document outlined the "philosophical and organizational foundations" that still guide the student affairs profession today (Long, 2012, p. 4).

In the 1970s, several important pieces of federal legislation and judicial decisions ushered in a new direction for student affairs as "students' rights and expectations of colleges and universities began to take center stage" (Schuh et al., 2017, p. 29) after the Vietnam War and Civil Rights movement. This prompted institutions to redefine student affairs and required them to have new resources to serve an increasingly diverse student population (Schuh et al., 2017).

For example, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 granted women equal access to educational programs. While equal access was granted, additional administrative measures were taken as faculty could still steer women away from majors that were deemed inappropriate based on the patriarchal idea of a women's place in

society (Schuh et al., 2017). As a result, institutions created women's centers and Title IX coordinator positions to ensure compliance (Schuh et al., 2017). Further, Section 504 of the 1974 Rehabilitation Act granted students with disabilities the right to a quality education including the implementation of learning accommodations to help the student succeed (Schuh et al., 2017). To ensure legal compliance, student affairs departments added disability services offices on campus (Schuh et al., 2017).

In 1971, The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowered the voting age to 18. In conjunction with the 26th Amendment, the 1974 Buckley Amendment (now the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) changed the majority age of students to 18, giving students exclusive access of their educational records including the right to withhold parental access to them (Schuh et al., 2017). The Higher Education Act of 1965 was amended in the early 1970s to create what are now known as Pell Grants, which provided more opportunity for low-income students to attend and choose a college (Schuh et al., 2017). The University of California v. Bakke decision upheld the use of affirmative action in the college admissions process paving the way for other institutions to do the same (Schuh et al., 2017). These laws and judicial decisions gave agency to students, effectively brought an end to *in loco parentis,* and gave women, students with disabilities, and underrepresented racially marginalized groups access to higher education (Schuh et al., 2017).

In 1979, the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) published standards and guidelines for 16 functional areas of student affairs programing and services meant to professionalize the field (CAS History, 2019). In 1986, the Council would go on to publish academic preparation standards, known as the *CAS Standards*. In

1988, the Council created a self-assessment guide for each set of functional areas meant for student affairs practitioners to use as an evaluation tool (CAS History, 2019). The *CAS Standards* further fashioned student affairs as a professional field with the development of new theories and models to enhance student learning and development (Schuh et al., 2017).

The student learning era in student affairs history is noted as those years from 1994 to 2010 (Schuh et al., 2017). During this time, student affairs professionals approached learning as a partnership with faculty with a more holistic focus on student development and learning inside and outside of the classroom (Schuh et al., 2017). Two of the prominent professional student affairs associations, ACPA-College Student Educators International (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), have long been advocates for faculty partnership in student learning and continuous improvement of practice in student affairs. ACPA's (1994) *Student Learning Imperative* and ACPA and NASPA's (2004) *Learning Reconsidered* positioned student affairs professionals as educational partners with faculty and redefined learning as the education of the entire student, both inside and outside of the classroom (Schuh et al., 2017). Between the releases of these two publications, ACPA (1998) published *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs*, which was meant to guide the practice of student affairs educators. ACPA and NASPA's (2015) joint publication, *Professional Competency Areas of Student Affairs Educators*, reflected a new emphasis for the profession to ensure its accountability to students, to higher education, and to the field. From this publication came 10 professional competency areas meant to help student affairs professionals meet the foundational outcomes in each competency area.

Professional Standards and Competencies

The CAS learning and development outcomes (CAS Outcomes, 2008) speak to the importance of academic and student affairs joining to develop metrics to assess student learning. CAS defines a set of six student learning and development outcomes, called domains, that institutional programs and services can use to identify learning needs and to assess student learning (CAS Outcomes, 2008). These domains include: (a) knowledge acquisition, construction, integration and application; (b) cognitive complexity; (c) intrapersonal development; (d) interpersonal competence; (e) humanitarianism and civic engagement; and (f) practical competence. The *practical competence* domain identifies an outcome dimension, or a more specific learning outcome, called technological competence. This dimension speaks to the learning that should take place surrounding technology (CAS Outcomes, 2008). This dimension requires that the student: (a) demonstrates technological literacy and skills; (b) demonstrates the ethical application of intellectual property and privacy; (c) uses technology ethically and effectively to communicate, solve problems, and complete tasks; and (e) stays current with technological innovations (CAS Outcomes, 2008).

CAS further details standards and guidelines for student affairs academic programs through the Master's Level Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programs. These standards and guidelines socialize students into the student affairs field and help them acquire the appropriate skills, knowledge, and perspectives to serve students (CAS Master’s Preparation Program, 2019). CAS acknowledges the impact that technology has on communicating and connecting with students and the entirety of work within the field (CAS Master’s Preparation Program, 2019). Standards and guidelines related to

technology within preparation programs include emphasizing the use of technology as a learning tool; removing technologies that create barriers to access, discriminate, or produce inequalities; and providing adequate technology for academic and student support (CAS Master's Preparation Program, 2019).

In addition to professional standards frameworks established by CAS (CAS Outcomes, 2008), ACPA and NASPA (2015) developed professional competency areas for student affairs professionals to use to assess their own learning. These competency areas are built on "decades of scholarship devoted to identifying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective practice" (ACPA & NASPA, 2016, p. 4) and are designed for proficiency assessment and competency development within the competency outcomes levels: foundational, intermediate, and advanced. In 2016, ACPA and NASPA adapted their competency areas to create a rubric to help student affairs professionals assess their proficiency and growth in these areas. The rubric outlined groupings or "dimensions" of the outcome descriptions and categorized them within the outcome levels.

These dimensions encourage "developmental progression in the domains of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective practice, as determined by the literature and expert practitioners" (ACPA & NASPA, 2016, p. 4). The grouping process of competencies gives student affairs professionals the ability to synthesize three to seven dimensions (that include multiple competencies) versus a daunting list of individual competencies within each competency areas. There are two competencies that provide important considerations for the proposed study as it relates to entry-level student affairs professional's social media - the technology and leadership dimensions. Both dimensions

relate to the proposed research question and can provide insight as to where the study participants may sit in relation to the foundational, intermediate, and advanced competency area outcomes.

The technology dimensions outline foundational, intermediate, and advanced outcomes in the areas of data use and compliance, online learning environments, technical tools and software, and digital identity and citizenship. The digital identity and citizenship outcomes for technology focus on the student affairs professional as a role model for reputation cultivation and professional engagement in virtual spaces (ACPA & NASPA, 2016). One of the two foundational outcomes in this dimension is to "[d]emonstrate awareness of one's digital identity and engage students in learning activities related to responsible digital communication and virtual community engagement" (ACPA & NASPA, 2016, p. 33). This outcome may be appropriate for entry-level professionals, but also for more seasoned professionals who are beginning to build their digital identity.

ACPA and NASPA (2016) acknowledge the difficulty in locating an individual's position within the levels as professional development; there are a number of influencing factors including lived experience, position at the institution, and education level. For example, many entry-level student professionals grow up engaging in SNSs. It is possible they have already mastered the foundational outcomes in this competency and are working toward the intermediate and advanced technology outcomes focused on cultivating their own digital identity presence or leading others in the cultivation of their digital identity, respectively (ACPA & NASPA, 2016). In addition, as professionals "strive not only to develop a genuine digital identity," they must "also gain skills at

digital leadership in student affairs" (Ahlquist, 2016b, p. 41). In so doing, student affairs professionals connect technology and leadership competencies as they develop their digital identities for themselves and others.

The dimensions within the leadership competency outline foundational, intermediate, and advanced outcomes in the areas of self-awareness and continual reflection, teamwork and interpersonal skills, foundational and theoretical principles of leadership, and change management and innovation. The self-awareness and continual reflection dimension in the leadership competency speaks to the ability "to reflect on one's influence and exhibit congruence between thoughts and leadership" (ACPA & NASPA, 2016, p. 20). One of the two foundational outcomes in this dimension is to "Describe how personal values, beliefs, histories, and views inform one's perception as an effective leader with and without authority" (ACPA & NASPA, 2016, p. 20). This outcome reflects upon the ability of an entry-level professional to influence others even though they oftentimes have less authority than individuals in mid-level and upper-level positions at the institution. This has the potential to be particularly influential when thinking about digital identity and its implications for students and colleagues.

As with the technology outcomes, it is possible that entry-level professionals have already mastered the leadership foundational outcome within the self-awareness and continual reflection dimension and are working toward incorporating their authentic self into their leadership identity. Although technology and leadership outcomes are distinct from one another, as previously noted, there is also opportunity for them to intersect. The proposed study will provide insight into where entry-level professionals position themselves relative to their professional development and can make recommendations for

continuing their growth and development as technologically competent leaders in the field of student affairs.

Organizational Analysis

The student affairs profession provides the organizational context for my study; in particular, I am interested in the context as it relates to early career student affairs professionals. As outlined above, the student affairs profession is a complex organization, and like all complex organizations, it includes people in various roles across the organization who are "dealing with a changing, challenging, and erratic environment" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 31). To try to make sense of the organization, I will use Bolman and Deal's four-frame model. I will consider the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames to conceptualize the organization from multiple points of view.

Structural Frame Analysis

The structural frame is a model focused on organizational efficiencies (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Structure places people in dedicated roles and responsibilities to minimize distraction in the workplace and maximize individuals' performance on the job (Bolman & Deal, 2008). As the history of student affairs evolved from serving students *in loco parentis* to serving the student more holistically (Schuh et al., 2017), institutions had to put people in dedicated roles and responsibilities to best serve students (MacKinnon, 2004). There are a number of factors that influence the structure of student affairs functions within a university setting including: the educational purpose and size of the institution; the nature of the student body; the community in which the institution is a part; and student affairs' relationship with other institutional functions, including

academic affairs and business services (Komives et al., 1996). The focus on dedicated roles is particularly important in larger institutional contexts as size alone can require specialized functions in student affairs, which includes financial aid, registration, and housing. However, job functions tend to be a bit more fluid at smaller institutions as staff assume multiple roles (Komives et al., 1996). An institution's ability to specialize student affairs functions and maintain an appropriate division of labor can increase efficiency and enhance staff performance (Bolman & Deal, 2008), which has implications for the evolution of the profession.

Problems can arise when institutions do not consider factors that influence departmental structure when assigning institutional roles and responsibilities because those structures may not align with current circumstances (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Consider technology as an influencing factor. Institutions are struggling to stay relevant with the rapidity of technological advancement (i.e., institutional roles and responsibilities) (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016), while a core of its constituents, students and early career professionals included, use social media platforms daily (i.e., current circumstances). With over three-quarters of institutions without a social media policy (Pomerantz et al., 2015) and a lack of professional development opportunities provided by the two leading student affairs associations [ACPA and NASPA], issues are certain to arise because of a lack of structure and guidance for social media use (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016), and the profession must be prepared to address these issues.

Institutional policy can provide the structure needed and serve as a "blueprint for officially sanctioned expectations and exchanges among internal (executives, managers, employees) and external constituencies (such as a customers and clients)" (Bolman &

Deal, 2008, p. 50). In the case of an institution not having a social media policy, professionals can also look to guiding ethical principles, including ACPA's Ethical Principles and Standards (2006) and CAS's Statement of Shared Ethical Principles (2006). Ethical standards ensure ethical behavior in professional situations, and are hallmarks of a profession (Komives, et al., 1996).

Policy and ethical standards can clearly define how faculty and staff use social media related to their roles and responsibilities on campus and would be particularly important for entry-level student affairs professionals who have presumably only gained social media interaction expectations through the observance of others online or through personal trial and error. Bolman and Deal (2008) spoke to the lack of clarity from an organization as a structural dilemma stating, "If employees are unclear about what they are supposed to do, they often tailor their roles around personal preferences instead of systematic goals, frequently leading to trouble" (p. 74). One would assume this type of learning from personal experiences and preferences would continue to happen without policy and ethical standards in place.

In reviewing the profession from the structural frame, it is possible to uncover how structure can influence expectations for professionals within the field of student affairs. Mechanisms such as codes of ethics, policies, and competencies guide how the profession may function. However, other frames, such as the human resource frame, may provide additional insights into how to understand the profession as an organization.

Human Resource Frame Analysis

The human resource frame focuses on the human element of the organization and the potential benefits and detriments related to organizational success. This frame

reinforces how the organization, the student affairs profession, is influenced by the very professionals that make it up. Moreover, how organizations treat their employees can have an impact on worker motivation and company output. Bolman and Deal (2008) shared that organizations want their workforces to be talented and motivated and to give their best but often "these same organizations rely on outdated assumptions and counterproductive practices that cause workers to give less and demand more" (p. 118). This speaks to the ability of an organization to empower employees at any level to provide feedback on process and practice.

At the highest level, ACPA and NASPA (2016) gave individuals and groups an opportunity to provide direction on their professional competency areas, empowering them to inform what student affairs professionals should be learning and ultimately the essence of the profession. At a more local level, at any given institution, you will find committees and working groups made up of staff who are updating policy, evaluating programs, or working on the campus strategic plan. The assumption then is that participating in these national and campus opportunities empower employees to contribute to and adjust their work environment to keep them motivated and engaged.

Bolman and Deal (2008) also spoke to how a lack of investment in professional development opportunities may influence employee behavior because "people bring patterns of behavior to the workplace that have roots in early life. These patterns do not change quickly or easily on the job" (p. 166). Giving entry-level student affairs professionals the ability to provide input and share experiences regarding social media usage can provide perspective to the organization and can help create an atmosphere that is supportive of social media use in the profession. It can also help create practical

guidelines by utilizing the input of those most affected by their implementation.

Understanding how social media use influences the profession and the student affairs professionals who comprise it increases in importance, given the changing nature of technology and its integration into professionals' lives. What complicates this understanding is that the profession operates in a larger organizational context that has its own conceptualization about social media, particularly the social media use of younger generations. For example, Boyd (2014) found that society viewed the use of social media by teens negatively and labeled it "fear mongering." Junco (2014) attributed this negativity to how social media use was portrayed by mainstream media as a detriment to the development of young people and further defined this view as an adult normative perspective, or a view that does not take into consideration the perspective youth has on social media use. This is important to note as the profession attempts to provide guidance on social media use, particularly if this guidance is relying heavily on the knowledge and expertise of more senior student affairs professionals who may have less exposure to social media.

Thus, although the student affairs profession has tried to empower all in the organization to shape the future of the organization and what constitutes a competent professional, early career professionals are likely less engaged and certainly have less experience. This means that more seasoned professionals, as is the case in most professions, direct the profession. However, this may have unique unintended consequences for certain aspects of the profession, such as the role technology can and should play in the field.

Political Frame Analysis

Conflict and jockeying for scarce resources to obtain power is the crux of the political frame. Within the field of student affairs, scarce resources come in many different forms and at all levels of the organization. Resources include time for projects and initiatives, staffing to support student services, and adequate funding to support students, to name a few. The political frame is most visible within a particular college or university, as units within student affairs fight for scarce resources, and also compete with academic affairs for university resources that may put them at a disadvantage because of the power of the academic side of the house. In addition, status within the hierarchy within student affairs at a college or university has implications for the power they can wield when vying for resources.

It is difficult for entry-level professionals to vie for scarce resources because they lack formal political power. As Bolman and Deal (2008) described, “power flows to those with the information and know-how to solve important problems” (p. 203). To no fault of their own, these professionals have not had the ability to acquire the appropriate acumen needed to play the political game nor have they gained positional, coercive, or personal power to make a decision (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The question then becomes, how does a professional with little power manage the process of requesting resources for the integration of new technology, for example? This is where building coalitions through alliances and networks become important (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Finding other colleagues on campus who could benefit from the implementation of this new technology can help strengthen the argument. While it is important to have those who support the idea, access to decision makers and their agendas are imperative to gain buy-in and

ultimately the resources to support the initiative (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Before the introduction of social media, universities, for the most part, could limit or at least influence the scope of negative information presented by mainstream media outlets. In these instances, outside media sources are curating information unless someone within the university comments or provides more information. Again, the message could be more controlled assuming the appropriate university staff were speaking. With the emergence of social media, staff are able to share information freely on the internet. The content may or may not be work related, but could still have an impact on the institution they work for and could have a negative impact for the staff member sharing. In essence, university policy is about ensuring that students, faculty, and staff adhere to a standard that supports the mission of the university and does not present the university negatively.

While some universities have social media policies for faculty and staff, more often than not, staff have to navigate how to use social media on their own and can be unaware of its potential impact on their personal and professional lives—as well as on the profession in which they work. These lives, arguably, are not separate and serve to represent individual beliefs and views of society. What happens when that representation of oneself conflicts with the values of the institution or an immediate supervisor? As Bolman and Deal (2008) stated, “Cultural conflict crops up between groups with differing values, traditions, beliefs, and lifestyles. Cultural quarrels in the larger society often seep into the workplace, generating tension around gender, ethnic, racial, and other differences” (p. 207).

Generational tensions regarding social media use may create conflict (Bolman &

Deal, 2008) regarding the social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals and how it can be perceived by other student affairs professionals. Professionals (e.g., colleagues, supervisors, upper administrators) who have an adult normative perspective (boyd, 2014; Junco, 2014) of social media may not take into consideration the perspective of the entry-level professional and how they use social media. Those with an adult normative perspective of social media are more likely to be *prescriptive,* even cynical, in their approach (Junco, 2014) whereas individuals with a youth normative perspective are more likely to be *inquisitive* and balanced in their approach (Junco, 2014). These different perspectives can present a major problem in resolving conflict pertaining to appropriate social media use, particularly if there are not clear university policies in place to, not only, guide individuals on social media use, but also guide supervisors on appropriate consequences.

The political frame is a very powerful tool to use when attempting to gain advantage in a world where resources are scarce. Entry-level student affairs professionals have the opportunity to gain political prowess by engaging the university in conversations on how to best utilize social media in their professional lives and by gaining an understanding of how their personal social media use can affect their status as an employee. Many early-career professionals are members of the millennial generation, thus their knowledge can also be utilized by the university and by the profession to gain a better understanding of how social media is being used, including the use by the college students they serve. Yet, their organizational status within the hierarchy of their profession and within their institutions can limit their potential to influence these organizations in important ways.

Symbolic Frame Analysis

The symbolic frame gives individuals the opportunity to make meaning in a diverse, unpredictable world. Viewing an organization through the symbolic frame provides a perspective on how individuals make sense of the world and how organizations utilize symbolism to create culture. As Bolman and Deal (2008) described, "Symbols are the basic building blocks of the meaning systems, or cultures we inhabit" (p. 248). Within the student affairs profession, there are a number of symbols, or rituals, that are designed to help professionals make sense of and navigate their work within the field including conferences, trainings, campus traditions, the transition from paraprofessional to professional, and the guiding principles set forth by professional organizations like ACPA, NASPA, and CAS.

The role of technology within the profession is symbolic of the ever-changing landscape of its impact on how we communicate and do our work. As entry-level student affairs professionals begin to think about how they utilize social media as a professional leadership tool, the influence of their digital presence on students, staff, the university, and the student affairs profession has to be considered. A key assumption of Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame is that "[a]ctivity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience life differently" (p. 253). The lines between personal and professional lives are blurred, even inseparable, when it comes to what people post online (i.e., activity) as it is a direct representation (i.e., meaning) of that person's thoughts.

Student affairs professionals should consider a long-standing controversial question, "Do leaders shape culture, or are they shaped by it?" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p.

269). Perhaps an even more timely question to consider may be, “Does social media shape culture or does culture shape social media?”. Social media messaging can be understood as a symbolic representation of an individual’s professionalism; it also has the potential to symbolically shape the profession, as was the case with how NASPA responded (NASPAtweets, 2015) to the use of Yik Yak by student affairs professionals during the 2015 NASPA conference.

Joseph I. Castro, President of California State University, Fresno, is a more positive example of how leaders can use social media to shape culture. He tweeted support for 1,000+ “Dreamers,” or young undocumented immigrants on a “pathway to U.S. citizenship through college, work, or the armed services” (American Immigration Council, 2019) attending his institution (Figure 6). President Castro’s ability to encourage agency to students through this tweet served as a symbol of his institution’s commitment to, not only supporting Dreamers, but to diversity and inclusion as an institutional value.

F*igure 6.* President Castro’s Tweet Supporting Dreamers at Fresno State

Source: JosephICastro. (2017, September 1). As President of @Fresno_State, I stand with & support each & every one of our talented 25,000 students, including our 1,000+ Dreamers. #DACA [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/JosephICastro/status/903770481421152257?s=20

Ahlquist (2017) identified President Castro as a top 25 higher education president

to follow on twitter, but "[n]ot all icons are at the top" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 257). Entry-level student affairs professionals can also be icons who have significant impact on students, colleagues, and the institution. As a result, it is important to analyze the role of leadership, which I do next.

Leadership Analysis

Leadership is a core competency of the student affairs profession (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The leadership competency is made up of foundational, intermediate, and advanced outcomes in foundational and theoretical principles of leadership, self-awareness and continual reflection, teamwork and interpersonal skills, and change management and innovation (ACPA & NASPA, 2016). Within this leadership competency, it would seem that entry-level student affairs professionals would focus time building competency in the areas of self-awareness and continual reflection and teamwork and interpersonal skills (ACPA & NASPA, 2016) given this position's high contact with students in individual or group settings (Burkard, et al., 2004).

In addition, it is important for entry-level student affairs professional to build leadership competency in the area of teamwork and interpersonal skills (ACPA & NASPA, 2016). Whether it is a supervising a staff of students or advising a student organization, entry-level student affairs professionals can lead by encouraging, providing feedback to, serving as a mentor for, and promoting the leadership development of students (ACPA & NASPA, 2016). As a young professional in the field, self-awareness and reflection is helpful in becoming a self-actualized leader and navigating, for many, their first professional work experience. It also gives young professionals the opportunity to become an authentic leader through reflection (ACPA & NASPA, 2016). Given the

growth needed in these two leadership competency areas, I use *transformational leadership theory* and *authentic leadership theory* to analyze the leadership of entry-level student affairs professional.

Transformational Leadership

> Northouse (2013) defined transformational leadership as:
>
> the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential. (p. 186)

This theory emphasizes intrinsic motivation and follower development (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership focuses on the "emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals" (Northouse, 2013, p. 185) of the follower. These foci are certainly things supervisors and advisors work on with students and is in line with the profession's focus of serving students holistically (Schuh et al., 2017). Using transformational leadership to supervise and advise, individuals can help students find internal motivation to do good work and develop as young professionals.

In the context of transformational leadership and social media use, there is one factors in particular that can guide the entry-level student affairs professional called *idealized influence*. Idealized influence describes the ability to be a role model for followers (Northouse, 2013). Not only should advisors and supervisors serve as role models to students in their offline interactions, they should do the same online through social media. Role modeling appropriate behavior online is important, but the crux of transformational leadership is the process of changing and transforming others

(Northouse, 2013). Entry-level professionals have the opportunity to train and influence students on appropriate social media use and how interactions online may be perceived by others.

Ahlquist (2016a) suggested that the tenets of transformational leadership could be applied to understand how senior student affairs officers use social media and noted a study by Webb (2009) that found transformational leadership to be the most effective style for college and university presidents. In addition to the digital decision-making model, a *digital leadership framework* emerged (Ahlquist, 2016a). Two of the four elements of Ahlquist's digital leadership framework (prioritizing relationships and embracing change) are connected to transformational leadership. Prioritizing relationships and embracing change feature many of Tichy and DeVanna's (1986) seven characteristics of transformational leadership: (1) self-identifying as change agents; (2) courageous; (3) belief in people; (4) values base; (5) lifelong learners; (6) able to work amongst complex, ambiguous, and uncertain issues; and (7) having vision. I anticipate that early career professionals will manifest many of the same characteristics that their senior counterparts did as they enact digital leadership. For example, Ahlquist's (2016a) participants embraced change by identifying and leading through it, while change fueled curiosity rather than fear. Participants prioritized relationships by making it a "priority to apply their leadership on and offline" (Ahlquist, 2016a, p. 19), which is reminiscent of Tichy and DeVanna's (1986) characteristics of belief in people and being values base.

Some may assume that more seasoned professionals lead early career professionals in social media use. However, I argue that early career professionals may serve in this capacity for more seasoned professionals, given their positions as digital

natives and the knowledge and skills they possess related to how to use social media. Of course, more seasoned professionals play a critical leadership role in many other ways for early career professionals. Within the context of social media, they may provide the ethical frameworks in which to operate, as those skills may not be as developed earlier in a career.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is one of the newest areas of leadership research and was identified, but not articulated, in early research on transformational leadership (Northouse, 2013). While transformational leadership focuses on maximizing the potential **of** [emphasis added] followers (Northouse, 2013), authentic leadership focuses on individuals' ability to "be perceived as trustworthy and believable **by** [emphasis added] their followers" (Northouse, 2013, p.267). Authentic leadership is similar to transformational leadership in that both leadership theories requires leaders to be ethnical and do what is 'right' and 'good' for their followers and society" (Northouse, 2013, p. 268).

Authentic leadership theory provides insight to the digital leadership of entry-level student affairs professionals. For example, the self-awareness and continual reflection competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) encourages the incorporation of "one's authentic self into one's identity as a leader" (p. 28) and promotes the ability of an individual to be congruent in both their leadership and actions (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). This competency demands authenticity among leaders.

Although authentic leadership theory is complex and does not have a single agreed upon definition, the theoretical approach of Walumbwa et al. (2008) provided

some direction in definition and use of the theory in the context of entry-level student affairs leadership. Specifically, Walumbwa et al. (2008) defined authentic leadership as:

> a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development. (p. 94)

Walumbwa et al. (2008) identified four components of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency.

The first two components, self-awareness and internalized moral perspective, align with ACPA and NASPA (2015) leadership competencies. Northouse (2013) shared that self-awareness included "reflecting on your core values, identity, emotions, motives, and goals and coming to grips with who you really are at the deepest level" (p. 263), a sentiment echoed in ACPA and NASPA's (2016) leadership competency self-awareness and continual reflection dimension. To be a good leader for students in physical or online settings, self-awareness is essential, particularly if the student affairs professional is leading by example.

The component of internalized moral perspective demands the ability to use internal values and morals to guide behavior as opposed to external influencers or pressure. This component of authentic leadership allows students to see the young professional as authentic because their words and actions are consistent both in person and online. The idea of this component also harkens back to another competency of the

self-awareness and continual reflection dimension that speaks to the ability of a leader to "exhibit congruence" (ACPA & NASPA, 2016).

Ahlquist (2016b) found that senior student affairs officers embraced a whole-life leadership approach. Related to this idea of being congruent, both online and off, student affairs leaders used a "what you see is what you get" (as cited in Ahlquist, 2016b, p. 42) approach, which highlighted that they are the same person on campus who they are at home. This is the sort of authentic leadership that early career professionals should also seek. Although this may not be as evident early in their career, authentic leadership is a developmental process that calls for self-reflection to advance their standards and competencies (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) throughout their careers.

With transformational leadership theory and authentic leadership theory, one can come to understand how entry-level professionals have the potential to influence students and colleagues, and the importance of self-reflection in their efforts to become more transformational and authentic leaders themselves. Transformational and authentic leadership theories are not the only theories that emphasize the importance of self-awareness and acting consistently in words and actions (e.g., educating students on how to appropriately engage on Yik Yak and engaging the same way as a professional); however, I draw upon these theories in this study because they align more closely to notions of digital leadership (Ahlquist, 2016b). The proposed study is informed by, and may advance thinking related to, organizational and leadership theories. By introducing the frames and theories above, I hope to help readers understand the context in which the case is embedded.

Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

Specific to the proposed research question, the proposed study will explore how entry-level student affairs professionals participate in SNSs and uncover the implications of personal and professional use in their student affairs leadership roles. I hope the findings from this study can be used in a variety of ways, including highlighting the value of personal assessment and reflection of digital identity, informing more intentional supervision of entry-level professionals, guiding the creation of policies regarding employee social media use, considering the role social media use has in the curriculum in graduate programs, and shaping professional development opportunities related to social media use.

The greatest potential of this study is to improve the work of student affairs professionals in digital spaces. With the addition of the technology competency to the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), the profession has required those in the field to have the skills and knowledge to integrate technology into their work. Although I am not conducting a study on the competency level of the participants, findings may provide insight into how the competencies are manifesting for participants and the implications of those manifestations as the profession continues to evolve.

The proposed study will give entry-level student affairs professionals the opportunity to reflect on their SNS use and utilize the digital decision-making model (Ahlquist, 2016a) to enhance or adjust their current approach to SNSs within their profession, to integrate social media into their work, and/or to acquire relevant information to consider as they prepare to better integrate SNSs into their roles. For the

supervisors of entry-level student affairs professionals, this research will give them a better understanding of how some entry-level student affairs professionals are utilizing SNSs in their work to engage students, utilize digital networks, and how their digital identity plays out online. Senior student affairs officers will also gain knowledge about the use of SNSs by entry-level student affairs professionals and may use the findings to influence division or campus policies surrounding social media.

The technology competency within the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) has solidified the importance of student affairs professionals to have the skills and knowledge needed to integrate technology into their work. Given this, I believe my findings will confirm that student affairs professionals use technology in their work and unearth how being digital natives influences their competence as digital leaders within the profession. The study may have implications on curriculum design to address the value of social media usage. Graduate programs can include this study as required reading or to complement existing curriculum related to technology use in the profession. The interview questions could serve as a tool for graduate students to reflect on their own social media use and how they see themselves as a digital leader through class discussion, personal reflection, or course assignments. Research findings may also provide insight as to the knowledge and skills needed to avoid the problems social media usage may cause for them as professionals and for the profession in general. For those already in the profession who have come from graduate programs without an emphasis on technology use, professional development at conferences becomes important and the study findings can inform conference presentations and professional development workshops. In addition, the study findings

may provide insight into the kinds of professional development opportunities needed for both early-career and more seasoned student affairs professionals who supervise and support these early-career educators.

Summary

Bolman and Deal's (2008) four-framed model includes the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames and can be used to better understand complex organizations. Utilizing each frame as a window into a different part of the organization creates a clearer picture. The organization for the proposed study is the student affairs profession, with a particular focus on the early career of a student affairs professional.

Through the structural frame, the importance of guiding entry-level student affairs professionals in their social media use becomes apparent. The structure of the profession and the standards and competencies reinforce the ways in which this study can be situated and how the organization of the profession informs the research. In addition, the lack of research coupled with the nascent technology competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) provides fertile ground to enhance the structure of the profession through the development and implantation of policies, guidelines, and learning opportunities for social media use.

The analysis through the human resource frame suggested that the profession would be well-served by creating opportunities for entry-level student affairs professionals to provide feedback on a social media use guidelines, competencies, and policy. The political frame provided perspective on how professional status can facilitate and limit the profession's integration of technology. Entry-level student affairs professional have the potential, but perhaps not the political capital, to engage the

profession and their campuses in conversation on how to best utilize social media in their professional lives. Finally, the symbolic frame can help early-career professionals consider impact of their social media use on their personal and professional lives and on how the field of student affairs is perceived by others related to social media use.

The ability of an entry-level professional to lead and influence others can be limited due to their position in the university structure. However, they often lead in the context of supervising or advising students. Through transformational leadership, entry-level student affairs professionals focus on helping students find intrinsic motivation in their work to help them develop as learners. Through authentic leadership, entry-level student affairs professionals can teach and role model appropriate online behavior by being consistent in words and actions both in person and online.

The study will contribute to the scant literature about social media use in student affairs and will inform, and be informed, by organizational and leadership theories to contextualize the phenomenon under investigation. Research implications for this study include assessing and reflecting upon personal and professional social media use, supporting entry-level professional supervision, developing social media policy and guidelines on campus, influencing graduate program curriculum, and informing professional development opportunities related to leadership and social media use in the profession.

SECTION THREE:

SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

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While technology has been identified as an important competency within the student affairs profession (ACPA & NAPSA, 2015), a number of questionable social media interactions among student affairs professionals (e.g., Fabris & Supiano, 2015; Messmore, 2016; Patton, 2016; Thomason, 2015) evidence the need for guidance and policies for social media use. In addition, digital technology use is not sufficiently integrated into graduate program curricula (Cabellon & Junco, 2015), signaling the need to explore the social media use of entry-level student affairs professional. In doing so, this knowledge has the potential to inform future policies and curricular interventions in graduate programs. Prior to collecting and analyzing any data, however, a review of relevant literature is necessary to ground this study. In this section, I review generational perceptions of digital technology use, SNS use in higher education and in student affairs, perceptions of entry-level student affairs professionals' technology competency, and the concepts of digital identity and digitized selfhood. Each of these topics provide the foundational knowledge upon which my study rests.

Generational Perceptions of Technology

Generational perceptions and use of digital technology and SNSs may impact the education and training of entry-level student affairs professionals. Prensky (2001) coined the term *digital native* to describe the generation that has grown up with digital and social technologies their entire lives. Those individuals not "born in the digital world" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1) but adapting to new technologies were termed *digital immigrants*. Prensky posited that digital natives process and think through information fundamentally differently than digital immigrants. Digital immigrants struggle with speaking the new

[digital] language and may not teach in ways that make sense, or are interesting to, digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Digital immigrants are likely those who are responsible for, or at minimum, tasked with, educating, training, and supporting entry-level professionals in graduate programs as supervisors and as professional development coordinators. Because of the likely generational differences, it is possible that entry-level professionals may not receive or retain the information necessary to grow in the field, particularly as it relates to technology competencies. While perceptions of technology and social media use can be seen through a generational lens (i.e., Millennials v. previous generations), understanding technology from a particular viewpoint can provide a different perspective regarding how young people and adults view technology when seeking or providing guidance on social media use.

Similar to the disconnect between digital natives and digital immigrants, Cabellon and Junco (2015) described how digital technology is perceived differently among those who have an adult, rather than youth, normative perspective:

> Generally, an *adult normative* perspective reflects an adult viewpoint, marked by a prescriptive approach, highlighted by negative beliefs, where the sole source of information is from themselves. Those who engage in the adult normative perspective often believe popular media's negative portrayals of youth technology use. Conversely, a *youth normative* perspective reflects a youth-centered viewpoint, marked by an inquisitive approach, highlighted by balanced beliefs, where the primary source of information is from youth themselves. (p. 53, emphasis in original)

I describe the aforementioned perspectives (i.e., digital native v. immigrant and

adult v. youth) because they provide additional insight into barriers that may need to be addressed when guidance about social media use is being sought within the profession of student affairs. Those senior level student affairs professionals with an adult normative or digital immigrant perspective will most likely be more *prescriptive,* even cynical, in their approach to guiding young professionals (Junco, 2014). As such, early career professionals may push against this approach because of their youth normative or digital native perspective and are more likely to be *inquisitive* and balanced in their approach to the topic (Junco, 2014).

Social Media Use in Higher Education

Early career professionals likely come to higher education with experience using technology and SNSs that is consistent with the college students with whom they work. Given a similar generational orientation and recency of attending college themselves, it would not be surprising that early career professionals frequent, or at least are more aware of, the social media platforms that college students use despite the ever-changing technologies that are emerging. This is the context in which most early career professionals currently enter the field of student affairs.

College Students

Social networking sites are online, electronic communication platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Snapchat, which individuals can use to connect with others. This connection can be based on shared physical locations or spaces, interests, identities, or common beliefs (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networking sites allow users to make their networks publicly viewable as an opportunity to (re)connect with others - a connection that may not have happened outside of an SNS (boyd &

Ellison, 2007).

Ellison and boyd (2013) updated their 2007 definition to more specifically describe today's SNS landscape:

> A social network site is a *networked communication platform* in which participants 1) have *uniquely identifiable profiles* that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can *publicly articulate connections* that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with *streams of user-generated content* provided by their connections on the site. (p. 158, emphasis in original)

Ninety-six percent of young adults (i.e., 18-29) in America use the Internet (Perrin & Duggan, 2015) and have significant exposure to computer-based technology on a daily basis. "They [young adults] have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age" (Prensky, 2001, p.1). This technology is integrated in the traditionally-aged (18-24 year old) college student experience because, in one form or another, technology has been in their lives long before college. Moreover, individuals with at least some college education use SNSs 10% more than individuals who only have a high school education or less (Pew Research Center, 2019), indicating an increased chance that students attending college are using SNSs. Thus, it is safe to assume most early career professionals and the students with whom they work are highly engaged with digital technology, which would include SNSs.

Further, traditionally-aged college students are digitally connected outside of the classroom. For example, they use smartphones and tablets to promote their student

organization's philanthropy fundraiser, post a food complaint to the dining hall's Facebook page, use a messaging application to ask friends about the mandatory residence hall meeting location, participate in digital activism, or live tweet the student government election debate. Digital technology use such as this reminds educators that they need to address and consider how they best engage students inside and outside of the classroom (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016).

In addition to SNSs, students are using technology within the academic space (Gierdowski, 2019). For example, they are using learning management systems like Blackboard, Moodle, or Canvas to submit assignments in both written and video formats, simultaneously writing and editing a group paper with classmates on Google Docs, studying for biology class with electronic flashcards created on their smartphone, or receiving a cellular phone text message from the university's emergency notification system about tomorrow's class cancellation due to the impending ice storm.

In addition to the use of LMSs, scholars have attempted to understand the social significance of SNS use (Selwyn, 2009) and the impact on teaching and learning in the academy (Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2014). Scholars who have studied SNSs and academic enhancement in postsecondary settings have focused on topics that include transformative learning (Veletsianos, 2011), enhancing social presence through Twitter (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2010), the challenges of social media use for professional purposes, learning and community building (Lee & McLoughlin, 2010; Minocha, 2009), and improving the efficiency of communication (Towner & Munoz, 2011).

Scholars have also examined SNSs and their impact on the college student experience related to the transition to college (DeAndrea et al., 2012; Ruud, 2013) and

well-being and student engagement (Mastrodicasa & Metellus, 2013). Although scholars have studied how students use SNSs, less is known about those educators who work closely with students, i.e., student affairs professionals, who likely use SNSs personally and professionally. Further demonstrating the gap in literature and the need to fill it, Cabellon and Payne-Kirchmeier (2016) called for more investigation into the use of digital technology and the impact on student affairs, which is at the heart of my study.

Positional Leaders

Based upon my review, scholarship about the use of SNSs by student affairs professionals has primarily focused on positional leaders' use of social media in higher education (Ahlquist, 2016b; Zaiontz, 2015). Zaiontz (2015) was the first to research the social media use of positional leaders in higher education. Twenty-two college and university presidents from Canada and the United States were interviewed for leading to what Zaiontz (2015) termed: *Five Styles of Presidential Presence*. These distinct approaches to social media include the customer servant, institutional promoter, socially inconsistent president, oversharing non-strategist, and socially active strategist. Social media participation varied based on the audience (i.e., students, faculty, staff, alumnx, external stakeholders/community members); type of information they were comfortable sharing; time available to participate in social media; and the primary goal or purpose for engaging on social media in the first place.

A study from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research (Barnes & Lescault, 2013) indicated that more than half of American college and university presidents are active on Facebook and Twitter, exceeding the number of Fortune 500 CEOs using social media by 20%. A more recent report (Hootsuite, 2019)

indicated that 98% of higher education institutions use social media with 64% of those institutions integrating social media into their strategic plan and institutional mission. The report also indicated 68% of higher education executives view social media as a strategic area of focus (Hootsuite, 2019). Given the number of active university presidents on social media and the rate in which institutions are using social media to strategically connect with students, the potential to influence/increase the social media use of those in the university community is great and further speaks to the importance of my research on entry-level student affairs professional social media use.

Senior Student Affairs Professionals

Ahlquist (2016a) argued that Zaiontz's work "uncovered a deeper understanding of thoughtful and authentic engagement on social media that opened the door to exploring digital leadership theories" (p. 4) and informed her research on the digital identity of senior student affairs officers. Ahlquist's (2016b) research provided a holistic perspective on the social media use of 16 senior student affairs officers and suggested a "personal yet strategic approach" (p. 36) to social media. From the research, she developed a *digital decision-making model* (see Section 1 of this dissertation). The digital decision-making model is designed to help senior student affairs professionals personally explore their digital identity or to help educate others on digital identity (Ahlquist, 2016b). Ahlquist (2016b) analyzed data collected from senior student affairs professionals about their use of social media, including participants' behavior on Twitter.

Entry-Level Student Affairs Professionals

My study will focus on the impact of social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals. The entry-level student affairs professional has 5 or fewer years of

full-time work experience (Cilente, et al., 2006; Coleman & Johnson, 1990; Fey, 1991) and is a particularly important group to study due to less experience in the profession and more frequent contact with students (Burkard, et al., 2004). In addition, as previously noted, most entry-level student affairs professionals have a similar generational orientation surrounding technology (Dimock, 2019) as the college students they serve, making them more likely to connect with college students online.

Entry-level student affairs professionals hold a number of job titles including, but not limited to, admissions counselor, residence hall director, student organization advisor, intramural athletics coordinator, and financial aid advisor (Burkard et al., 2004). Entry-level student affairs professionals' responsibilities include substantial contact with students in individual or group settings, program development, and implementation; other responsibilities may be more administrative. For example, some entry-level student affairs professional responsibilities included managerial roles with some staff supervision, more typical of directors of orientation, student activities, and student unions (Burkard et al., 2004).

Entry-level student affairs professionals are more likely to connect with students through technology, including social media, given their similar generational orientation (Dimock, 2019), which may partially explain the addition of technology as a competency in student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Given both circumstances, entry-level professionals should be aware of their digital identity, model appropriate behavior online, and prepare to educate others on digital leadership best practices. Also, their frequent contact with students demands that the technology competency of entry-level student affairs professionals is explored.

Perceived Technology Competency

A number of studies have examined the professional competencies of entry-level student affairs professional through the perceptions of their supervisors or senior-level student affairs administrators (Burkard et al., 2004; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017). Through their work, Burkard et al. (2004) attempted to build consensus regarding important skills, responsibilities, and theories that are pertinent to the work of entry-level student affairs professionals. They identified 32 competencies essential to entry-level student affairs professionals; technology ranked 24th. While the respondents in their analysis believed technology was an important *competency* to have, the respondents did not emphasize it as a *job responsibility* of entry-level student affairs professionals. However, the researchers did acknowledge the importance of computer/technology competency, as it continues to be integrated into the fabric of higher education (Burkard et al., 2004). It is important to note that if they conducted a similar study 15 years later, technology as a competency and job responsibility may be more highly ranked.

Cuyjet et al. (2009) were also interested in the perceptions of student affairs professionals. They surveyed new graduates who were entering the profession, as well as their supervisors, to understand the quality of preparation entry-level professionals received from their master's-level college personnel program. Overall, recent graduates somewhat agreed they were highly trained in relevant competencies, particularly in knowledge and use of student development and ethical issues facing the profession (Cuyjet et al., 2009). Supervisors agreed with the recent graduates' perceptions of their graduate preparation. Both recent graduates and supervisors believed the competencies

targeted in graduate preparation programs were important for the graduates' current jobs. However, competencies related to technology were not addressed in the study, nor were there survey questions related to technology. The most likely reason is that the 2006 version of the CAS Master's Level Student Affairs Professional Preparation Program used for this study did not address technology as a competency, unlike the 2012 version that does include technology as a competency (CAS Master's Preparation Program, 2019).

Gansemer-Topf and Ryder's (2017) research found that mid-level managers perceive the skills needed for effective entry-level professional work do align with the ACPA/NASPA competencies overall. They used the 2010 Joint Statement (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), which excluded technology as a stand-alone competency. Gansemer-Topf and Ryder (2017) intentionally conducted the study prior to the release of the 2015 Joint Statement because as "practitioners and graduate programs increasingly are adopting the competencies…[they] felt it important to understand how the competencies aligned with the work of student affairs professionals" (p. 41). As mid-level managers described the competency needs of entry-level professionals, the following themes emerged: "(a) [an] emphasis on broader, transferable skills versus specific skills, (b) [an] approach to work [that] undergirds competencies, (c) [the] importance of understanding context, (d) knowledge of assessment, (e) [the] ability to adapt to different audiences, and (f) [the] ability to know and apply content" (Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017, p. 46). None of the participants in the study identified technology as an important competency for entry-level student affairs professionals.

Although the research shows an overall agreement that entry-level student affairs

professionals are ready for, or performing well, in entry-level work (Burkard et al., 2004; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017), research is mixed on the perceived skill deficiencies of entry-level student affairs professionals and the extent to which graduate programs prepare them for their first position in student affairs (Cooper, et al., 2016).

Cooper et al. (2016) found only two of six studies (Dickerson et al., 2011; Waple, 2006) that identified technology as a perceived competency deficiency of entry-level student affairs professionals. Research, assessment, and evaluation; budgeting and financial management; and legal knowledge and standards were perceived as the areas entry-level student affairs professionals were most deficient (Cooper et al., 2016). In addition, only 8% of student affairs graduate programs mention technology on their website as a course offered or as an important competency or objective for program graduates (Cooper et al., 2016), signaling either a gap in the espoused value of technology as a student affairs competency or an assumption that graduate students and entry-level professionals already have the necessary competencies. While a number of these studies did not indicate technology as an important entry-level student affairs competency, the fact remains that 96% of young adults use the Internet with an even higher percentage of use likely for college students (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). Also, entry-level professionals are likely to continue to connect daily with college students online and through SNSs as most of these professionals view technology through a similar generational lens (Dimock, 2019). Thus, additional research related to technology use is critical to future policy and curricular decisions.

Digital Identity & the Digitized Self

Digital identity is a method of presenting oneself online through the construction of personal and professional personas conveyed through online digital platforms including SNSs (Ahlquist, 2016b). Reflecting a similar notion, Junco (2014) defined self-presentation as "the conscious or unconscious process by which people try to influence the perception of their image, typically through social interactions" (p. 111). The manner in which individuals engage, share, promote, and present themselves online is "intricately connected to their overall identity" (Stoller, 2012, para. 2) and no longer viewed as something separate from their "offline identity."

As I have mentioned previously, research regarding the technology use of student affairs administrators is limited (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016) and I have been unable to identify literature to date focused on the technology use or digital identities of entry-level student affairs professionals. Given the lack of literature in this area, understanding college student technology use and identity matters as it may inform how entry-level student affairs professional use technology given a similar generational orientation and familiarity with social media platforms as the students with whom they serve. Brown's (2016) exploration of college students' conceptualization of self and identity in light of their digital and social media use is an example of research that may inform technology use of early career professionals.

Brown (2016) found that students were heavily curating content for social media platforms, sometimes multiple platforms. When constructing an online identity and posting information on social media, how they believed others would perceive them online influenced their online behavior. In addition, they were selective of the content

they posted, depending on the audience of a particular social media platform. Also, they believed that constructing the "perfect" online image involved not posting boring or negative content and thought social media "likes" were very important and served as a sign of external validation (Brown, 2016). To add to the complexity, students sometimes constructed different digital identities for each of the social media platforms they used (Brown, 2016).

One of Brown's (2016) research participants was in their first year of graduate school. While the experience of recent graduates was not the focus of Brown's study, Brown briefly discussed the participant's experience as a "post-college" social media user. Post-graduation transition can be expected as friends move away for their next venture, behavioral patterns change, and individuals become more independent (Brown, 2016). During this transition, social media was used to maintain a connection with college friends, show "adulting" skills, or project a happy persona online but, in reality, be unhappy at their new job (Brown, 2016). Given this singular perspective, Brown suggested future research on how individuals make meaning of social media post-college graduation. I thought this was important to share as participants in my study may also speak to their post-graduation transition not being that far removed from graduation.

Brown (2016) largely avoided terms such as *digital identity* and *digital identity development* and coined the term "digitized selfhood" to indicate "the extent to which individuals see their digital world selves as part of, or separate from, their physical world selves" (p. 14). Brown believed the scant literature surrounding *digital identity development* to be largely incomplete due to the lack of nuisance regarding online identity exploration and online self-presentation:

> Although this content might represent an identity, and might be generated as a part of identity exploration, the content itself is not developmental. One's data does not have a psychological life. The word development is used in both instances but in different ways. It confuses the process of developing (exploring) identity online with the process of developing (crafting) an online identity. (p. 11)

Similar to the college students in Brown's (2016) research, Kimmons and Veletsianos's (2014) participants also carefully constructed content for SNSs based on how they believed others would perceive them. Kimmons and Veletsianos studied the relationship between teacher educator SNS participation and found that participants only shared certain parts of their identity online based on what the participants believed to be acceptable by the audience. Participants were students in the first-semester of their teacher education program and required to participate in an online social media training meant to spark conversation and critical reflection on the topic. What the participants shared online was authentic to their sense of self, but was "a carefully constructed portrait, intended to convey a certain message" (Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2014, p. 295). They theorized that online identities are a "constellation of interconnected fragments or.... acceptable identity fragments (AIF)" (p. 295). It is plausible that study participants indicated being more thoughtful, or even strategic, about the content they share on one or more SNSs, given the potential impact their content may have on students, colleagues, and their own professional career. Entry-level professionals may use a similar approach to sharing content on SNSs. For example, an entry-level professional may be comfortable friending students and work colleagues on SNSs. However, they may be inclined not to post about politics or other "hot" topics, given that it could affect "in-person"

professional relationships.

Summary

The literature discussed in this section grounds my study and will contribute to research regarding the SNS use of entry-level student affairs professionals. Entry-level student affairs professionals have grown up with digital technology their entire lives, while those responsible for educating, training, and supervising them are less likely to have done so (Prensky, 2001). Differing generational perceptions can present a challenge for entry-level student affairs professionals' understanding of technology's place and use in student affairs if supervisors and those responsible for professional development in this area see technology from an adult normative perspective (Cabellon & Junco, 2015). However, it is worth noting that there are senior student affairs leaders who were not born in the digital age who deploy a youth normative perspective regarding technology to lead their campuses (Ahlquist, 2016b). Additionally, studies focused on competencies did not indicate technology as an important entry-level student affairs competency, signaling a need for more research in this area given the profession's espoused value of technology (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) after most of these studies were completed.

As discussed in Section 2 of this proposal, the profession has signaled that technology is an important competency within the student affairs profession (ACPA & NAPSA, 2015; CAS Outcomes, 2008); however, guidance and policy for social media use is needed in student affairs given recent social media incidents (Fabris & Supiano, 2015; Messmore, 2016; Student Affairs Professionals Facebook Group, n.d.; Thomason, 2015), insufficient integration of technology into graduate program curricula (Cabellon & Junco, 2015), and a general lack of clear institutional social media guidelines (Cabellon

& Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016). We will continue to see incidents like Yik Yak and the 2015 NASPA Annual Conference if efforts to integrate social media use into the profession continue to lag behind, or even more alarmingly, they become normative. However, before developing new policies and guidelines, a greater understanding of SNSs and other technology use is needed, particularly where there is a large gap in the literature relative to entry-level professionals. The intent of my study is to help address this gap. I believe that the literature reviewed in this section, along with the organizational and leadership analysis in Section 2, create a solid foundation for this study.

SECTION FOUR:

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

SECTION FOUR: CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Executive Summary

DIGITAL BAGGAGE: THE DIGITAL IDENTITY OF ENTRY-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

This executive summary is submitted to the University of Missouri Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis faculty who teach in the master's programs with a higher education emphasis. The findings and recommendations for this case study on entry-level student affairs professional social media use can inform institutional policy and curricular interventions in graduate programs.

Universities and colleges are slow to implement policy regarding appropriate social media use. A 2015 study found only 17.7% of institutions in the Carnegie Classification data file have accessible social media policies (Pomerantz et al., 2015). Without definitive social media guidance, campus leaders must consider whether institution-level policies are needed, given the implications of social media use and how it may impact the institution. Without much institutional and professional direction, student affairs professionals are left to their best judgement to navigate social media. Such judgment can result in questionable social media interactions (e.g., Fabris & Supiano, 2015; Messmore, 2016; Thomason, 2015). Coupled with the assumption that those newest to the profession are digital natives, they are likely active in these spaces and their usage may have implications for their status in the profession, for good or ill. These issues are compounded as digital technology is not sufficiently integrated into graduate program curricula and ACPA and NASPA professional development opportunities surrounding digital identity are insufficient (Cabellon & Junco, 2015). To date, however, we know very little empirically about the social media use of entry-level student affairs professional.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media by exploring their digital identity. Digital identity is a method of presenting oneself online through the construction of personal and professional personas conveyed through online digital platforms including social networking sites (SNSs) (Ahlquist, 2016). Entry-level student affairs professionals are new professionals with 5 or fewer years of full-time working experience (Cilente et al., 2006; Coleman & Johnson, 1990; Fey, 1991).

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study is: How do entry-level student affairs leaders describe their digital identity? Although scholars have conducted research about student affairs professionals' SNS use, they have focused on how more senior student affairs professionals should utilize SNSs (Ahlquist, 2016; Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016; Kolomitz & Cabellon, 2016; Pasquini, 2016; Pasquini & Evangelopoulos, 2017). My research can address a gap in the literature by providing

insight into how entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media to interact with students, with each other, and with their larger institutional population and beyond.

Conceptual Framework

My study is guided by research conducted by Ahlquist (2016). I used and built upon the digital decision-making model that emerged from her study findings about the digital identity of senior student affairs officers. The model features a four-pronged approach meant to guide student affairs professionals through a reflection on their digital identity and social media use and includes a set of guiding questions for each area or "prong." Figure 1 illustrates the four prongs derived from the social media experiences of senior student affairs officers who participated in Ahlquist's (2016a) study, including technology tools and strategy, user engagement, digital contribution, and intended purpose.

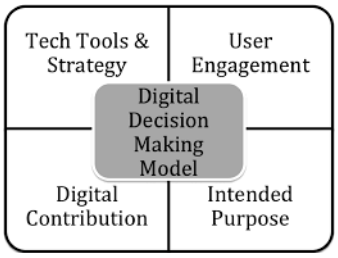

Figure 1. Digital Decision-making Model

Source: Ahlquist, J. (2016). The digital identity of student affairs professionals. *New Directions for Student Services, 155,* 29–46. doi:10.1002/ss.20181

Methods

I conducted an exploratory embedded case study (Yin, 2003) to explore a bounded system over time. Individual participants are embedded in the case; that is, they exist to inform the case of the early career student affairs professional at one of the four University of Missouri (UM) System campuses (i.e., the University of Missouri, University of Missouri – St. Louis, University of Missouri – Kansas City, and Missouri University of Science and Technology). More specifically I was interested in the phenomenon of social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals. I used three methods of data collection to triangulate the data sources, including an online questionnaire, individual virtual interviews, and participants' posts on one social media platform (collected from October 1, 2019 through April 30, 2020). There were 13 study participants with each of the four University of Missouri System institutions represented in the study. Each participant decided on their own pseudonym for the study. Additional participant information is bulleted here:

- 62% of the respondents self-identified as women; 38% identifying as men
- 62% of respondents were White, followed by 15% Hispanic or Latino/a/x, 8% Black or African American, 8% who identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x and White, and 8% who identified as Native American or Alaskan Native and White
- 43% of participants working in career development, 23% in residential life, 8% in

multicultural affairs, 8% in wellness initiatives, 8% in testing and accessibility, and 8% in campus activities

- Participants worked in student affairs 2 years on average, with three less than a year and one for 5 years

Findings

Findings indicated three primary factors that influenced social media use: lack of formal training and guidance, learning from experience, and community. Below, I present each finding. Exemplar quotes appear as images throughout.

Lack of Formal Training and Guidance

The majority of participants did not receive social media training for their position, nor had they reviewed the university's social media guidelines (although most were aware guidelines existed). Only two participants learned about technology or social media as a professional competency in college.

Learning from Experience

Participants learned about personal and professional social media use through previous college and work experience, on the job, and from self and others. Previous college and work experience greatly influenced most participants' use of social media and how they engaged as an early career professional. Learning about social media on the job was specific to a job role that required using social media for a particular function (e.g., training or teaching students about LinkedIn, promoting events on social media). Learning from self and others including self-reflection, self-teaching, and the perceptions of others, also influenced social media use.

Past is prologue. Participants came to their current positions with many other life experiences. Those experiences greatly informed how they approach social media in their current jobs.

On the job training. Participants came to their student affairs role with several experiences that influenced their approach to social media use within the profession. Current institutional roles also influenced their approach to social media.

Self and others. Self-reflection on life experience, self-teaching, and the perceptions of others also influenced social media use.

Community

Community will mean different things to different people but for this study, community was important.

Campus climate. Several professionals spoke about the negative environment surrounding social media use on their campuses. Other professionals felt positive about the environment surrounding social media on their campus.

Discussion

I originally assumed that entry-level professionals would come to the field with substantial exposure to experience with social media growing up with digital and social technologies. Given this history with technology, I anticipated entry-level professionals would have a robust, professional social media presence and would be more likely to connect with students on social media given this similar generational orientation (Dimock, 2019). However, I found that most entry-level professionals were not ready or willing to engage university communities on social media platforms. In fact, previous experiences, both lived and observed, deterred some professionals from doing so. They largely lacked a professional digital identity as they began their first student affairs position, and were somewhat reticent about developing a robust professional digital identity.

Once I discovered that my initial assumptions about early career professionals' proficiency with social media was inaccurate, I added an additional set of interview questions for participants who indicated (on the online questionnaire) that they did not use social media as a part of their professional roles. These questions, along with Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model questions, uncovered a critical consideration for the social media use of entry-level student affairs professional that leads to a happening I call *digital baggage.*

Digital Baggage

I found that most entry-level professionals were not ready or willing to engage university communities on social media platforms. In fact, previous experiences, both lived and observed, deterred some professionals from doing so. They largely lacked a professional digital identity as they began their first student affairs position, and were somewhat reticent about developing a robust professional digital identity. This is a critical consideration for the social media use of entry-level student affairs professional that leads to a happening I call *digital baggage*.

While the term "baggage" is largely considered negative when used to describe emotional impact, positive experiences (i.e., baggage) can also influence social media use. These experiences could include past high school or college experiences, past or current job roles, self-reflection, self-teaching, or the potential impact on current and future career. More external social media influencers may include the perceptions of family, scare tactics aimed at limiting or stopping social media use, professional social media policies or guidelines (or lack thereof), community, cultural influence, or campus climate. Racial or socio-political environments could also influence social media use.

Recommendations for Practice

Graduate Program Curriculum: Findings provide empirical evidence that graduate preparation programs can use to educate future professionals about technology competencies. I recommend that graduate curriculum, either in formal coursework or within assistantship and internship experiences consider asking students to participate in the following:

- conducting a self-assessment of proficiency in technology competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015)
- using Alquist's (2016) digital decision-making model to reflect on digital identity
- completing an assignment that addresses the factors that influence the social media use of student affairs professionals
- developing skills to interpret university policy surrounding social media or to appropriately engage in social media as a professional

Course Suggestions: With the increasing rate that technology integrates into higher education, the course content should be scholarly and relevant for a course on **current issues in higher education** or **leadership in higher education**, particularly if the curriculum had a focus on digital leadership or the ACPA/NASPA professional competencies. Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model guiding questions can serve as a tool for graduate students to reflect on their own social media use and how they see themselves as a digital leader through class discussion, personal reflection, or course assignments. Research findings can also provide insight as to the knowledge and skills needed to avoid the problems social media usage may cause for them as professionals and for the profession in general.

Professional Development: For those already in the profession who have come from graduate programs without an emphasis on social media use, professional development at conferences becomes important and the study findings can inform ***conference presentations*** **on navigating social media as an entry-level professional** and ***professional development workshops*** **on creating or assessing their digital identity in the profession.**

Campus Social Media Training & Guidance: There is an opportunity for the system, each campus, or division of student affairs to provide guidelines and training for individual employees who have or want to have a professional presence on social media. Guidelines and policy should not only outline what *should not* be done on social media but should also include what *could* be done with resources and examples. Training could include:

- relevant policy and guidelines
- a digital identity exercise (Ahlquist, 2016)
- identification of goals for professional social media use
- types of social media content to share based on functional area
- how to approach social media and controversial topics
- an in-depth training on LinkedIn for those who are still considering a social media platform

Conclusion

There are several factors that influence the social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals. These factors largely contribute to how participants interact personally and professionally on social media. The lack of policy, guidelines, and training for individual employees to build a professional social media presence has negative implications for professional growth in digital identity competency areas (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) by not giving professionals an opportunity to explore these competencies and reflect on how to implement social media use in their professional work. Entry-level student affairs professionals should master the foundational digital identity competency areas and continue to the intermediate and advanced outcomes aimed at cultivating a digital identity presence and training students and colleagues to do the same (ACPA & NASPA, 2016).

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SECTION FIVE:

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

SECTION FIVE: CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Journal Article

DIGITAL BAGGAGE: THE DIGITAL IDENTITY OF ENTRY-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

Universities and colleges are slow to implement policy regarding appropriate social media use. A 2015 study found only 17.7% of institutions in the Carnegie Classification data file have accessible social media policies (Pomerantz et al., 2015). Of those social media policies, 80.3% had one policy guiding the institution, 11.1% had policies for one or more campus departments within the institution, and 8.6% had policies for both the institution and for one or more campus departments. Moreover, in cases where there were multiple social media policies, they lacked cohesion at the departmental, divisional, and campus levels (Pomerantz et al., 2015).

Without definitive social media guidance, campus leaders must consider whether institution-level policies are needed, given the implications of social media use and how it may impact the institution. When social media policies and guidelines are unclear or non-existent, staff members tend to post using their own discretion or their own perception of institutional and professional context (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). This can leave staff members vulnerable to disciplinary action or scrutiny from colleagues if their perceptions regarding posting guidelines are not in line with those of the institution, particularly if the staff member is left to guess the institutional standpoint related to usage. In addition, questions remain about who moderates behavior on these platforms and where does institutional authority come into play if staff members' postings become problematic.

Without much institutional and professional direction, student affairs professionals are left to their best judgement to navigate social media. Such judgment can result in questionable social media interactions (e.g., Fabris & Supiano, 2015; Messmore, 2016; Thomason, 2015). Coupled with the assumption that those newest to the profession are digital natives, they are likely active in these spaces and their usage may have implications for their status in the profession, for good or ill. These issues are compounded as digital technology is not sufficiently integrated into graduate program curricula and ACPA and NASPA professional development opportunities surrounding digital identity are insufficient (Cabellon & Junco, 2015). To date, however, we know very little empirically about the social media use of entry-level student affairs professional.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media by exploring their digital identity. Digital identity is a method of presenting oneself online through the construction of personal and professional personas conveyed through online digital platforms including social networking sites (SNSs) (Ahlquist, 2016). Entry-level student affairs professionals are new professionals with 5 or fewer years of full-time working experience (Cilente et al., 2006; Coleman & Johnson, 1990; Fey, 1991). Contact with college students happens in their daily work and most entry-level professionals are part of the same Millennial generation (Dimock, 2019). By definition, they have also had fewer years of professional experience in the field compared to more seasoned administrators. As they represent the future of the profession, it is important to know more about this generation of professionals.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study is: How do entry-level student affairs leaders describe their digital identity? There is a gap in the literature surrounding the use of social media by young student affairs professionals. Although scholars have conducted research about student affairs professionals' SNS use, they have focused on how more senior student affairs professionals should utilize SNSs (Ahlquist, 2016; Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016; Kolomitz & Cabellon, 2016; Pasquini, 2016; Pasquini & Evangelopoulos, 2017). In fact, I have been unable to identify any literature to date that has placed the entry-level student affairs professional at the center of inquiry. My research can address this gap by providing insight into how entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media to interact with students, with each other, and with their larger institutional population and beyond. Better understanding who these professionals are and how they use social media has the potential to inform future institutional policies and curricular interventions in graduate programs.

Literature Review

Early career professionals likely come to higher education with experience using technology and social media platforms consistent with the college students with whom they work. Given a similar generational orientation and recency of attending college themselves, it would not be surprising that early career professionals frequent, or at least are more aware of, the social media platforms that college students use despite the ever-changing technologies that are emerging. This is the context in which most early career professionals currently enter the field of student affairs.

Ninety-six percent of young adults (i.e., 18-29) in America use the Internet

(Perrin & Duggan, 2015) and have significant exposure to computer-based technology on a daily basis. “They [young adults] have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age” (Prensky, 2001, p.1). This technology is integrated in the traditionally-aged (18-24 year old) college student experience because, in one form or another, technology has been in their lives long before college. Moreover, individuals with at least some college education use SNSs 10% more than individuals who only have a high school education or less (Pew Research Center, 2019), indicating an increased chance that students attending college are using SNSs. Thus, it is safe to assume most early career professionals and the students with whom they work are highly engaged with digital technology, which would include SNSs.

Although scholars have studied how students use SNSs, less is known about those educators who work closely with students, i.e., student affairs professionals, who likely use SNSs personally and professionally. Further demonstrating the gap in literature and the need to fill it, Cabellon and Payne-Kirchmeier (2016) called for more investigation into the use of digital technology and the impact on student affairs, which is at the heart of my study.

Entry-Level Student Affairs Professionals

The entry-level student affairs professional has 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience (Cilente, et al., 2006; Coleman & Johnson, 1990; Fey, 1991) and is a particularly important group to study due to less experience in the profession and more frequent contact with students (Burkard, et al., 2004). In addition, most entry-level student affairs professionals have a similar generational orientation surrounding

technology (Dimock, 2019) as the college students they serve, making them more likely to connect with college students online.

Entry-level student affairs professionals hold a number of job titles including, but not limited to, admissions counselor, residence hall director, student organization advisor, intramural athletics coordinator, and financial aid advisor (Burkard et al., 2004). Entry-level student affairs professionals' responsibilities include substantial contact with students in individual or group settings, program development, and implementation; other responsibilities may be more administrative. For example, some entry-level student affairs professional responsibilities included managerial roles with some staff supervision, more typical of directors of orientation, student activities, and student unions (Burkard et al., 2004).

Digital Identity & the Digitized Self

Digital identity is a method of presenting oneself online through the construction of personal and professional personas conveyed through online digital platforms including SNSs (Ahlquist, 2016). Reflecting a similar notion, Junco (2014) defined self-presentation as "the conscious or unconscious process by which people try to influence the perception of their image, typically through social interactions" (p. 111). The manner in which individuals engage, share, promote, and present themselves online is "intricately connected to their overall identity" (Stoller, 2012, para. 2) and no longer viewed as something separate from their "offline identity."

As I have mentioned previously, research regarding the technology use of student affairs administrators is limited (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016) and I have been unable to identify literature to date focused on the technology use or digital identities of

entry-level student affairs professionals. Given the lack of literature in this area, understanding college student technology use and identity matters as it may inform how entry-level student affairs professional use technology given a similar generational orientation and familiarity with social media platforms as the students with whom they serve. Brown's (2016) exploration of college students' conceptualization of self and identity in light of their digital and social media use is an example of research that may inform technology use of early career professionals.

Brown (2016) found that students were heavily curating content for social media platforms, sometimes multiple platforms. When constructing an online identity and posting information on social media, how they believed others would perceive them online influenced their online behavior. In addition, they were selective of the content they posted, depending on the audience of a particular social media platform. Also, they believed that constructing the "perfect" online image involved not posting boring or negative content and thought social media "likes" were very important and served as a sign of external validation (Brown, 2016). To add to the complexity, students sometimes constructed different digital identities for each of the social media platforms they used (Brown, 2016).

One of Brown's (2016) research participants was in their first year of graduate school. While the experience of recent graduates was not the focus of Brown's study, Brown briefly discussed the participant's experience as a "post-college" social media user. Post-graduation transition can be expected as friends move away for their next venture, behavioral patterns change, and individuals become more independent (Brown, 2016). During this transition, social media was used to maintain a connection with

college friends, show “adulting” skills, or project a happy persona online but, in reality, be unhappy at their new job (Brown, 2016). Given this singular perspective, Brown suggested future research on how individuals make meaning of social media post-college graduation. I thought this was important to share as participants in my study may also speak to their post-graduation transition not being that far removed from graduation.

Similar to the college students in Brown’s (2016) research, Kimmons and Veletsianos’s (2014) participants also carefully constructed content for SNSs based on how they believed others would perceive them. Kimmons and Veletsianos studied the relationship between teacher educator SNS participation and found that participants only shared certain parts of their identity online based on what the participants believed to be acceptable by the audience. Participants were students in the first semester of their teacher education program and required to participate in an online social media training meant to spark conversation and critical reflection on the topic. What the participants shared online was authentic to their sense of self, but was “a carefully constructed portrait, intended to convey a certain message” (Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2014, p. 295). They theorized that online identities are a “constellation of interconnected fragments or.... acceptable identity fragments (AIF)” (p. 295). It is plausible that study participants indicated being more thoughtful, or even strategic, about the content they share on one or more SNSs, given the potential impact their content may have on students, colleagues, and their own professional career. Entry-level professionals may use a similar approach to sharing content on SNSs. For example, an entry-level professional may be comfortable friending students and work colleagues on SNSs. However, they may be inclined not to post about politics or other “hot” topics, given that it could affect “in-person”

professional relationships.

Conceptual Framework

My study is guided by research conducted by Ahlquist (2016). I used and built upon the models that emerged from the findings of her study about the digital identity of senior student affairs officers to inform my work focused on early-career student affairs professionals. Ahlquist's research provided a holistic perspective on the social media use of 16 senior students affairs officers and suggested a "personal yet strategic approach [to social media] for digital identity, relationship building, and digital leadership in student affairs" (p. 36). From the research, she developed a *digital decision-making model*.

The digital decision-making model is designed to help senior student affairs professionals personally explore their digital identity or to help educate others on digital identity (Ahlquist, 2016). The model features a four-pronged approach meant to guide student affairs professionals through a reflection on their digital identity and social media use and includes a set of guiding questions for each area or "prong."

Figure 1 illustrates the four prongs derived from the social media experiences of senior student affairs officers who participated in Ahlquist's (2016) study, including technology tools and strategy, user engagement, digital contribution, and intended purpose. The model is "fluid and flexible enough to guide one through a reflective digital identity exercise for social media use" (Ahlquist, 2016, pp. 37-38) and can illustrate how a user can be strategic, personal, and meaningful on social media. This model is the guiding proposition of my study and informed my online questionnaire and participant interview questions.

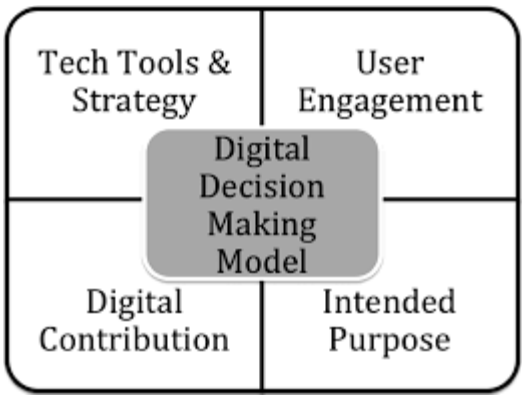

Figure 1. Digital Decision-making Model

Source: Ahlquist, J. (2016). The digital identity of student affairs professionals. *New Directions for Student Services, 155,* 29–46. doi:10.1002/ss.20181

Methods

I conducted an exploratory embedded case study (Yin, 2003) to explore a bounded system over time. Individual participants are embedded in the case; that is, they exist to inform the case of the early career student affairs professional at the University of Missouri System. More specifically I was interested in the phenomenon of social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals. I purposely selected this design to align with the methods Ahlquist (2016) used in her study. The heart of the proposed study is to understand *how* entry-level student affairs professionals describe their digital identity. The *how and why* line of questioning is important, as Yin (2003) pointed out that these two questions are "more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research strategies" (p. 6).

Participants

Study participants are entry-level student affairs professionals who work in the field 5 or fewer years at one of the four University of Missouri (UM) System campuses (i.e., the University of Missouri, University of Missouri – St. Louis, University of

Missouri – Kansas City, and Missouri University of Science and Technology). The UM System collectively serves 75,000 students amongst the four campuses (University of Missouri System, 2022). I used convenience sampling to recruit participants via gatekeepers, institutional colleagues, and direct communication with potential participants. Each of the four University of Missouri System institutions were represented in the study. The largest number worked at the University of Missouri, followed by the University of Missouri – Kansas City and Missouri University of Science & Technology. The smallest number of participants worked at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents self-identified as men and 62% identifying as women. Sixty-two percent of respondents were White, followed by 15% Hispanic or Latino/a/x, 8% Black or African American, 8% who identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x and White, and 8% who identified Native American or Alaskan Native and White. All participants work in student affairs at their respective institution with 43% of participants working in career development, 23% in residential life, 8% in multicultural affairs, 8% in wellness initiatives, 8% in testing and accessibility, and 8% in campus activities. Each participant decided on their own pseudonym for the study. See Table 1 for more information about the participants.

Table 1:

Participant Information

Participant Pseudonym & Pronouns	**Gender**	**Race/Ethnicity**	**Student Affairs Functional Area**	**Number of Years in Student Affairs**	**Social Media Platform Analyzed**
Willow S. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	3 years	Instagram
Vega T. (she/her/hers)	Woman	Hispanic or Latino/a/x, White	Career Development	3 years	LinkedIn
Chris B. (he/him/his)	Man	Black or African American	Residential Life	2 years	Twitter

Laura T. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Campus Activities	0-12 months	Twitter
Quincy J. (he/him/his)	Man	Hispanic or Latino/a/x	Multicultural Affairs	2 years	LinkedIn
Rachel D. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	1 year	LinkedIn
Kali H. (she/her)	Woman	White	Wellness Initiatives	0-12 months	Facebook
Carlitos C. (he/him/his)	Man	Hispanic or Latino/a/x	Residential Life	5 years	No Social Media Platform Analyzed
Alex S. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	2 years	LinkedIn
Emma S. (she/her/hers)	Woman	White	Career Development	0-12 months	LinkedIn
Tibet S. (he/him/his)	Man	White	Residential Life	3 years	Facebook
Phillip F. (he/him/his)	Man	White	Career Development	2 years	LinkedIn
Dana W. (she/her/hers)	Woman	Native American or Alaska Native, White	Testing Services	1 year	LinkedIn (No posts found)

Participants were asked to identify the social media platform they were most active on in their professional role. The answer to this question identified the social media platform I would use to analyze participant social media posts. In the interview, I confirmed that platform and ended up changing five participant social media platforms analyzed based on further conversation about social media use. Nearly half of participant social media engagement happened on LinkedIn, which is not surprising given the number of career development professionals in the study and their charge to engage employers and educate students on the platform.

Lack of Social Media Policy/Guidelines

The University of Missouri System does not have a social media policy or set of guidelines. It does have a set of collected rules and regulations that speaks to employee personal conduct which would most likely be enforced if a social media violation occurs:

> The personal conduct at all times of any employees of the University shall be of such a nature as not to bring discredit upon the institution. Conduct contrary to this policy will result in the termination of such employees' connection with the University.
>
> (https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/rules/collected_rules/personnel/ch330/330.010_personal_conduct_of_employees)

Each campus does have social media guidelines and/or policies listed on their Marketing and Communication or Brand Identity websites for employees who administer university social media accounts, but only the University of Missouri has a dedicated webpage for personal social media use (https://identity.missouri.edu/apply-the-brand/social-media/personal-use-of-social-media/). To my knowledge, there are no social media guidelines specific to the Division of Student Affairs at any system campus, although departments within these divisions may have policies or guidelines.

Data Collection

I used three methods of data collection to triangulate the data sources, including an online questionnaire, individual interviews, and participants' posts on one social media platform. I collected data with an online questionnaire in advance of interviews with the study's participants. These data provided descriptive information about the participants to help guide the interview process, as well as initial insights into participant demographics (see Table 1), social media usage, and social media management.

Thirteen participants participated in individual virtual interviews. Although Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model reflection questions informed my interview protocol, I used a semi-structured interview protocol so that I had flexibility in

interview question wording, question order, and allowed me to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90).

I also collected social media posts made by each participant on one predetermined social media platform. Making meaning of entry-level student affairs professionals' experience on social media is at the core of my research. The ability to collect and analyze these data provided great insight into how they used such tools. Merriam (2009) described the advantage of analyzing an online data source as a "computer-mediated communication" (p. 156); it allowed me to understand how participants' situate themselves in an online environment.

Data Analysis

Creswell's (2009) qualitative research data analysis approach guided my data analysis. While this approach "suggests a linear, hierarchical approach building from the bottom to the top" (p.185), Creswell described the process as more interactive in application with interrelated analysis stages that may vary in order. This nonlinear, dynamic process is how I analyzed the data, as analysis took place simultaneously with data collection and afforded the opportunity to organize and refine data as the study progressed (Merriam, 2009). I took the following steps to validate the accuracy of the information as described by Creswell (2009) once raw data was collected. I created a case record to bring together transcribed interviews and social media posts for analysis (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

I used open coding to identifying data useful to the study (Merriam, 2009), which allowed for construction of categories and a description of the participants (Creswell,

2009). I conducted an inductive analysis using emerging codes, but kept the conceptual framework (Ahlquist, 2016) and extant literature in mind to determine what may be relevant to the case record (Creswell, 2009).

Positionality

As with all research, my positionality and potential influence on the case narrative is important (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). I identify as a White, cisgender, heterosexual man and understand my race and other identity characteristics are important to consider throughout the research process. Most of my visible identities (White, male, able-bodied) are in the majority and have the potential to influence how participants saw me as a researcher, as they may have identified differently. I also recognize the privilege in many of my identities and am aware these identities may have influenced how participants answered questions or interacted with me as a researcher.

I worked in student affairs for approximately 7 years at the University of Missouri and 2 years at the University of Missouri – Kansas City. I also graduated from UMKC's Higher Education Administration Master's Program. Most recently, I worked six years in career development at the University of Missouri. I am personally and professionally active on a number of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. I visit each platform almost on a daily basis and tend to post or "like" content a few times each week across platforms. Because some of my study participants also worked at the University of Missouri or in career services at other University of Missouri System institutions, I personally knew three of the participants. I did not exclude these individuals from the participant pool but acknowledge including them in the study presents potential for me to interpret their data differently. Having a

relationship with these individuals, I had greater context about what they share because I have known them longer than other participants.

Trustworthiness

To enhance trustworthiness, Gibbs (2007) suggested extensive documentation of case study procedures, including a detailed case study protocol and the creation of a database. In this spirit, I kept a methodological journal to document my procedures. I triangulated data sources, as noted previously, which strengthened the credibility and dependability of my findings. I also utilized member checking to make sure that I accurately portrayed participant findings. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcript during a 2-week period after the transcription was available.

Findings

In this study, I sought to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals utilized social media. Out of the 13 participants, only six had a professional social media presence. All of them were on LinkedIn and worked in career development. When reviewing participant social media posts, only Quincy consistently posted, commented, shared, and reacted to others' content related to his position in student affairs.

Chris, Tibet, and Kali were consistently active on Twitter and Facebook, but did not engage as professionals in the field. The rest of the participants rarely or never shared their own content, but Alex and Vega "liked" posts quite often. Dana identified LinkedIn as the social media platform she used most frequently, but did not have any interactions on the platform during the 7-month timeframe social media posts were collected. Carlitos did not participate in any social media platforms personally or professionally.

Entry-level professionals primarily connected with students on LinkedIn. They connected with students to share campus resources, recognize student accomplishments, promote student organization events, model appropriate social media use, and engage with students to positively reinforce their use of platforms like LinkedIn. However, only two participants reported daily social media interactions with students and one participant reported weekly social media interactions (2-3 days per week). Most participants reported much less frequent interaction.

In addition to the overview of usage above, findings indicated three primary factors that influenced social media use: lack of formal training and guidance, learning from experience, and community. I explore each of these factors next.

Lack of Formal Training and Guidance

Overall, participants were aware that their institution and departments had social media guidelines but only Carlitos and Tibet, both in Residential Life, could cite one specifically. The majority of participants did not receive social media training for their position nor had they reviewed the university's social media guidelines. When asked about institutional guidelines for appropriate social media use, Dana, who has worked in student affairs for a year, said, "I'm sure there are [guidelines], but if there are, I haven't really read them or seen them yet."

Only two participants learned about technology or social media as a professional competency in college. Laura learned about social media from her undergraduate program that had an emphasis in strategic communications. She shared: "Junior and senior year is when we really focused on the professionalism of social media and how what you can say can be either a deterrent for your job or it can definitely help with your

job." Chris learned about technology during his student affairs graduate program but admitted learning was a "little foggy" and did not remember the context in which he learned about the competencies. However, he did recall that there are difference competency levels "that you are reaching or that would benefit you as a student affairs professional". Without much professional or institutional direction, participants discussed other factors that influenced their decisions regarding social media use.

Learning from Experience

Participants learned about personal and professional social media use through previous college and work experience, on the job, and from self and others. Previous college and work experience greatly influenced most participants' use of social media and how they engaged as an early career professional. Learning about social media on the job was specific to a job role that required using social media for a particular function (e.g., training or teaching students about LinkedIn, promoting events on social media). Learning from self and others including self-reflection, self-teaching, and the perceptions of others, also influenced social media use.

Past is prologue. Participants came to their current positions with many other life experiences. Those experiences greatly informed how they approach social media in their current jobs. In the online questionnaire, all participants identified students as a main audience with whom they want to engage in their position. Furthermore, all but two respondents reported being "very comfortable;" the remaining reported being "somewhat comfortable" when engaging students in their position and profession. However, when asked about the frequency in which they interact with students on social media, over half of the participants said "never" with only two participants reporting "daily" social media

interactions with students. Thirty-one percent of participants reported not using social media as a part of their professional role. There is a disconnect between being comfortable engaging students as a job responsibility, but not frequently or ever connecting with students on social media. This phenomenon can best be described by the most prominent influential factor discussed by participants - previous college and work experience.

Emma's approach to social media was influenced by her experiences as an undergraduate student athlete, graduate assistant in athletics, and full-time professional who worked with college student athletes. As an undergraduate student athlete, Emma's coach required her to report teammates who posted about alcohol:

> When I was team captain for 2 years, if any of my teammates would post [photos with alcohol in them] I would have to tell coach immediately and it would be taken down, like complete scare tactic. And now I'm thinking like nothing would have happened, but it, yeah, it, it was scary at the time and definitely hurt some relationships at the time having to do that.

As a graduate assistant in athletics, there were rules against Emma friending college student athletes on social media platforms until she or the student graduated. She took a similar approach when moving into her professional roles in athletics and career services by not connecting with student athletes on Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook. She did, however, begin to connect with them on social media platforms that she identified as "professional accounts" including Twitter and LinkedIn.

Much like Emma's experience as a collegiate athlete, Kali remembered scare tactics being used in high school, "…don't ever post pictures of yourself with alcohol

because you'll never get a job. Your employers will find this. Yeah. It'll ruin you.” Kali also discussed past experiences that made her hesitant to post on social media and engage with certain populations as a military spouse and former victim advocate for survivors of sexual assault. Kali’s hesitancy to post on social media was further reinforced because people used pictures of her and her active-duty military spouse without their consent.

Given the confidential nature of her past role as a victim advocate, Kali could not post about specific client interactions nor share personally identifiable information on social media; these critical limitations made her hesitant to use social media in other ways, which eliminated the opportunity to directly engage with a population with which she worked so closely. Kali also discussed intentionally not interacting with clients that sent direct messages to their office social media accounts. She described this non-interaction as a line that should not be crossed and seemed to allude to the importance of a separation between work and home life.

Kali’s past experiences regarding social media informed how she participated in social media in her current position working in wellness initiatives. In the online questionnaire, Kali shared that she never interacted with supervisors or students on social media. However, when asked about her social media connections during her interview, she shared that she is now connected with her supervisor on Facebook, but not with students:

> Not my supervisor, but I do have her on Facebook now so that doesn't really bother me, but students, clients, I would not want to, I would generally avoid that. And if they did, for some reason find me, it would be like a very "have a good

> day" interaction. It would not be anything of substance. I would not go out of my way to interact with them if for some reason they found me [on social media].

Rachel reported being comfortable connecting with students, colleagues, and campus leadership on professional social media platforms like LinkedIn. However, much like Kali, Rachel was not as comfortable connecting with those groups on social media accounts like Instagram or Facebook. She is a trained counselor and shared this perspective: "I've been just trained to be very private and not disclos[e] a lot of information, just for potential clients who might be trying to find me on social media. So that's kind of informed sort of keeping them separate".

Dana, who was once active-duty military and has a spouse who is still active-duty, said the military frowned upon connecting with other soldiers on social media, particularly with the soldiers you led. This mindset has stuck with her but caused her to question connecting with the students with whom she works:

> I do have student workers with me. I've got 10 of them. And so it is weird trying to like figure out how, what is acceptable here? You know what I mean? Like, are they friends, but I see them as like "Nope," I'm still [in] that military mentality of we're not supposed to be friends, so I try and keep it professional, and I don't always see social media as being a platform for professionalism.

Finally, Vega shared that because she grew up with social media and worked in corporate human resources, she knew that employers looked at candidates' social media accounts. This experience influenced her approach to social media. She shared that there are certain things that you can and cannot say on social media, it is important to use inclusive language, and messaging should be understood by and not offensive to diverse

student and employer populations. Vega also mentioned not connecting with students on personal social media platforms because she did not want to "cross that line." She believed that connecting with college students on professional platforms liked LinkedIn is the most appropriate approach.

On the job training. Participants came to their student affairs role with several experiences that influenced their approach to social media use within the profession. Current institutional roles also influenced their approach to social media. Before working in career development, Alex was not very active on LinkedIn and described her profile as "bare bones." She became more active on LinkedIn and had to learn more about it to educate students. Additionally in this new role, she began to connect with work colleagues on Facebook when she had not previously done so. She began to think more deliberately about what she posted on Facebook and paid closer attention to what others tagged her in. Alex maintains that Instagram is her most personal social media account. Her settings for this platform are *private* meaning only approved followers can see her content. On Instagram, she does not connect with co-workers and only connects with select family members. I would characterize Alex's varied approach to each platform as professional (LinkedIn), personal (Instagram), and a blended approach (Facebook).

Rachel intentionally connected with students on LinkedIn in her role as the instructor of a career explorations course so she can grade their use of LinkedIn for an assignment. Laura advised the marketing team for a student organization that promotes campus events and also posted content on their behalf when needed. Along with her career services duties, Willow also does marketing and communications, which included posting content on the department's social media accounts.

In testing services, Dana worked with students with disabilities. She said she would not be comfortable engaging this student population on social media. She explained that if her department created a Facebook page and tried to engage students on the platform, it could potentially violate student privacy. Having a positive graduate student and employee experience at her institution, Vega enjoyed posting about her campus on social media, “I started going to school at [the institution], and I started working at [the institution] and now I'm like, oh [the institution], everything is great. Yes, let’s post about this cuz its great.”

Learning about social media use in the workplace took place sporadically, and at the department level. Alex had to learn more about LinkedIn so she could educate students about how to use the platform. Her training came primarily from her supervisors. While Rachel did not receive training on how to use LinkedIn in her current role, she did learn about it in her previous role as a graduate assistant for the university career center. Vega received guidance from a colleague on posting career-related content for their office.

Self and others. Self-reflection on life experience, self-teaching, and the perceptions of others also influenced social media use. Alex reported the most formidable influences were becoming more open-minded as you get older, having children, and wanting to grow as a professional. Quincy would post daily about *what* he was doing (e.g., eating, going to the park) and now posts more about the essence of *who* he is as a person and professional, “I am a Latino person. I worked with diversity. I'm also a part of the LGBTQ community, so that's how I decide to shar[e] stuff that reflects who I am.”

Both Emma and Willow taught themselves how to use social media. Emma learned about LinkedIn so she could host workshops for students.

> I think I was pretty much all self-taught when it came to LinkedIn and running workshops on how to update your LinkedIn. Everything was kind of through my own time…but I've never sat in a workshop on this is how you do this and would present it to students.

Willow spoke about social media learning more broadly over time. It started in high school when she got her first smart phone. She began using Facebook and then Instagram and other platforms, and through experience over time, she became knowledgeable about how to use them. In addition to learning from personal use, she used YouTube videos, online articles, and even started an online course about social media use (which she has not completed yet). Despite her experiential knowledge, Willow struggled with the idea of connecting with students on social media, given their closeness in age and being a recent college graduate herself. She was wary about students seeing her curse on social media or posting a personal photo wearing a bathing suit or crop top and shorts in the summer. She shared, “I just feel like it's just too close for them to feel like I'm not maybe an authority figure or they will lose professional respect for me or something along those lines.”

Rachel’s social media use was more social as an undergraduate student. At that time, she did not think much about how others perceived her posts. She now thinks more deeply about what she posts and shares more educational content related to social justice issues to support her Facebook and Instagram community wanting to learn more and have

language around these topics. Laura discussed being perceived as a “mouthpiece” for the university and understands what someone posts can reflect badly upon the university.

Community

Community will mean different things to different people but for this study, community was important. Living in a small community, Alex did not want to be the “talk of the town” for something she posted on social media as she saw it happen to others. Professionally, this could be detrimental to a future job search in the area as “people talk” and remember when these things happen.

Depending on the people she connected with on a given platform, Alex was more comfortable posting her personal opinions:

> I think I am more open to sharing my personal opinions on stuff on Instagram. Just a little bit more than I am on Facebook just because I have a lot of family members who are, just, have a very different mindset. I have such a mix of people with different mindsets, and I don't want to offend anyone or anything like that. So on Facebook, I don't share as much personal opinions. Where Instagram I'm more willing to share more of my personal opinion.

This approach is not surprising, given Alex’s views on relationship building: “building relationships is really, really important for growing your professional career, but I want to build them professionally in every area of my life, rather than letting more of a personal matter, kind of come into it.” Alex did not want conflict with family members on topics on which they disagree, so refrained from posting those opinions on Facebook. She did, however, choose to share those opinions on Instagram where she connects with more like-minded family members and friends.

Quincy used social media to serve as a digital mentor and cultural advocate for the Latinx community on campus. He believed it's important for students to see a Latino professional still "tied to its roots, to its language" by posting content in Spanish, speaking Spanish in live videos, showcasing the culture through food and music, and even showing emotion regarding the treatment of immigrants at the southern border of the United States. Quincy shared a specific example:

> The other day I share a video of me making a flour tortilla with avocado, which is something that it's really cultural, but I don't think any normal, regular person will know that in Mexico, we like to eat a tortilla with avocado inside. That's it, and I would like to believe that the students would appreciate that, "Hey, he's just like us. He's eating a tortilla with avocado."

Campus climate. Several professionals spoke about the negative environment surrounding social media use on their campuses. While Rachel is not on Twitter, she heard that colleagues' social media posts were being monitored by campus administration. This sense of being watched contributed to a decreased comfort in posting, "I've been at [my institution] for 4 years and particularly in the last 2, just given the climate has felt particularly like… [the] comfort level has gone down even further." Participants mentioned campus politics, being reprimanded, getting "in trouble," being in "hot water," being asked to bite their tongue, the "pressures" of posting, and posting personal opinions that might impact work as risks or feelings associated with posting about campus happenings on social media.

Other professionals felt positive about the environment surrounding social media on their campus. Willow found her campus to be particularly supportive and

collaborative on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. She shared that her institution was active on social media with the marketing and communications office posting through the "big institution accounts" often and re-sharing other department's content. She also noticed increased social media use by departments, student organizations, and associations given the lack of in-person interaction and on campus operations limited by the pandemic. Emma, who works at the same institution as Willow, described their campus as "very pro social media" and will receive institutional funds to upgrade their LinkedIn to a "premium account" so they can further network with employers.

There was residential life department policy on one campus stating that staff could not communicate on behalf of the university on social media. Staff members were prohibited from answering questions posed on university social media accounts even if they could easily be answered like referring someone to the parking office or telling a student to call their Resident Assistant because they were locked out of their residence hall room. This policy seemed to be in line with a broader departmental approach of limiting those who can respond to media inquiries and referring those requests to the university news bureau. Tibet encapsulated what this policy means for staff members, "I can never speak for the university officially." While this type of policy may limit how staff members responded *on behalf of* their institution, they may still post *about* their institution - even when the topic is controversial.

On one campus, the campus community members were engaged around a highly contested, long-standing statue. A participant shared that they received guidance from institutional leadership on how to speak about and respond to questions regarding the

statue. The participant disagreed with the institution's approach and was comfortable re-sharing information on social media if it was factual, even if it went against university talking points:

> I would be very comfortable in doing that because it's true. At one point I was a student here at [institution]. Twice. So it's like, yes, I definitely understand what you're saying and it puts me in a difficult position because I work for the university, but I'm definitely not going to let it stop my voice.

In a previous position, Emma was asked to remove a post about George Floyd from her personal social media account until the director of the department came out with a statement. She understood why she was asked to wait but felt that not posting anything about the situation went against her personal beliefs, especially since she posted from a personal social media account not attached to a university account.

Laura was a new professional on campus but also familiar with the institution as a recent graduate. This "newness" came with a discomfort when considering whether to post on social media about race relations on campus given her past and present position on campus:

> I feel like I don't necessarily want to say a whole bunch on that subject because I can see how the administration is working for it, but then I can also see how there's not been as much action taken. So like that I just don't feel as comfortable posting about, but I do see the validity of posting on it. But I don't feel as personally comfortable about it because I'm so new into the job and just being on the other side of it.

There was a particular race-related topic that Laura was compelled to share on social media but was unsure how to best word a message encouraging others to read about the Black student experience. It was not until a senior administrator in student affairs re-tweeted the hashtag with a message of support, that she was comfortable doing the same. Ultimately, like Laura, participants assessed the temperature of the climate and determined whether posting was worth the professional risk and personal reward.

Discussion

In this study, I sought to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals described their digital identity. Study findings highlighted several factors that influenced social media use including lack of formal training and guidance, learning from experience, and community. I originally assumed that entry-level professionals would come to the field with substantial exposure to experience with social media growing up with digital and social technologies. Given this history with technology, I anticipated entry-level professionals would have a robust, professional social media presence and would be more likely to connect with students on social media given this similar generational orientation (Dimock, 2019). However, I found that most entry-level professionals were not ready or willing to engage university communities on social media platforms. In fact, previous experiences, both lived and observed, deterred some professionals from doing so. They largely lacked a professional digital identity as they began their first student affairs position, and were somewhat reticent about developing a robust professional digital identity.

Digital identity is an online presentation of self through the construction of personal and professional personas conveyed through social media platforms (Ahlquist,

2016). Once I discovered that my initial assumptions about early career professionals' proficiency with social media was inaccurate, I added an additional set of interview questions for participants who indicated (on the online questionnaire) that they did not use social media as a part of their professional roles. These questions, along with Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model questions, uncovered a critical consideration for the social media use of entry-level student affairs professional that leads to a happening I call *digital baggage.*

Digital baggage is a collection of social media or social media-connected experiences that consciously or unconsciously influence personal or professional social media use. While the term "baggage" is largely considered negative when used to describe emotional impact, positive experiences (i.e., baggage) can also influence social media use. These experiences could include past high school or college experiences, past or current job roles, self-reflection, self-teaching, or the potential impact on current and future career. More external social media influencers may include the perceptions of family, scare tactics aimed at limiting or stopping social media use, professional social media policies or guidelines (or lack thereof), community, cultural influence, and/or campus climate.

For most entry-level student affairs professionals in this study, digital baggage appeared to result in low-to-no professional social media use. Thus, if technological competency, including social media competency, is necessary in the field, entry-level student affairs professionals should reflect upon how their digital baggage influences their digital identity and assess or reassess how early career professional social media use can impact their career.

For participants, social media training at work was sporadic, at best, and typically took place for job-related functions that required specific social media knowledge only like learning about LinkedIn to educate students. Participants indicated that learning about social media primarily took place on the job or it was self-taught. They also tended not to review their campus social media policy or guidelines. This is not surprising given the lack of training, guidance, and policy at the system, campus, and departmental levels and seems to signal either a gap in the espoused value of technology as a student affairs competency or an assumption that entry-level professionals already have the necessary competencies.

Participants are acutely aware of the consequences and risks associated with social media use growing up in a time when society viewed teenager social media use negatively (Boyd, 2014). Junco (2014) attributed this negativity to how social media use was portrayed by mainstream media as a detriment to the development of young people and further defined this view as an *adult normative perspective*, or a view that does not take into consideration the perspective youth have on social media. This is important to note as the profession attempts to provide guidance on social media use, particularly if this guidance is relying heavily on the knowledge and expertise of more senior student affairs professionals who may have less exposure to or inherently negative view of social media. Additionally, Dana mentioned the possibility of violating student privacy by creating a Facebook page for the testing center, signaling the *potential* for risk would deter her from using social media for her office.

Much like the senior student affairs officers in Ahlquist's (2016) study, some entry-level professionals were comfortable connecting with students and other

professionals on social media while some were less likely to connect with these groups to keep their social media connections personal. When engaging professionally on social media, entry-level professionals engaged with students similarly to how senior student affairs officers did including the appreciation and celebration of others, event promotion, sharing news or information, and replying directly to social media comments or posts (Ahlquist, 2016).

Implications for Practice

The findings in this study demonstrate the need for entry-level student affairs professionals to further explore their digital identity and how to incorporate social media into their role in student affairs. Given their low-to-no professional engagement on social media, most participants are not meeting the foundational outcome proficiency standards in the digital identity area of the technology competency as outlined by the *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) including (1) demonstrating awareness of their digital identity and engaging students in responsible social media use, (2) promoting services and events and engaging students in them, (3) engaging in digital learning communities, and (4) incorporating social media into their work. Once entry-level student affairs professionals have mastered competency in these areas, they should continue to intermediate and advanced outcomes aimed at cultivating a digital identity presence and training students and colleagues to do the same (ACPA & NASPA, 2016).

Learning about and demonstrating these foundational technology competencies should take place in student affairs graduate programs. The study has implications on curriculum design in student affairs or higher education master's programs. Findings

provide empirical evidence that graduate preparation programs can use to educate future professionals about technology competencies. I recommend that graduate curriculum, either in formal coursework or within assistantship and internship experiences consider asking students to participate in the following: conducting a self-assessment of proficiency in technology competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015); using Alquist's (2016) digital decision-making model to reflect on digital identity; completing an assignment that addresses the factors that influence the social media use of student affairs professionals; and developing skills to interpret university policy surrounding social media or to appropriately engage in social media as a professional. With the increasing rate that technology integrates into higher education, the course content should be scholarly and relevant for a course on current issues in higher education. This research would also be applicable to a course focused on leadership in higher education, particularly if the curriculum had a focus on digital leadership or the ACPA/NASPA professional competencies.

Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model guiding questions can serve as a tool for graduate students to reflect on their own social media use and how they see themselves as a digital leader through class discussion, personal reflection, or course assignments. Research findings can also provide insight as to the knowledge and skills needed to avoid the problems social media usage may cause for them as professionals and for the profession in general. For those already in the profession who have come from graduate programs without an emphasis on social media use, professional development at conferences becomes important and the study findings can inform conference

presentations on navigating social media as an entry-level professional and professional development workshops on creating or assessing their digital identity in the profession.

With the addition of the technology competency to the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), the profession has required those in the field to have the skills and knowledge to integrate technology into their work. Social media policy and guidelines for the participants in this study were non-existent and only one campus directly addressed personal use of social media. Each campus does have guidelines for employees who administer university social media accounts, but these professionals are engaging students differently as a university, department, or office. There is an opportunity for the system, each campus, or division of student affairs to provide guidelines and training for individual employees who have or want to have a professional presence on social media. Guidelines and policy should not only outline what *should not* be done on social media but should also include what *could* be done with resources and examples. Training could include relevant policy and guidelines, a digital identity exercise (Ahlquist, 2016), identification of goals for professional social media use, types of social media content to share based on functional area, how to approach social media and controversial topics, and an in-depth training on LinkedIn for those who are still considering a social media platform.

Recommendations For Future Research

Social networking sites continue to integrate into the fabric of higher education institutions. College students, faculty, and staff in their respective academic and social circles use them. However, research has been limited regarding digital technology use by student affairs administrators (Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016). Some scholars have

focused on how senior student affairs professionals should use social media platforms (Ahlquist, 2016; Cabellon & Payne-Kirchmeier, 2016; Kolomitz & Cabellon, 2016; Pasquini, 2016; Pasquini & Evangelopoulos, 2017), but beyond this study, the entry-level student affairs professionals' use of social media has not been explored in depth. By placing the entry-level student affairs professional at the center of my research, we have a better understanding of how this professional group describes their digital identity and the factors that influence social media use. Study participants also shared how and why they connect with students on social media. However, further research is needed to determine how entry-level student affairs professional social media use influences student development and students' use of social media.

Ahlquist's (2016) digital decision-making model was designed to help professionals explore their digital identity. This study confirmed that Ahlquist's model did allow for participants to explore their identities, which was the goal of the study. The digital identity of two career stages in the field of student affairs have now been examined: the entry-level and senior student affairs professional. This framework should continue to be examined with other student affairs professionals including mid-career professionals or in certain functional areas (e.g., residential life professionals, greek life professionals). Additionally, deeper exploration regarding the digital identity of particular populations is also warranted, including intersections of identity. Lastly, future researchers can build on my work and the concept of digital baggage —as this study is the first of its kind, it can inform future studies to expand the knowledge of this topic.

Conclusion

There are several factors that influence the social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals. These factors largely contribute to how participants interact personally and professionally on social media. The lack of policy, guidelines, and training for individual employees to build a professional social media presence has negative implications for professional growth in digital identity competency areas (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) by not giving professionals an opportunity to explore these competencies and reflect on how to implement social media use in their professional work. Social media will continue to integrate in the lives of higher education professionals. It is important they build the necessary skills needed to navigate this quickly changing, often nebulous way to engage students in their college experience.

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SECTION SIX:

SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

SECTION SIX: SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

Earning a degree from the University of Missouri has been a personal goal for as long as I can remember. Earning my terminal degree from this institution is truly an honor and an experience that has influenced me as a practioner and a scholar. Intertwined with my doctoral journey have been many welcomed and unwelcomed life circumstances, including the decision to scrap my first dissertation topic, a new job, the birth of a second child, the death of close relatives, the impact of an outlandish political landscape, and a global pandemic. While these things contributed to slowed progress at times, I was resolved to complete a meaningful dissertation. Throughout my time in the EdD program, I have learned so much about myself and my work as a scholarly practitioner. In this section, I will reflect on how this program has influenced me as a practitioner and scholar.

Leading as a Practitioner

The transformation I have undertaken during this dissertation process has been astounding. Not only have I personally been able to reflect upon myself as a member of the higher education community, I have the confidence to make change within it. I have also grown more appreciative of the art of being a practitioner. Understanding my own worldview as a social constructivist (Creswell, 2009), as a researcher, and as a practitioner has improved my ability to support students in their career endeavors. Social constructivism assumes that people want to understand their daily lives and seek ways to navigate complex situations, which is consistent with my epistemology.

Approaching student career development as a social constructivist has helped me better support students who are navigating a very complex process that is informed by

their interactions with others, their culture, and societal views on who should work in which occupations. For example, when discussing career choice with students, I help them construct the meaning of work, what they want from a career, and which careers might fit what they are looking for. I help through asking open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009) and with my knowledge of careers in healthcare.

This dissertation process has also had a substantial impact on my ability to navigate institutional change and lead others. Organizations are complex, surprising, deceptive, and ambiguous entities, requiring leaders to navigate an ever-changing landscape that increases the need for better and faster decision-making (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Institutional leaders cannot subscribe to one leadership theory and expect to effectively navigate the complexity and uncertainty that educational systems create. Understanding the strengths and limitations of any given leadership theory is a common theme in each chapter of the Northouse (2013) text and gave me the opportunity to find a leadership style(s) that works best based on my strengths as a leader and the situation needing attention. Northouse (2013) shared, “As the name of the approach implies, situational leadership focuses on leadership in situations” (p. 99). Although situational leadership is one leadership approach, the core of its meaning speaks to this concept.

Primarily, I am a situational leader, and using my CliftonStrengths talents to influence my approach affords me the ability to address a situation from a place of strength most of the time. This is at the heart of situational leadership: approaching a situation with the best personal tools and talents available to handle it. Additionally, the transformational leadership approach (Northouse, 2013) pairs very well with my top two CliftonStrengths themes, *Futuristic* and *Empathy* (Gallup, 1999).

Clifton et al. (2006) described those who are *Futuristic* to be fascinated and inspired by what the future holds, with the ability to energize themselves and others by the vision of what could be. The *transformational leadership approach* described by Northouse (2013) is a "process that changes and transforms people" (p. 185). One way that a transformational leader can transform others is through *inspirational motivation*. Northouse (2013) described a person with inspirational motivation to be a leader "who communicates high expectations to followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization" (p. 193). In this regard, I see myself as a transformational leader. I can inspire my team by providing a vision of what could be and can help a group of colleagues or students visualize what we could or want to accomplish in the future (Gallup, 1999).

Using my *Empathy* CliftonStrengths theme, I can imagine myself in another person's situation and sense how others around me feel (Gallup, 1999). This strength is beneficial to have when advising students because I can quickly assess when a student is stressed or when something is wrong. It also allows me to focus on the emotional needs of the person before moving on to the topic at hand. This talent connects to *individualized consideration*, which is factor four of the transformational leadership approach, because it "is representative of leaders who provide a supportive climate in which they listen carefully to the individual needs of followers" (Northouse, 2013, p. 193). Akin to my social constructivist worldview, I have learned to lead by understanding the perspective of others to make my own decisions or to help others make decisions.

Leading as a Scholar

Through the EdD program, I have learned what it means to use literature to

inform practice. I used Merriam and Bierma's (2014) chapters on Andragogy (Chapter 3) and Experiential Learning (Chapter 6) as frameworks for student staff training when working in Residential Life. I utilize brain-based career development theory (Jaunarajs et al., 2017) when advising students through their career development process. As referenced above, I use several leadership theories to shape and guide my approach to leadership.

Going through this dissertation process has impacted me as a scholar. I wanted my dissertation topic to be timely, speak to a gap in the literature, and serve a practitioner group that I have an affinity for. I was able to incorporate each of these with research on entry-level student affairs professional social media use. I believe my research can have an impact on professional guidance and use. Social media use in the profession should be seen as a skill to be honed *and* a liability to be mitigated; social media training and guidance from the profession must speak to both with clear expectations and examples, and with transparency about potential risks and consequences.

This dissertation has led me to appreciate the art of case building and how research can truly impact decision-making and what we thought we knew about a particular population. I thought that my dissertation would show that entry-level student affairs professional are the model social media users in student affairs – savvy, multi-platform users, who frequently interact with students and other institutional stakeholders. Instead, it highlighted the factors that influenced and often deterred them from using social media as a professional in the field. Writing my findings was the most exciting part of this process; it uncovered information about a population of young professionals that may be misunderstood and is often overlooked.

Similar to research participant experiences, my social media use has been shaped by my own social media blunders, learning from the missteps of others, who I choose to connect with on each platform, the environment surrounding social media at my institution, and the current political landscape of our nation. Reflecting on social media use helped put my own use into perspective and helped me uncover how my lived experiences have influenced how I construct my digital identity.

Conclusion

The EdD program has given me the tools to improve scholarly practice, enhance my ability to lead others, navigate complex organizational systems, and confront problems of practice in a systematic manner. This vast, complex learning experience has given me the opportunity to critically reflect on work as a scholarly practitioner and, through using the scholarship from courses and in my own research, apply relevant theories and approaches to situations in my everyday work at the University of Missouri. Learning from scholarly work and directly applying it to practice is the essence of this education doctorate. I have grown to understand my role in higher education and the connections I have made to the coursework. This program has given me a tremendous confidence in my ability to be a scholarly practitioner at the University of Missouri.

I am forever grateful for the opportunity to learn so much about serving others and enhancing an institutional setting on which so many young people rely to shape their future. I do not take working in higher education lightly and I know there is more knowledge to gain and many people to lead. I do not believe my learning has ended with this dissertation, but a framework for future learning has been established. It is time to

build on the learning that has taken place throughout this program and systematically improve a career field that has given me so much.

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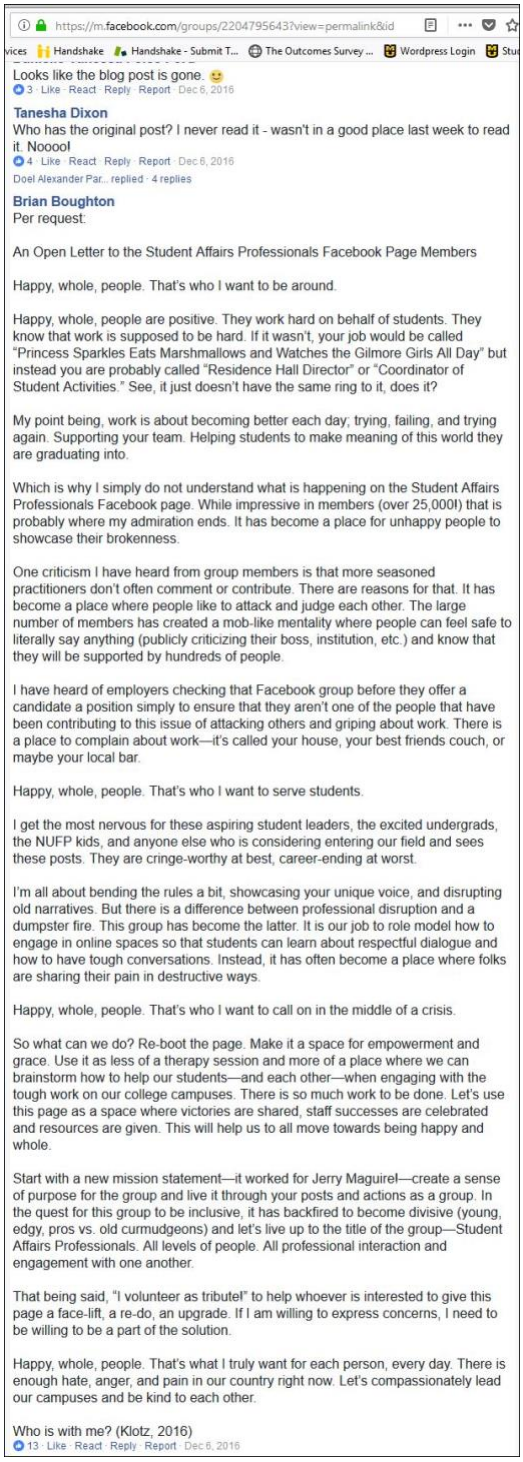
Appendices

Appendix A

Boughton's re-post of Klotz's (2016) blog: An open letter to the Student Affairs Professionals Page Members



https://m.facebook.com/groups/2204795643?view=permalink&id

Handshake · Handshake - Submit T... · The Outcomes Survey ... · Wordpress Login

Looks like the blog post is gone.

3 · Like · React · Reply · Report · Dec 6, 2016

Tanesha Dixon

Who has the original post? I never read it - wasn't in a good place last week to read it. Nooool

4 · Like · React · Reply · Report · Dec 6, 2016

Doel Alexander Par... replied · 4 replies

Brian Boughton

Per request:

An Open Letter to the Student Affairs Professionals Facebook Page Members

Happy, whole, people. That's who I want to be around.

Happy, whole, people are positive. They work hard on behalf of students. They know that work is supposed to be hard. If it wasn't, your job would be called "Princess Sparkles Eats Marshmallows and Watches the Gilmore Girls All Day" but instead you are probably called "Residence Hall Director" or "Coordinator of Student Activities." See, it just doesn't have the same ring to it, does it?

My point being, work is about becoming better each day; trying, failing, and trying again. Supporting your team. Helping students to make meaning of this world they are graduating into.

Which is why I simply do not understand what is happening on the Student Affairs Professionals Facebook page. While impressive in members (over 25,000!) that is probably where my admiration ends. It has become a place for unhappy people to showcase their brokenness.

One criticism I have heard from group members is that more seasoned practitioners don't often comment or contribute. There are reasons for that. It has become a place where people like to attack and judge each other. The large number of members has created a mob-like mentality where people can feel safe to literally say anything (publicly criticizing their boss, institution, etc.) and know that they will be supported by hundreds of people.

I have heard of employers checking that Facebook group before they offer a candidate a position simply to ensure that they aren't one of the people that have been contributing to this issue of attacking others and griping about work. There is a place to complain about work—it's called your house, your best friends couch, or maybe your local bar.

Happy, whole, people. That's who I want to serve students.

I get the most nervous for these aspiring student leaders, the excited undergrads, the NUFP kids, and anyone else who is considering entering our field and sees these posts. They are cringe-worthy at best, career-ending at worst.

I'm all about bending the rules a bit, showcasing your unique voice, and disrupting old narratives. But there is a difference between professional disruption and a dumpster fire. This group has become the latter. It is our job to role model how to engage in online spaces so that students can learn about respectful dialogue and how to have tough conversations. Instead, it has often become a place where folks are sharing their pain in destructive ways.

Happy, whole, people. That's who I want to call on in the middle of a crisis.

So what can we do? Re-boot the page. Make it a space for empowerment and grace. Use it as less of a therapy session and more of a place where we can brainstorm how to help our students—and each other—when engaging with the tough work on our college campuses. There is so much work to be done. Let's use this page as a space where victories are shared, staff successes are celebrated and resources are given. This will help us to all move towards being happy and whole.

Start with a new mission statement—it worked for Jerry Maguire!—create a sense of purpose for the group and live it through your posts and actions as a group. In the quest for this group to be inclusive, it has backfired to become divisive (young, edgy, pros vs. old curmudgeons) and let's live up to the title of the group—Student Affairs Professionals. All levels of people. All professional interaction and engagement with one another.

That being said, "I volunteer as tribute!" to help whoever is interested to give this page a face-lift, a re-do, an upgrade. If I am willing to express concerns, I need to be willing to be a part of the solution.

Happy, whole, people. That's what I truly want for each person, every day. There is enough hate, anger, and pain in our country right now. Let's compassionately lead our campuses and be kind to each other.

Who is with me? (Klotz, 2016)

13 · Like · React · Reply · Report · Dec 6, 2016

Appendix B

Online Questionnaire

I will ask the consent question on the opening page of survey before participants can participate. The consent question explanation will be directly followed by a question that reads, "Do you consent to these terms?" with Yes/No answer options. Participants who answer "Yes" will proceed to the online questionnaire. Participants who answer "No" will not proceed to the online questionnaire.

1. How long have you worked in Student Affairs (excluding time as a graduate, teaching, or research assistant)? *(Participants who select Answer "G" will not be able to participate in the study. Message for individuals that <u>do not</u> meet study criteria: "Thank you for taking a moment to complete this survey. Unfortunately, you do not meet the research study criteria.")*
    a. 0-12 months
    b. 1 year
    c. 2 years
    d. 3 years
    e. 4 years
    f. 5 years
    g. More than 5 years
2. Name (text response)
3. University email address (text response)
4. Position Title (text response)
5. Position Title of Supervisor (text response)
6. Gender Pronouns (Check all that apply)
    a. he/him/his
    b. she/her/hers
    c. they/them/theirs
    d. Ze/Zir
    e. Pronoun not listed (text response)
7. Gender (text response)
8. Race/Ethnicity (Check all that apply)
    a. Native American or Alaska Native
    b. Asian or Asian American
    c. Black or African American
    d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
    e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    f. White
    g. A race or ethnicity not listed here (text response)

    h. Prefer not to state
9. What pseudonym and pronouns would you like me to use in the study? Please provide a First Name and first initial of Last Name and pronouns (e.g., they/them/theirs; he/him/his; she/her/hers). (text response)
10. Who are the main audiences with whom you want to engage in your position and in your profession? (Check all that apply)
    a. Students
    b. Professional colleagues on your campus
    c. Supervisor or upper-level administrators on your campus
    d. Professional colleagues outside of your campus
    e. External university stakeholders
    f. An audience not listed here (text response)
11. Please select your current comfort level when engaging with the following populations in your position and profession: (matrix question - use list from Question 10)
    a. Levels: Very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, neither comfortable or uncomfortable, somewhat uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, not applicable)
12. How often do you interact with the following populations on social media? (Interactions could include commenting directly on social media posts or profiles, liking or sharing posts, or tagging those people/accounts in your social media posts) (*matrix question – using group list from Question 10*)
    a. Frequency: Daily, Weekly (2-3 days per week), Monthly, Yearly, Never
13. Please rate your proficiency on the following platforms: (matrix question - use list from Question 12)
    a. Ratings: Advanced Proficiency, Above Average Proficiency, Proficient, Basic Proficiency, and No Proficiency
14. Please select each social media platform you use personally/<u>outside of your professional role (check all that apply)</u>.
    a. Blogging (Wordpress, personal website, etc.)
    b. Facebook
    c. Instagram
    d. LinkedIn
    e. Pinterest
    f. Snapchat
    g. Twitter
    h. YouTube
    i. Tik Tok
    j. Platform not listed here (text response)
    k. I do not use social media personally/outside of my professional role
15. Select each social media platform you use <u>as part of your professional role</u>. This can include personal social media platforms used for work purposes (check all that apply).
    a. Blogging (WordPress, personal website, etc.)
    b. Facebook
    c. Instagram

   d. LinkedIn
   e. Pinterest
   f. Snapchat
   g. Twitter
   h. YouTube
   i. Tik Tok
   j. Platform not listed here (text response)
   k. I do not use social media as part of my professional role

16. Please select the social media platform you are most active on in your professional role: (*I will use skip logic for Question 16 so participant will only be able to choose from those platforms they selected in Question 15. Additionally, participants will skip Questions 16 through 19 if they choose answer "K" on Question 15 as these questions relate to social media use in their professional role.)*
    a. Blogging (WordPress, personal website, etc.)
    b. Facebook
    c. Instagram
    d. LinkedIn
    e. Pinterest
    f. Snapchat
    g. Twitter
    h. YouTube
    i. Tik Tok
    j. Platform not listed here (text response)
17. Please estimate how much time you spend per week managing your social media professional presence (writing/editing, posting, commenting, etc).
    a. Less than One Hour
    b. 1-3 Hours
    c. 3-5 Hours
    d. 5-7 Hours
    e. 7-9 Hours
    f. More than 9 Hours
18. On average, when are you active on social media platforms for work purposes? (Select as many as applicable)
    a. 5-7am
    b. 7-9am
    c. 9-11am
    d. 11am-1pm
    e. 1-3pm
    f. 3-5pm
    g. 5-7pm
    h. 7-9pm
    i. 9-11pm
    j. 11pm-1am
    k. 1am-5am
19. Do you utilize any other support to manage your social media platforms?

a. No, self-managed
b. Yes, professional staff
c. Yes, students
d. Yes, both students and professional staff
e. Other (text response)

20. Date Availability for Interview (*using Qualtrics date form*)
    a. Date (*asking for 3 different dates – 1st available, 2nd available, 3rd available*)
    b. Times available on each date

Appendix C

Participant Interview Script & Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

SCRIPT:

Before we begin, I would like to reiterate important information from the consent form. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media. Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You can stop being in the study at any time without giving a reason. Just tell me right away if you wish to stop taking part. I want to confirm that there are no benefits, no costs, and no incentives associated with being a part of this study. If, at any point during your participation, you have questions, concerns, or complaints, you can speak with me directly, my dissertation advisor, Dr. Jeni Hart, or contact MU Research Participant Advocacy calling 888-280-5002 or emailing MUResearchRPA@missouri.edu. Thank you again for participating in my study and I look forward to the interview today.

In the online questionnaire, you identified (social media platform) as the social media platform you are most active on in your professional role. As part of the study, I may need to "friend" or "follow" you on this platform so I can have access to your posts from October 2019 through April 2020. I would need to "friend" or "follow" you for a minimum of 45 days beginning today. After 45 days, you can choose to "unfriend," "block," or make no change in our social media connection.

Can you provide me with more information on how I can find you on this platform (i.e. Twitter handle, Instagram or Facebook Username)?

Record Answer Here : _____

Thank you for that information, we will now begin our interview.

(Ask interview questions)

Do you have any additional thoughts or questions at this time?

(Note additional thoughts and answer questions)

Thank you very much for participating in this interview. In the near future, I will send you the transcript of this interview so you can review it for accuracy.

(End interview)

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. What is your comfort level in posting about your campus?
    a. How do you perceive institutional support or messaging around the use of social media?
    b. How do you perceive your SSAOs and/or supervisors' perspectives on technology and social media use?
2. How did you learn about technology as a professional student affairs competency through training or within a graduate program?
    a. In what context were you learning about the competency?
3. How do you find or seek out other professionals to connect with on social media?
    a. Once you've connected with them on social media, how do you engage with them on the platform?
    b. How is this similar or different from how you engage with current college students on social media?
4. How do any of the social media accounts you are active on overlap with your personal and professional roles?
    a. How do you decide what to share? Has that decision-making process changed over time?
    b. Identify any topics, experiences, and/or people you will not post about?
5. Who will you connect with, or not connect with, on each social platform?
    a. What are the benefits for connecting with those you do allow into your network?
6. What is an outcome you are currently intentionally working on in your position?
7. Think about the value you hope to contribute to your campus and profession. How does this live out digitally?
8. How can you incorporate your personality and personal life into your social media presence?
9. What are the values that draw you to the work you do?
    a. How are these values present in your approach to social media and your digital identity?
10. Who have you identified as student affairs role models you can look to who are demonstrating intentionality on tools like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram?
11. How does intentionality currently factor into your digital identity?
    a. On which platform can you apply a deeper purpose?

Potential questions if participants do not use social media in their professional role:

12. Tell me about your social media use?
    a. What are you posting about? Who are you connected/connecting with (friends, family, work colleagues, influencers in the field)? What type of

accounts are you following (news, politicians, famous people)? What groups/communities are you a part of on your social media platforms (higher ed groups, personal interest groups)?

13. Tell me about how you communicate with students/colleagues/leadership? How does social media play into that communication, if at all?
14. You've made a conscious decision to not connect with students/colleagues/leadership on social media, why is that?
15. What do you see as the risks of connecting with these groups on social media?
    a. How have those risks impacted your decision to use social media in your professional role?
16. What do you see as the rewards of connecting with these groups on social media?
    a. How have those rewards impacted your decision to use social media in your professional role?

Appendix D

Participant Email Communications through Case Study Criteria Update

Appendix D1

Joint email to SSAOs and IDE Leadership

Good afternoon. My name is Luke Gorham and I am a current student in the Ed.D. program at the University of Missouri and also serve as the Career Services Coordinator for MU School of Health Professions. I am pursuing a research study and seek participation of early career professionals working for the University of Missouri Division of Student Affairs and Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. My study seeks to understand the ways entry-level professionals utilize social media.

I will use convenience sampling to recruit participants and plan to send individual emails containing a study recruitment message to the director of each unit within the Division of Student Affairs and Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity with a request to forward it to potential participants.

I hope the outcomes of my research will be helpful to each of you and those who supervise early career and graduate student professionals in your respective areas. When the time comes, I hope each of you will attend a presentation with the higher ed faculty in ELPA regarding study implications and findings.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information regarding the study.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart

Appendix D2

Email to Potential Participant Supervisor or Unit Director

Dear _____,

My name is Luke Gorham and I am a current student in the Ed.D. program at the University of Missouri and also serve as the Career Services Coordinator for MU School of Health Professions. I am pursuing a research study and seek participation of entry-level professionals working for the University of Missouri Division of Student Affairs and Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. My study seeks to understand the ways entry-level student affairs professionals utilize social media. I am emailing you as the Director of the (student affairs/IDE unit) to request that you forward this email in its entirety to potential participants in your unit. If you meet the study criteria, you are welcome to participate as well.

Participant Criteria:
Before individuals can participate in this study, they have to meet the case study criteria. They have to 1.) be an entry-level student affairs professional (defined as having 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience) at the University of Missouri, 2.) use social media sites daily, 3.) interact online with students at least once per week, and 4.) use more than one social media site.

Interested Participant Information:
Before individuals can participate in this study, they have to meet the case study criteria, including being an entry-level student affairs professional, using social media sites daily, interacting online with students at least once per week, and using more than one social media site. If participants meet the study criteria, they will receive a follow up email including study details and consent to participate. My study consists of three parts:

- A pre-interview online questionnaire used to gather demographics, social media usage, and social media management information.
- An individual interview (conducted via Zoom) that will last no longer than one hour.
- A content analysis of one of the participant's social media platform. The platform used for content analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be identified by the participant's answer to question #13 of the online questionnaire. As the researcher, I will ask to "friend" or "follow" the participant on the platform identified.

Interested participants can complete the case study criteria survey here:

(LINK TO CASE STUDY CRITERIA SURVEY)

Please let me know if you would be open to sharing this information with potential participants by emailing GorhamL@health.missouri.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart

Appendix D3

Email #1 to Participants Eligible to Participate in the Study (Confirm Participation)

Dear _____,

Based on your responses to the case study criteria survey, I'm excited to share that you are eligible to participate in my study on entry-level student affairs professional social media use.

My study consists of three parts: a pre-interview online questionnaire, that should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete, an individual interview (conducted via Zoom) that will last no longer than one hour, and a content analysis of one of your social media platforms during two separate time frames: October 1, 2019 – October 31, 2019 and April 1, 2020 – April 30, 2020. The platform used for content analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be identified by your answer to question #13 on the online questionnaire. As the researcher, I will ask to "friend" or "follow" you on the platform identified.

Please let me know if you would be open to being part of this small study by (month, day of month) by emailing GorhamL@health.missouri.edu. Please also include at least three interview time options based on your availability in (month/s).

The online questionnaire will include the informed consent, which I will ensure you have plenty of time to review and complete prior to the interview. I can also assist you in using Zoom to minimize technical difficulties.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart

Appendix D4

Email #2 to Participants Eligible to Participate in the Study (CONFIRM PARTICIPATION)

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for confirming your participation in this exciting research study on entry-level student affairs professional social media use.

The first part of this research is completion of an online questionnaire found here:
(LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE)

Please complete this *prior* to our interview on (day, date, at time CST). The informed consent is part of the online questionnaire, where you will officially confirm your participation. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to reach out to me at anytime.

I have us utilizing Zoom for the one hour interview. At the time of the interview, you can click on the link below to enter the Zoom meeting used to conduct the interview. I will also send you an Outlook calendar invitation that will contain the link to the Zoom meeting.

(LINK TO ZOOM MEETING)

I thank you in advance for your time and willingness to be part of this research!

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Appendix D5

Email #3 to Participants Eligible to Participate in the Study (Reminders sent up to twice per week leading up to the interview)

Dear _____,

This is a friendly reminder to complete the online questionnaire *prior* to our interview on (day, date, at time CST). If you have any questions about the study, please let me know.

You can complete the online questionnaire here:
(LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE)

For your convenience, I have again included the link to the Zoom meeting we will use to conduct the interview. I also sent you an Outlook calendar invitation that included this link.

(LINK TO ZOOM MEETING)

Thank you again for your time and willingness to be part of this research.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Appendix D6

Email #4 to Participants Eligible to Participate in the Study (Transcript Review Request)

Dear _____,

Please find the attached transcript of our Zoom interview that took place on (day, date, at time CST). I would like to give you the opportunity to verify that the transcripts are accurate. I will also accept any additional information you would like to share related to your interview responses. Additionally, I would like to remove filler words (um, uh, like, you know, etc.) from the transcript, but will keep the language the same.

Please respond to GorhamL@health.missouri.edu by (day, date, time CST) with your feedback and if you are ok with me removing filler words. If you do not respond by this date, I will move forward without your feedback and will remove filler words.

Thank you again for your participation in the study and I look forward to your response.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Appendix D7

Updated Dissertation Criteria Outreach Email (Participant Request)

Hello _____, I am again reaching out to ask that you consider taking part in my dissertation study as I recently updated the criteria to participate. Criteria related to daily use of social media and frequency of social media interaction with students has been removed. The primary purpose of my study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals are using social media personally, professionally, or in both capacities. If you are not using social media, I want to explore that as well. If you meet the case study criteria below, I hope you consider participating.

Updated Participant Criteria:
Participants have to be an entry-level student affairs professional (defined as having 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience excluding time as a graduate, teaching, or research assistant) at the University of Missouri.

If you meet the case study criteria, you can begin participation in the study by completing this brief online questionnaire used to gather demographics, social media usage, and social media management information. The informed consent is part of the online questionnaire, where you will officially confirm your participation.

(LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE)

My study consists of two additional parts:

- An individual interview (conducted via Zoom) that will last no longer than one hour.
- A content analysis of one of the participant's social media platform (assuming you use social media). The platform used for content analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be identified by the participant's answer to question #16 of the online questionnaire. As the researcher, I will ask to "friend" or "follow" the participant on the platform identified.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information and thank you for your consideration.
Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart

Appendix D8

Email to MU SSAOs and IDE Leadership about Additional Gatekeepers

Good morning/afternoon _____. I hope this email finds you safe and well this summer. I emailed you on May 6 to share my dissertation research focused on the social media use of early career professionals working for the University of Missouri Division of Student Affairs and Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. I want to be sensitive to the current situation given how COVID-19, university budgets, and furloughs have impacted staff across campus. As I attempt to recruit participants in your area, I am hoping you might have recommendations for the best time to reach back out to program directors for participant recruitment. I also wanted to ask if you would be willing to encourage your program directors to share my study participation request with the early career professionals working in their areas?

Attached is the recruitment email I sent to program directors on May 18. I have had 4 program directors respond to let me know they shared my study with staff. I have had 2 early career professionals respond to the case study criteria survey, but they did not meet the study criteria which means I do not currently have study participants. Please let me know if you would like the names of the program directors I emailed on May 18.

Again, I hope the outcomes of my research will be helpful to you and those who supervise early career and graduate student professionals in your area. Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information regarding the study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart

Appendix E

Expanding Study Participtionto Um System Entry-Level Student Affairs Professionals - Gatekeeper & Participant Communication

Appendix E1

Email to MU SSAO – Request to share with other UM System SSAOs

Hello _____,

As you may recall, I am conducting my dissertation research on entry-level student affairs professional social media use. I am expanding my participant group to now include entry-level professionals working for the Division of Student Affairs at each University of Missouri System institution.

Would you be willing to encourage your student affairs counterparts at UMKC, UMSL, and Missouri S&T to share my study participation request below with their unit directors and/or entry-level student affairs professionals?

I greatly appreciate your consideration and welcome any questions or considerations.

Dear University of Missouri System Senior Student Affairs Officers,

My name is Luke Gorham and I am a current student in the Ed.D. program at the University of Missouri and also serve as the Career Services Coordinator for MU School of Health Professions. I am pursuing a research study and seek participation of early career professionals working for the Division of Student Affairs at each University of Missouri System institution.

The primary purpose of my study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals are using social media personally, professionally, or in both capacities. If they are not using social media, I want to explore that as well.

Participant Criteria:
Participants have to be an entry-level student affairs professional (defined as having 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience excluding time as a graduate, teaching, or research assistant) at a University of Missouri System institution.

If participants meet the case study criteria, they can begin participation in the study by completing this brief online questionnaire used to gather demographics, social media usage, and social media management information. The informed consent is part of the online questionnaire, where participants will officially confirm their participation.

(LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNIARE)

My study consists of two additional parts:

- An individual interview (conducted via Zoom) that will last no longer than one hour.
- A content analysis of one of the participant's social media platforms (assuming they use social media). The platform used for content analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be identified by the participant's answer to question #16 of the online questionnaire. As the researcher, I will ask to "friend" or "follow" the participant on the platform identified.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information regarding the study.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart
Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
University of Missouri

Appendix E2

Email to the SSAO at UMKC, Missouri S&T, and UMSL

Good afternoon. My name is Luke Gorham and I am a current student in the Ed.D. program at the University of Missouri and also serve as the Career Services Coordinator for MU School of Health Professions. I am pursuing a research study and seek participation of early career professionals working for the Division of Student Affairs at each University of Missouri System institution including (insert their institution's name). My study seeks to understand the ways entry-level professionals utilize social media.

I will use convenience sampling to recruit participants and plan to send individual emails containing a study recruitment message to the director of each unit within the Division of Student Affairs at (insert their institution's name) with a request to forward it to potential participants.

I hope the outcomes of my research will be helpful to you and those who supervise early career and graduate student professionals at your institution. When the time comes, I hope you will attend a presentation regarding study implications and findings.

Below is the information I plan to send your unit directors.

Hello _____,

My name is Luke Gorham and I am a current doctoral student in the Ed.D. program at the University of Missouri and also serve as the Career Services Coordinator for MU School of Health Professions. I am pursuing a research study and seek participation of entry-level professionals working for the Division of Student Affairs at each University of Missouri System institution including (insert their institution's name).

I am emailing you as the Director of the (student affairs unit) to request that you forward this email in its entirety to potential participants in your unit. If you meet the study criteria, you are welcome to participate as well.

The primary purpose of my study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals are using social media personally, professionally, or in both capacities. If they are not using social media, I want to explore that as well.

Participant Criteria:
Participants have to be an entry-level student affairs professional (defined as having 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience excluding time as a graduate, teaching, or research assistant) at a University of Missouri System institution.

If participants meet the case study criteria, they can begin participation in the study by completing this brief online questionnaire used to gather demographics, social media usage, and social media management information. The informed consent is part of the online questionnaire, where they will officially confirm their participation.

(LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNIARE)

My study consists of two additional parts:

- An individual interview (conducted via Zoom) that will last no longer than one hour.
- A content analysis of one of the participant's social media platforms (assuming they use social media). The platform used for content analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be identified by the participant's answer to question #16 of the online questionnaire. As the researcher, I will ask to "friend" or "follow" the participant on the platform identified.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information regarding the study.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart
Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
University of Missouri

Appendix E3

Recruitment Email to UM System Division of Students Affairs Unit Directors & Professional Colleagues at UM System Institutions

Hello _____,

(This is/My name) is Luke Gorham and I am a current doctoral student in the Ed.D. program at the University of Missouri and also serve as the Career Services Coordinator for MU School of Health Professions. I am pursuing a research study and seek participation of entry-level professionals working for the Division of Student Affairs at each University of Missouri System institution including (insert their institution's name).

I am emailing you as [a professional colleague/the Director of the (student affairs unit)] to request that you forward this email in its entirety to potential participants in your unit. If you meet the study criteria, you are welcome to participate as well.

The primary purpose of my study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals are using social media personally, professionally, or in both capacities. If they are not using social media, I want to explore that as well.

Participant Criteria:
Participants have to be an entry-level student affairs professional (defined as having 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience excluding time as a graduate, teaching, or research assistant) at a University of Missouri System institution.

If participants meet the case study criteria, they can begin participation in the study by completing this brief online questionnaire used to gather demographics, social media usage, and social media management information. The informed consent is part of the online questionnaire, where they will officially confirm their participation.

(LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNIARE)

My study consists of two additional parts:

- An individual interview (conducted via Zoom) that will last no longer than one hour.
- A content analysis of one of the participant's social media platforms (assuming they use social media). The platform used for content analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be identified by the participant's answer to question #16 of the online questionnaire. As the researcher, I will ask to "friend" or "follow" the participant on the platform identified.

Please let me know if you would be open to sharing this information with potential participants by emailing GorhamL@health.missouri.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart
Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
University of Missouri

Appendix E4

Email to Potential Entry-level Participants at UM System institutions

Dear _____,

My name is Luke Gorham and I am a current doctoral student in the Ed.D. program at the University of Missouri and also serve as the Career Services Coordinator for MU School of Health Professions. I am pursuing a research study and seek participation of entry-level professionals working for the Division of Student Affairs at each University of Missouri System institution including (insert their institution's name).

The primary purpose of my study is to understand how entry-level student affairs professionals are using social media personally, professionally, or in both capacities. If you are not using social media, I want to explore that as well. **I am emailing you as a potential participant.** If you meet the criteria below, I hope you consider participating.

Participant Criteria:
Participants have to be an entry-level student affairs professional (defined as having 5 or fewer years of full-time work experience excluding time as a graduate, teaching, or research assistant) at a University of Missouri System institution.

If you meet the case study criteria, you can begin participation in the study by completing this brief online questionnaire used to gather demographics, social media usage, and social media management information. The informed consent is part of the online questionnaire, where you will officially confirm your participation.

(LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNIARE)

My study consists of two additional parts:

- An individual interview (conducted via Zoom) that will last no longer than one hour.
- A content analysis of one of the participant's social media platform (assuming you use social media). The platform used for content analysis (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be identified by the participant's answer to question #16 of the online questionnaire. As the researcher, I will ask to "friend" or "follow" the participant on the platform identified.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information and thank you for your consideration.

Luke Gorham
University of Missouri
GorhamL@health.missouri.edu
(660) 229-0734

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Hart

Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
University of Missouri

Appendix F

Ahlquist's Original Online Questionnaire

Questions:

1. Position Title (text response)
2. Position Reports to (text response)
3. Current Institution Type
    a. 4 Year Public
    b. 4 Year Private
    c. Community College
    d. 2 Year Public
    e. 2 Year Private
    f. For Profit
4. Gender
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Prefer not to state
5. Ethnicity
    a. American Indian
    b. Asian
    c. Black or African American
    d. Hispanic or Latino
    e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    f. White
    g. Prefer not to state
6. Years in Higher Education
    a. 1-10 Years
    b. 10-15 Years
    c. 15-20 Years
    d. 20-25 Years
    e. 25-30 Years
    f. 30+ Years
7. Please check each social media platform utilized in your professional role
    a. Blogging (WordPress, Blogger, etc.)
    b. Facebook
    c. Four Square
    d. Google+
    e. Instagram
    f. LinkedIn
    g. Pinterest
    h. Twitter
    i. Tumblr
    j. Vine

    k. YouTube
8. Please rate your proficiency on the following platforms: (matrix question - use list from Question 7)
    a. Ratings: Advanced Proficiency, Above Average Proficiency, Proficient, Basic Proficiency, and No Proficiency
9. Do you utilize any other support to manage your social media platforms?
    a. No, self managed
    b. Yes, professional staff
    c. Yes, student leaders
    d. Yes, both students and professional staff
    e. Other
10. How long has their been a social media presence in your work?
    a. Less than 1 year
    b. 1-2 years
    c. 2-3 years
    d. 3-4 years
    e. 4-5 years
    f. More than 5 years
11. By clicking the "I consent" button below, I am giving my consent to participate in this research study.
    a. I Consent
    b. I Do Not Consent
12. Name (Optional)
13. Please check each social media platform utilized personally
    a. Blogging (Wordpress, Blogger, etc.)
    b. Facebook
    c. Four Square
    d. Google+
    e. Instagram
    f. LinkedIn
    g. Pinterest
    h. Twitter
    i. Tumblr
    j. Vine
    k. YouTube
14. Please rate how important the use of the following social media tools are to you professionally: (matrix question - use list from Question 13)
15. Please estimate how much time you spend per week managing your social media professional presence (writing/editing, posting, commenting, etc).
    a. Less than One Hour
    b. 1-3 Hours
    c. 3-5 Hours
    d. 5-7 Hours
    e. 7-9 Hours
    f. More than 9 Hours
16. On average, when do you seek out social media tools? (Select as many as

applicable)

a. 5-7am
b. 7-9am
c. 9-11am
d. 11am-1pm
e. 1-3pm
f. 3-5pm
g. 5-7pm
h. 7-9pm
i. 9-11pm
j. 11pm-1am

Appendix G

Consent with Waiver of Documentation

INVESTIGATOR'S NAME: LUCAS GORHAM
PROJECT IRB #: 2022113
Study Title: ENTRY-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS: A STUDY OF DIGITAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE PROFESSION

STUDY SUMMARY

My name is Luke Gorham and I am a current student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis EdD program at the University of Missouri. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study focused on social media use of entry-level student affairs professionals. If you are interested, this form will explain what will happen if you join the study. If there is anything in this form that you do not understand or if you would like an electronic copy for your records, please email GorhamL@health.missouri.edu for an explanation.

Research studies help us to learn new things and test new ideas. Taking part in a research study is voluntary. You are free to say yes or no, and you can stop taking part at any time, without providing a reason. We will only include you in the study if you first give us your permission.

WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to complete the online questionnaire directly following this consent form, participate in a virtual interview, and allow the PI to analyze social media posts on one of your social media platforms. You will be asked to "friend" the PI or allow the PI to "follow" you on one social media platform for a minimum of 45 days and allow the PI to access that social media platform for past social media posts made from October 2019 through April 2020.

You must give us permission to use the images/photographs/audio recordings/video recordings we take of you or take from your social media platform during the study. You will be able look at/listen to/watch them before you give your permission for us to use them. Images/photographs/audio recordings/video recordings will not contain anything that might identify you.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are risks to taking part in any research study. There may be problems caused by the study that we do not know about yet. Some risks/discomforts from being in this study include psychological distress from survey/interview questions. If we learn about new important risks, we will tell you. We will tell you about any new information we learn that may affect your decision to continue taking part in the study.

WHO CAN I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

If you have more questions about this study at any time, you can call PI Luke Gorham at 573.882.6417 or Dissertation Advisor Dr. Jeni Hart at 573.884.1402.

You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you:

- Have any questions about your rights as a study participant;
- Want to report any problems or complaints; or
- Feel under any pressure to take part or stay in this study

The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights of participants are protected. Their phone number is 573- 882-3181.

If you want to talk privately about your rights or any issues related to your participation in this study, you can contact University of Missouri Research Participant Advocacy by calling 888-280-5002 (a free call), or emailing MUResearchRPA@missouri.edu. If you have any questions right now, please email GorhamL@health.missouri.edu.

Q: Do you consent to these terms?

a. Yes
b. No

VITA

Lucas (Luke) Gorham worked at the University of Missouri for 13 years as a Residence Hall Coordinator and Leadership and Educational Resources Advisor for the Department of Residential Life and as the Career Services Coordinator for the School of Health Professions. He also worked for 2 years as a graduate assistant in the Office of Student Involvement at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Lucas is a first-generation college student holding an AA in Applied Science from The Metropolitan Community Colleges in Kansas City, MO; a BSBA in Business Management and Marketing from Missouri Western State University; and a MA in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is currently pursuing his EdD in Educational Leadership from the University of Missouri. Lucas is from Lexington, MO and married to Alissa Pei Gorham and father to Bella and Caroline Gorham.