

Social Identity and the Shift of Student Affairs Staff to the Academic Unit

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the phenomenon of student affairs professionals working at Arizona State University who shifted from a student affairs unit to perform similar work in an academic unit. The conceptual framework for this exploration was social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), which asserts that individuals develop a self-concept or image that derives, in part, from her/his membership in a group or groups. This qualitative study utilized in-person interviews to capture raw data from four purposeful participants, and a software package (NVivo 9) aided in the grounded theory approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The study found that participants placed a high value on the college-centric approach to their student affairs work, but they still identified as student affairs professionals working inside the academic unit. Findings are useful to: supervisors who have an interest in the professional development and personal well-being of staff; faculty and administrators of master's and doctoral degree programs designed to prepare student affairs professionals; associations that serve student affairs professionals; higher education leaders engaged in organizational change; and higher education administrators interested in the roles of individual biases and values in organizations. This study will interest student affairs professionals making the shift from a student affairs unit to an academic unit, and it will inform the researcher's own practice and career development through his investigation of his own organization.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my parents, Lon and Fern Mader, who taught me the power of hard work and always believed in me; Kelly Henning, the smarter one and the best big sister any one could have; Ken Harton, who showed me the transformational properties of education and an amazing place called The University of Kansas; Stu and Arlene Lerman, who made me part of their family; Beth Gelbert and Jacob, who understood all the missed weekends; and Anders Pers, my amazing best friend, whose lust for life and endless energy was inspirational. Skal!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		Page
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	Context.....	2
	Conceptual Framework and Interests.....	6
	Community of Practice	8
	Purpose Statement.....	12
2	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	13
	Social Identity Theory.....	13
	Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Relationships.....	17
	Professional Identity	18
	Professional Associations	18
	Graduate Programs.....	22
	Student Affairs Professional Identity.....	24
	Student Affairs and Restructuring	27
3	METHODOLOGY	30
	Research Question	30
	Research Approach	31
	Research Disposition	34
	Research Setting.....	36
	Action	36
	Data Collection and Management.....	39
	Data Analysis	46

CHAPTER		Page
	Participants.....	52
4	FINDINGS.....	54
	Relationships with Students.....	55
	Quality.....	57
	Robert.....	57
	Nicole.....	59
	Laura.....	59
	Ian.....	60
	Summary of Quality Interaction.....	61
	Duration.....	62
	Robert.....	62
	Nicole.....	63
	Laura.....	64
	Ian.....	64
	Summary of Duration of Relationships with Students.....	65
	High Academic Ability Students.....	65
	Robert.....	66
	Nicole.....	67
	Laura.....	67
	Ian.....	68

CHAPTER	Page
	Summary of Relationships with High Ability
	Students.....69
	Summary of Relationships with Students.....69
	Professional Development70
	Professional Advancement and Market Value.....71
	Robert.....72
	Nicole74
	Laura76
	Ian79
	College-centric Approach80
	Robert.....80
	Nicole81
	Laura82
	Ian83
	Summary of Professional Development84
	Summary of Findings.....85
5	DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS.....87
	Social Identity and Student Affairs Transplants87
	Love and Estanek’s Conceptual Framework90
	Student Affairs Transplants90
	Valuing Dualism92
	Transcending Paradigms93

CHAPTER	Page
Recognizing Connectedness	93
Embracing Paradox.....	94
Love and Estanek’s Conceptual Framework in Understanding	
Student Affairs Transplants	95
Relationships with Students.....	95
Professional Development	98
Personal and Professional Implications	101
Organizational Implications.....	105
Recommendations for Further Study	107
Summary and Conclusion.....	108
REFERENCES	113
APPENDIX	
A DEFINITIONS.....	124
B PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE	127
C INFORMATION LETTER.....	129
D INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FIRST ROUND	131
E INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SECOND ROUND	133
F INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM	136

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The student affairs profession in the higher education setting in the United States provides programs and services that often include, but are not limited to, residential life, admissions, orientation, leadership, student activities, student union, student government, multicultural student affairs, Greek life, student conduct, student health, counseling services, veteran services, financial aid, and career services. These and other support areas are typically housed in an entire division called student affairs, and “its organizations and functions are now well established, with accepted standards of practice, distinct professional associations, and several professional publications devoted to the field” (Sandeem, 1996, p. 435). And while not all practitioners in student affairs graduate from student affairs graduate programs, “the master’s degree from a student affairs graduate program is recognized within the profession as one of the most critical sources of professional preparation for entry into the field” (Kuk, Cobb, & Forrest, 2007, p. 665). Also, student affairs professionals typically affiliate with national associations and organizations that are, predominantly, housed in what is commonly known as the student affairs profession. Over the past decade, however, due to severe budget cuts, student affairs divisions, like all units, have faced rapid reorganizations and retrenchments (Ambrose et al., 2006; Brown & Gamber, 2002). At Arizona State University (ASU), a research university with four campus locations across metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona, a new organizational model has emerged within the context of rapid reorganization.

This new model, known as the school-centric or college-centric model, has an evolving design that “transcends the campus-based model” (Arizona State University, n.d.c, para. 9) and leverages the resources of multiple academic units to create strong interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research clusters that compete against peers on a national and global scale (Crow, 2010). It is within the context of this new organizational model that some student affairs professionals have shifted to the academic unit. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the influence this shift has on the social identity (Tajfel, 1974) of individual student affairs professionals working at ASU who now perform similar, if not the same, work in an academic unit.

Context

According to the State Higher Education Executive Officers organization (SHEEO), state support for higher education in total constant dollars since 1984 has increased steadily across the country; however, the current economic recession has not allowed states to keep pace with full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment growth (SHEEO, 2010). From fiscal years 2000 to 2009, the collective state investment per FTE student fell by \$1,000, with much of this lost revenue made up through increased student tuition and fee revenue (SHEEO, 2010). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act absorbed some of the loss of state dollars in fiscal years 2010 and 2011, but this funding stream expired in fiscal year 2012 (SHEEO, 2010), leaving state policy makers and college leaders with an enormous challenge of how to meet increased funding needs in the face of reduced tax payer dollars. According to the National Association of State Budget

Officers, it will take several more years for states to recover from the current economic climate (SHEEO, 2010). The likely result of ongoing reductions in per student funding for public higher education is prolonged restructuring and retrenchment at universities (Ambrose, et al., 2006; Brown & Gamber, 2002) to achieve efficiency.

The phenomenon of interest in this study occurs in the organizational environment at ASU. Hence, key institution-specific information related to taxpayer funding within the context of national economic trends is relevant information. For the fiscal years 2008 to 2011, which overlap the current economic recession, ASU's state appropriation reductions totaled \$110 million, or a 22% loss in absolute funding. There was a 30% decline in support per full-time equivalent student; schools and colleges were consolidated, taking the total from 23 to 16; and there was an elimination of over 1,300 FTE faculty and staff positions (Arizona State University, 2011). Plus, in the face of state revenue reductions, student tuition increased exponentially. Nationally, university tuition increased 439% between 1982 and 2010 (National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, 2008), or 5.6% beyond the rate of inflation from 2000 to 2010 (Baum & Ma, 2010). At ASU, resident tuition and fees increased over 73%, and non-resident tuition and fees increased 30% between the Fall of 2006 and the Fall of 2010 (Arizona State University, 2010). These financial realities resulted in a series of major university reorganizations, including "mergers of a number of academic units to streamline the university's academic administration...and create new and dynamic academic programs" (Arizona State University, 2008). This

type of restructuring and reorganization in general results in the flattening of student affairs, the combining of resources with academic units to support positions and/or programs (Romano, Hanish, Phillips, & Waggoner, 2010), and lower-cost delivery of coursework and degrees via on-line and differentiated face-to-face platforms.

Recent research on the restructuring of student affairs units focuses on the organizational and administrative levels (Carlson, 2003; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001), but not at the interpersonal/individual level, which supports the need for further inquiry into the interpersonal dynamics of student affairs restructuring. Even though no effort was made to *directly* link restructuring and rapid organizational change to the phenomenon under study, the phenomenon still existed inside this climate and there was inherent value in understanding the environmental factors surrounding the specific topic of study. Public human resource and institutional analysis documents provided some basic information regarding staffing shifts (Arizona State University, n.d.b), but not at the level of detail necessary to discern potential relationships. There were on-line forms available for university staff to make requests for specific information (Arizona State University, n.d.a), but the researcher determined it was not prudent to make these administrative requests at the time of the study. Academic leaders at universities are undergoing structural change, and the importance of identity on various levels exists elsewhere in organizations. One academic leader, writing on the subject of restructuring, for example, stated that, “[t]he micropolitics of the university surfaced strongly in the restructuring process not simply because of the

reorganization of the academic departments and disciplines, but because of the recasting of the various identities that accompanied such shifts in the institution” (Gibbon, Habib, Jansen, & Parekh, 2001, p. 45). Gibbon et al. also made a case for understanding the importance of identity: “without grasping the underlying, sometimes seismic, shifts in identity that inevitably accompany restructuring, university leaders and administrators run the risk of alienating the very constituencies from which they seek ‘buy in’ for radical change proposals” (p. 45). Elizabeth Capaldi, Provost and Executive Vice President of ASU since 2006, has orchestrated major restructuring efforts at ASU. With regard to restructuring and identity based on discipline, Capaldi (2008) asserted that the “department itself is an arbitrary administrative artifact, not an intellectually defined unit,” (p. 27) and the modern university structure based on academic disciplines was no longer the best organizational model for higher education. She contended that by reducing the number of academic departments into multi-disciplinary groups clustered around faculty research interests, the university was in a better position to “accomplish the aims of undergraduate and graduate education...and solve the problems facing the planet...and conserve university resources in hard times” (Capaldi, 2008, p. 20). Brew (2008) reinforced this ideology and restructuring strategy/approach, as his research demonstrated that academic identities can transcend affiliation with the narrow discipline and expand identification to their broader research interests, allowing for more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary intellectual activity. Gumport and Sporn (1999) stated that academic restructuring in higher education is due as much to the

reconceptualization of what universities actually do rather than a continuance of what they already do with less money.

It is of critical importance to have knowledge and awareness of the organizational dynamics surrounding the phenomenon, as well as recognize that the individuals and the identity of individuals in an organization are of value. Individuals in an organization are rich depositories of knowledge and data that can inform and improve practice through inquiry. Restructuring during difficult economic times and extreme budget cuts places the organization and the staff who comprise its human infrastructure in flux. The complex and unique organizational dynamics born out of this flux are worthy of study, as findings can inform future decisions by leaders in higher education.

Conceptual Framework and Interests

The shift of student affairs professionals to academic units involves individuals from one group moving to another. Because new environments and groups have distinct values, beliefs, and norms, as well as distinct professional associations that reinforce and shape those norms, a social identity change is likely to emerge (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For the purposes of this study, the researcher referred to student affairs professionals who shifted to an academic unit to perform very similar work as *student affairs transplants*, or SATs. Staff members moved from familiar ground (student affairs unit) to new ground (academic unit). The purpose of this study is to understand if these staff members/transplants are thriving, struggling, or failing in this new ground and to better understand how they perceive themselves in this new soil. Social identity

theory (Tajfel, 1974) is one way to understand how SATs are doing on new ground, or in the new organization. Organizational identification is a particular form of social identification, and individuals can and do derive their social identities from organizations and workgroups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The key factors of social identification in complex organizations include “categorization of individuals, group distinctiveness and prestige, out-group salience, and group formation factors” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 25), indicating that identification with a group is likely (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). These types of behaviors and affiliations are of value and relevant to any organization, as “crediting a collectivity with a psychological reality beyond its membership, social identification enables the individual to conceive of, and feel loyal to, an organization or corporate culture” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 26). While the application of social identity theory to organizations was relatively new in the late 1980s (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), it has been broadly and successfully utilized and applied as a conceptual framework in many studies of individuals in organizations, which will be discussed in the literature review section of this study.

Social identity theory does, of course, have limitations, disadvantages, and detractors. Korte (2007) pointed out three common controversies/questions around the concept of identity, which are “what is it, where is it located, and why is it important” (p. 171). He also recognized the difficulty of utilizing social sciences in general to predict future human behavior, the versatility of social identity theory in viewing organizational phenomenon being both a weakness and

strength, and the disadvantage of “extending the concept beyond its relevance and explanatory powers” (Korte, 2007, p. 172). Despite these drawbacks, social identity theory has proven to be utilitarian and robust in the study of individuals in complex organizations and their perceptions of themselves in a group or organization.

Community of Practice

The researcher’s contextual knowledge of the phenomenon occurs through a variety of roles and provides both insight and inherent bias. As an administrator in a student affairs division, the researcher has oversight responsibility and close relational ties to student affairs areas undergoing restructuring. He works closely with academic affairs staff on a daily basis, and is a member of the broader university management team that has intimate knowledge of reorganization strategy. The researcher brought his own set of experiences to the process. He is a student affairs professional with nearly twenty years of experience, has first-hand knowledge of organizational change and trends in higher education, and is closely affiliated with student affairs professional associations. He also has a working relationship with some of the participants in the study, as well as personal and professional proximity to the participants. While this close relationship presented challenges, it did not impact negatively on data collection, analysis, and findings. The researcher paid strict heed to the advice set forth by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003):

it is justifiable, even inevitable, for a researcher to *use* his subjectivity in analyzing and interpreting data. However, it is not justifiable for him to

impose his own subjectivity in an arbitrary manner, that is, in a way that is not grounded in the data. (p. 83)

Hence, while cognizant of the inherent tension between researcher and participant brought on by an intimate awareness of the phenomenon and social structures behind it (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the researcher was vigilant in representing the “storied lives” of the participants and did not view them simply as “exemplars of formal categories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 141). The researcher consciously sought to present the collective narrative of the participants and guarded against a story he wanted to tell. As an administrator in the organization that housed the setting for the study, the issues of bias and values were of particular importance. More detail on how the researcher managed these issues is given in the methodology section of this dissertation.

The researcher recognized that the SATs phenomenon exists within the broader context of increased privatization of higher education driven by neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is typically associated with neoconservative political views that consider fundamental free-market forces as superior to government interventions created through democratic processes (Giroux, 2002). The term neoliberalism is a paradox, as it has transformed from the “positive label coined by the German Freiberg school to denote a moderate renovation of classical liberalism, to a normatively negative term associated with radical economic reforms” (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 145). A recent content analysis of 148 journal articles published between 1990 and 2004 found the following primary problems associated with the use of the term, making it a

complicated analytic tool: 1. it is often undefined, 2. it is employed unevenly across ideological divides, and 3. it is used to characterize an expressively broad variety of phenomena (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). Boas and Gans-Morse, through their analysis of the scholarship utilizing neoliberalism, explained that neoliberalism espouses a reduced role of the state in the economy and a curtailment of government subsidies (economic reform policy), places the highest value on individual freedom (ideology), and, when used as a model, defers to the supremacy of producers and consumers acting rationally and efficiently in the open market place. As a point of reference, politicians most associated with placing neoliberal ideologies into practice include President Reagan and the Republican Party in the United States in the 1980s, Prime Minister Thatcher and the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom in the 1980s (Cerny, 2008), and Augusto Pinochet in Chile in the 1970s (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). For the purposes of this study, a simple distinction and definition between liberalism and neoliberalism is “[i]n classical liberalism the individual is characterized as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. Neoliberalism seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 315). Hallmarks of neoliberalism in the public education sector include entrepreneurial public-private partnerships (e.g., charter schools, tuition vouchers, and university housing), collaborative research ventures, reduction in state and federal student financial aid programs, and less reliance on tax payer financial support.

This study explored the social identity of SATs who operate in their roles at the institution within the broader context of restructuring and the climate of neoliberalism. The researcher was interested in areas associated with identity in a work organization that included professional development, role definition, job satisfaction, supervisory and colleague relations, job status, and core values. How SATs adapted to rapid and significant restructuring and neoliberal solutions to challenges was also an area of interest. ASU, along with the other state universities in Arizona, proposed the formation of *The Arizona Higher Education Enterprise*, designed to create a public corporation independent of the state, including the severance of administrative support and the development of new performance and funding measures based on productivity and outcomes (Arizona Board of Regents, 2010). Specific recommendations included eliminating underperforming academic programs, developing low cost tuition options across the state, accelerating and enhancing general education curricula to expedite graduation and contain costs, leveraging all business operations where cost savings and performance enhancements can be realized, eliminating unnecessary duplication, developing new programs for new campuses that are more highly structured and more attuned to the needs of the local communities, expanding online offerings, and streamlining community college matriculation (Arizona Board of Regents, 2010). This initiative was, as the name indicates, enterprising and entrepreneurial and clearly articulated the intention of the three state universities in Arizona to be less reliant on state funding and administration and to embrace practices that are distinctly reflective of private business practices. In

short, the public universities in Arizona are, based on the modern and normative definition framed by Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), decidedly neoliberal and/or charting a course that is neoliberal.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the social identity of student affairs professionals who shifted to conduct their work within an academic unit after having worked in a student affairs unit. This study is of interest to the following: supervisors interested in the professional development and personal well-being of staff, faculty and administrators of master's and doctoral degree programs designed to prepare student affairs professionals, associations that serve student affairs professionals, higher education leaders engaged in organizational change, and any higher education administrator interested in the roles of individual biases and values in organizations. This study is of interest to working professionals making the shift from one unit setting to another by choice or by necessity, and it informs the researcher's own practice and career development through his investigation of his own organization.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Social Identity Theory

While the literature from the student affairs field has much to offer in terms of professional development and the socialization of professionals in the field, social identity theory is a particularly well-suited conceptual framework to study the interpersonal and intergroup dynamics experienced by SATs. The literature in the student affairs field related to academic affairs is dominated by research on how to bridge the gap between student affairs and academic affairs, resulting in position statements on best practices and guiding principles on student affairs-academic affairs partnerships and collaborations, most notably *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association of Higher Education, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, & American College Personnel Association, 1998). Kezar (2001) provided a much-needed empirical study on successful student affairs-academic affairs partnerships, but the study was not intended to get at the visceral, individual level of the actual work of professionals. While student affairs research provides valuable direction and guidance for best practice, it does not provide the needed conceptual framework to explore the phenomenon of SATs. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) provides a framework to understand the phenomenon at the level desired by the researcher. Social identity theory asserts that individuals develop a self-concept or image derived, in part, from her/his membership in a group or groups and that there is

emotional significance attached to membership. Tajfel (1974) theorized that individuals typically strive to achieve a positive social identity, which relies on comparisons to other groups, leading to *in-group* (positive) and *out-group* (negative) distinctions. Subsequently, when individuals perceive that they are part of an out-group, there is an effort to either become a member of the in-group or to make one's out-group experience more positive (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The dynamics of placing oneself in "a network of groupings" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 67) is "one of the most important and durable problems that is posed to an individual" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 67). The placement of value on the group (which is reinforced by group values, beliefs, and norms) and, therefore, social identities, creates a dynamic intergroup-social identity intersection (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Turner et al. (1994) elaborated and expanded on social identity theory through self-categorization theory, which contends that social identity theory is responsive to social contexts and individuals will define themselves "based on shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories" (p. 454). This responsiveness to the social context depersonalizes the individual and reinforces identity with the group and makes *salient* an individual's membership in the group (Turner et al., 1994). The self-categorization process is of particular interest, as the concept is central to the phenomenon student affairs professionals shifting out of one *group* (the student affairs unit) to another *group* (the academic unit).

Organizational identity theory is considered by many researchers to be a subset of social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hall, Schneider, &

Nygren, 1970; Korte, 2007; Mowday & Sutton, 1993; Patchen, 1970), as the organization (which is often the work place) is simply another group with which to affiliate and assign value. Social identity theory can exist based on individual perceptions of “oneness with or belongingness to a group, involving direct or vicarious experience of its success or failures....and can occur even in the absence of strong leadership or member inter-dependency, interaction, or cohesion” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 24). Conversely, organizational identity theory asserts that individual interaction and engagement in an organization reinforces behaviors that drive strong loyalty and satisfaction (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). As a thread of social identity theory, organizational identity theory can assist in a better understanding of individuals in work environments or formal professional groups. Ashforth and Mael, who provided an excellent overview of social identity theory and organizations, drew upon the work of Hall, Schneider, and Nygren (1970) and Patchen (1970), whose work demonstrated a level of integration and congruence between individual goals and organization goals. Korte (2007) reviewed the implications that social identity theory has on training and development in human resource development in organizations. He claimed the importance of social identity theory on training in organizations stems from insights on individual behavior in groups, but, ultimately, it is more important to address group-based behavior directly rather than aggregate individual behavior to improve organization performance. He also stated that an organization’s beliefs, values, and norms are generally unwritten and learned informally, and the existing group members must be aware of their prototypical group identity so that

newcomers to the group are not alienated (Korte, 2007). Sebrant (2008) took a social constructivist view of how social identity is produced among Swedish healthcare professionals by looking at how power relations, emotion, identity structure, and learning affected a health care workplace when significant changes in work roles occurred and broke up teams. Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling (2008), in their study on tensions in higher education leadership in the United Kingdom, recognized social identity theory as helpful in explaining how leaders networked within the university to develop relationships that were critical in creating a sense of belonging to the management team. Amey (2006) also observed that leaders in higher education made decisions based on who they are and the context of their experiences. Other notable researchers have used social identity theory to describe a variety of workplace and organizational phenomena, including employee attraction to dynamic and up and coming organizations (Highhouse, Thornbury, & Little, 2007), perceived organizational support and relational exchanges (Sluss, Klimchak, & Holmes, 2008), gender inequity in academia (Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, 2005), and the impact of workspace management on productivity and well-being (Knight & Haslam, 2010). The body of research utilized organizational identity theory, a branch of social identity theory, and demonstrated the usefulness of social identity theory in understanding workplace phenomenon. This collective literature provided valuable foundational knowledge for a study on the social identity of SATs.

Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Relationships

The relationship between academic affairs and student affairs has been a long-standing topic of inquiry. The recent scholarship on student affairs-academic affairs partnerships and collaborations (Bourassa & Krueger, 2001; Ellis, 2000; Frost, Strom, Downey, Schultz, & Holland, 2010; Martin & Samels, 2001; Nesheim et al., 2007) is highly relevant to this study. This collective body of research takes a view of student affairs and academic affairs working together across a gap from two sides of the institution, and the metaphor of a bridge is often used to describe the successes of the collaborations and partnerships. This study complements and augments Kezar's (2001) report on successful collaborations and partnerships between academic affairs and student affairs, as well as Hirt's (2007) essay on the different paradigms from which academic affairs and student affairs have operated for well over twenty years. The work of Love and Estanek (2004) provide a unique framework for new thinking in student affairs, which is based on four primary concepts—"valuing dualisms, paradigm transcendence, recognizing connectedness, and embracing paradox" (p. 1). In short, they asserted that student affairs and academic affairs professionals operate on dual tracks under different paradigms, but there is a connection between the two (i.e., bridge metaphor) that can be transcended by accepting the inherent paradox. To transcend and achieve a new way of thinking about one's practice "involves rising above, being greater than, and going beyond the limits of something and even incorporating it. When applied to paradigms, transcendence implies that there is the old way *and* new way" (Love & Estanek, 2004, p. 15).

The concept of paradigm transcendence was a very relevant concept in the researcher's study, as SATs were, physically and psychologically, submerged in two paradigms and were evolving towards a new emergent paradigm. These scholars provided an important foundation and background for this study, and shed light on phenomena that involved student affairs and academic affairs professionals, the work they performed from different *sides* of the university, and the different professional perspectives they brought to their work. What differentiates this study, however, is its exploration of the phenomenon of individuals who switch from one side of a university to the other but to perform the same or very similar work. In the case of SATs, they bridged a gap, but it was a personal and professional crossing. This shift had implications on the social identity of the individuals making the crossing and, subsequently, on the organization at the unit and institution levels. The shift also influenced how the professionals perceived themselves, their profession, and their affiliated networks and professional associations.

Professional Identity

Professional associations. Central to social identity theory are the norms, beliefs, and values that provide the foundation for the organization and bind its members to the group. Therefore, it was important for the researcher to have baseline knowledge of the entities that shape norms, beliefs, and values of the student affairs profession and SATs.

The student affairs profession has two primary and broad-based professional associations that serve as the professional development and

scholarship arms of the profession: the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). The two organizations have rich histories and have served student affairs professionals (under various names) for over a century. NASPA and ACPA reflect the changing nature of student affairs and the evolving roles of staff doing student affairs work. NASPA's beginning can be traced to 1918, which began as a group of Deans of Men and faculty who convened in 1919 under the name Conference of Deans and Advisers of Men (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2010). Key statements from NASPA, ACPA, and other professional organizations have, over the years, provided standards for student affairs practice and also served as benchmarks on the evolution of core values of the profession. The seminal work, *The Student Affairs Point of View*, published by the American Council on Education (1937, 1949), is perhaps the most important document in the student affairs profession, as it laid the foundation for the development of the whole student and the individual, as well as articulated the need for student personnel workers to attend to the out-of-class needs of students that was once the role of teaching faculty. The update in 1949 reflected current events (most notably the aftermath of World War II), and added these goals: education for democracy, international understanding and cooperation, and social problems and the administration of public affairs (American Council on Education, 1949). The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (1987) issued a statement on *The Student Personnel Point of View* on the fiftieth anniversary of its publication reaffirming the values

and goals of the seminal document, but placed the profession of student affairs in a modern context. *The Student Personnel Point of View* serves as a fundamental guiding document for NASPA and its eleven thousand members. ACPA, with over 8500 members, has similar guiding documents, most notably *The Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association, 1994), which was “a clarion call to re-examine the philosophical tenets that guide the professional practice of student affairs and to form partnerships with students, faculty, academic administrators, and others to help all students attain high levels of learning and personal development” (American College Personnel Association, 1994, para. 2). These respective statements reflect the evolution of the profession based on changing times.

Both professional associations—ACPA and NASPA—issued a joint document on shared views of good practice in student affairs titled *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* in 1997, which demonstrated the many similarities in the values and beliefs of the two associations. It is also particularly useful for the purposes of this study as it is the *most recent* document on values and beliefs of the student affairs profession. The seven principles of good practice in student affairs are outlined as follows:

1. Engages students in active learning;
2. Helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards;
3. Sets and communicates high expectations for student learning;
4. Uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance;
5. Uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals;

6. Forges educational partnerships that advance student learning; and
7. Builds supportive and inclusive communities. (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1997)

These shared principles constitute what the profession expects of student affairs professionals in the work environment and speak to the values espoused to group members. It also provides a key narrative of the profession and its relationship to academic affairs (Hirt, 2007), who contends that student affairs as a profession is “out of sync” (p. 1) with the market-driven enterprise culture that now pervades academic affairs and that the joint document illustrates the incongruence between student affairs’ and academic affairs’ respective (and quite different) narratives. She provided recommendations for changes to the document to bring it more in line with the predominant academic affairs approach, which includes focusing on knowledge regime, consumerism, higher education as manufacturer, and the public versus the private benefits of higher education (Hirt, 2007).

Hirt (2007) also succinctly summed up the history of the student affairs profession from a values and roles perspective, which she framed as three narratives: *in loco parentis*, student services, and student development. The narrative for the 225 years or so of American higher education was *in loco parentis* (Latin for *in place of the parent*). Colleges during this era had strict standards and morals for the conduct and transgressions of students, many of whom were as young as thirteen, so a parental approach was taken. In the 1950s and 1960s, the narrative was dramatically revised in response to radically

changing social norms, post-World War II veterans coming to college, and the expansion of programs and services (e.g., recreational, social, and athletics) on campuses. Hirt referred to this narrative as *student service*, as the relationship to students became more contractual in nature. Hirt's third narrative, which she claims exists to the present day, is *student development*. The emergence of student development theory in the 1960s, combined with steep enrollment growth during the same time period, prompted a shift in the narrative (Hirt, 2007). She claimed that this narrative placed student affairs professionals as facilitators for students who are active collaborators in their learning and development. Hirt also stated that this narrative gave rise to the emphasis on student learning, the importance of partnering with academic affairs to provide a seamless student experience, and the belief that the work of student affairs professionals is as valuable as the work of faculty and academic professionals. Hirt's analysis of these principles of good practice informed this study as it highlighted the juxtaposition of student affairs and academic affairs perspectives on their respective professional roles and the values, beliefs, and norms that provided the foundation for these roles.

Graduate programs. Graduate preparation programs, particularly master's level programs, provide a curricular knowledge base for new professionals seeking to enter the field of student affairs. In 1986, a set of standards was established by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education to create a minimum set of standards for master's programs in student affairs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education,

2003; McEwen & Talbot, 1998). Students in these programs are often interning with a student affairs unit through graduate assistantships, or they are gaining first-hand work experience through a practicum requirement in the curriculum. Graduate preparation programs and parallel internships serve as key socializing experiences for up-and-coming student affairs professionals (Cutler, 2001; Funk, 2000; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). These experiences often serve as the first normative exercise for new professionals, hence laying the foundation of beliefs and values that shape membership in and affiliation to the student affairs profession. It is important to address the significance of graduate preparation program research due to the impact the experience has on student affairs professionals in their early career years.

Research on graduate preparation programs and new professionals is broad and deep. Renn and Jessup-Anger's (2008) year-long study of 90 new student affairs professionals provided a foundation for understanding the key concerns surrounding a new professional's transition from graduate school to practice. Chief among the concerns of graduate preparation programs based on their findings were not enough practical experience; formal coursework's relative lack of impact (or low salience) on the lives of new professionals; intellectual preparation not being connected to work in the field; knowledge attainment over application; limited exposure to supervision, budgeting, counseling, and administrative skills; insufficient coverage on the importance of institutional politics and organizational dynamics; and, finally, the absence of self-authorship (Kegan, 1994), or the emphasis on individuals taking personal responsibility for

their own professional development (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). This study reinforced, built upon, and mirrored the work of other researchers in the areas of graduate preparation programs, new professionals, and preparation and socialization, including Amey and Reesor (2002), who looked at the importance of organizational dynamics/politics and challenges for new professionals transitioning from graduate school to work; Magolda and Carnaghi (2004), who investigated work-life balance and mentor relationships; Ketrovics (2002), Lovell and Kosten (2000), and Palmer (1995), who focused on curricula alignment with the actual work of entry level professionals; and Burns (1982), Lorden (1998), Richmond and Sherman (1991), and Tull (2006), who were interested in attrition and retention of new professionals. These studies looked closely at a critical phases in the early development of student affairs professionals—graduate study and the entry level positions. It is through the formal curricular experiences and first jobs that new professionals learn what is most important in the field and begin to make tangible connections between the theory and practice in student affairs. These studies did not, however, address directly the social identity of student affairs professional staff.

Student affairs professional identity. Recent work on professional identity and student affairs is closely connected to and born out of social identity theory and organizational identity theory. Crim's (2006) study revealed five factors that influenced the development of professional identity in student affairs administrators (graduate education, mentors, role models, working experiences, and professional associations) and also identified five *sub-identities* that

undergirded the profession (counseling, teaching, social change agents, administrators, and servants). Cutler (2001) looked at the professional identity and professional development implications of student affairs professionals who trained under a counselor education paradigm and found that the “influences of others, self-growth, linking theory to practice, and balancing professional and personal lives” (p. iv) were important to identity as a student affairs professional. Funk (2000) explored the role the administrative assistantship played in professional identity development of students in a master’s of higher education program and concluded that the assistantship is a “conduit of professional growth” (p. ii) and that critical factors influencing professional identity include “a sense of fit within the assistantship site, congruence between personal values and those of the profession, and their interactions with undergraduate students” (p. ii). Both Cutler’s (2001) and Funk’s (2000) studies drew upon the graduate preparation and new professional literature. Helm (2004) sought to understand how new student affairs professionals made sense of and resolved socialization tensions in professional environments and the extent to which these tensions were created by the emerging market effect in higher education. Each author provided background and history of student affairs as a profession, with Crim (2006) and Helm (2004) going into greater depth on the subject than Cutler (2001) and Funk (2000); addressed the fundamental issue of student affairs being a profession; acknowledged that entry into the student affairs profession was quite varied and not linear; and took a qualitative research approach that involved interviewing student affairs professionals. The research on professional identity and the impact

that peers, faculty, and practitioners have on young professionals and professional identity was also given proper attention in these four studies. These four professional identity studies shared the common finding that student affairs professionals have identities and sub-identities, and student affairs professionals place value on identity or identities-based norms, beliefs, and values learned through organizational experiences and reinforced through professional or curricular engagement.

The question “is student affairs a profession?” is persistent and compelling. It is also relevant to social identity and student affairs professionals, as this argument among some researchers influences how professionals view themselves and their work in that profession. Some researchers contend that student affairs is definitively *not* a profession, while others make the case that student affairs is an *emergent* profession (Helm, 2004). In the first group, the basic arguments are that the graduate preparation programs do not prepare students for the profession due to lack of consensus on what students should actually learn (Stamatakos, 1981; Wrenn & Darley, 1949), and the field is comprised of distinctly separate specialty areas that share a common philosophy that does not meet the definition of profession (Bloland, 1992; Penney, 1969; Rickard, 1988; Woodard, Love, & Komives, 2000). In the *emergent* camp (Carpenter, Miller, & Winston, 1980; Young, 1993), the argument is best summarized by Helm (2004): “[W]e are constantly evolving our leadership, guiding values and practice in order to better meet the needs of our constituents” (p. 74). Finally, Helm’s coverage of professionalization and socialization

addressed a dynamic that is important to this study, which is the evolution of roles and expectations of professionals. For example, he observed that nurses

have been delegating much of their former work to aides and technicians while continually taking on new roles given to them by physicians.

However, could it be that in adopting many of the tasks historically bestowed upon faculty (down-grading), that student affairs is really still in the category of non-professional? (Helm, 2004, p. 72)

This observation is of particular relevance for this study as it addressed issues of roles and the value of roles in an organization, as well as the issue of placement of value on one's work which, in turn, puts value on one's social identity in that group.

Student Affairs and Restructuring

Recent research on the restructuring of student affairs units has focused on organizational and administrative dynamics (Carlson, 2003; Fuller & Haugabrook, 2001) but not the interpersonal/individual level. Hence, there is more than adequate room for further inquiry into the interpersonal dynamics of student affairs staff shifting to the academic unit to perform similar work. A particularly valuable piece of research by Banning and Kuk (2009), a bounded qualitative meta-study of dissertations on student affairs and organizational issues, demonstrated a strong interest in restructuring in student affairs and provided a useful snapshot of the scholarly interests, as well as descriptive subcategories, on the topic. Their inductive analysis of thirty-two dissertations written between 2002 to 2007 revealed four basic themes: 1. A movement towards the academic

(e.g., restructuring, student affairs and academic affairs collaboration, and learning paradigms), 2. Student affairs management issues, 3. Student affairs organizations and cultural values (e.g. sub-cultures and role of student affairs in student advocacy), and 4. Student affairs organizations and special groups (e.g., alumni perceptions, distance students, and multicultural issues) (Banning & Kuk, 2009). More importantly, at least in relation to this study, were the following key findings of Banning and Kuk's work: Restructuring in student affairs will be influenced by the academic side of the university or college and there will be increased calls for collaboration between academic units and student affairs. Additionally, the study indicated that little attention has been given to the interpersonal dynamics and social identity of student affairs professionals, and there is no study on student affairs professionals moving to the academic unit to perform similar or the same work.

Carlson's (2003) research on the restructuring in student affairs was also valuable to this study. Through his survey of 607 institutional members of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) from across the United States, he found that 61% of student affairs departments were restructured from 1996-1999. His interest in restructuring in student affairs was prompted by calls from NASPA that sought a broader follow-up study to a previous NASPA-commissioned study conducted by Engelbride and Goodale (1997), a case-study of two public research universities that explored the process, goals, and results of restructuring in student affairs (Carlson, 2003). Chavez (1998), in her critical review of restructuring and fiscal constraints in student

affairs, provided an excellent study of the primary influences on student affairs restructuring efforts during the 1990s: 1. societal (general disgruntlement from tax payers and criticism from the popular press and professional groups regarding improvement in undergraduate education), 2. governmental (calls for outcomes assessment and productivity and efficiency and declining state appropriations), and 3. corporate (seeking entrepreneurial partnerships with universities for revenue production and serving as role models for managerial behavior). These influences, which are closely aligned with neoliberal ideology (to be discussed later), remain prevalent today. Carlson's (2003) study also found that the hallmarks in departments where change was difficult were "fear of change, lack of staff support, morale problems, and poor communication" (p. v). These findings within the context of restructuring pertain to the individual and the interpersonal relationships and dynamics in a group. This researcher looked more closely at individuals negotiating the residual influences of restructuring in a university organization (student affairs staff shifting to academic affairs to perform similar work) in order to better understand those individuals and, as a consequence, the organization. Insight into the organization was gained through a better understanding of professionals who deliver the mission of the institution on a daily basis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Question

The central research question of the study was how does working in an academic unit influence the social identity of student affairs staff professionals who previously performed similar, if not the same, work in a student affairs unit? The purpose of this study was to explore the social identity of student affairs professionals who conducted their work within an academic unit after having worked in a student affairs unit. The researcher was interested in this question because of the potential benefit to those who are leader-practitioners in the higher education setting. The findings from the study provide a better understanding of student affairs transplants (SATs), which will aid their supervisors, faculty who develop and direct higher education graduate preparation programs, and leaders of universities and colleges involved with restructuring and reorganizations in the face of severe budget constraints. The study's findings provide valuable insight for academic leaders of ASU who are currently making operational and staffing decisions in a rapidly changing organizational environment. Ultimately, leaders of colleges and universities are

key to how organizations function, and there is little doubt that the leaders who are needed to guide postsecondary institutions in tomorrow's complex environments have to think about their work differently than did their predecessors....Today's postsecondary leaders need to guide their institutions into the future while providing the authentic insights that come

from critical reflection about and deep understanding of organizational culture and values. (Amey, 2006, p. 58)

One way to gain insight into an organization is to understand the staff members who deliver the mission on a daily basis. This study will benefit higher education organizations, as well as higher education professional associations that provide professional development opportunities for their members, as it provides an important snapshot into the social identity of staff whose work environment and roles have shifted within the context of significant organizational change.

Research Approach

The specific type of research employed in this study is most commonly known as “action research,” a term often used interchangeably with “practitioner research” (Anderson & Herr, 1999, p. 20). Throughout this text, the term action research is referred to as AR. AR was aptly described by Anderson and Herr (1999) as “a broad-based movement among school professionals to legitimate knowledge produced out of their lived realities as professionals” (p. 20). Hirsh (2000) stated that AR, as it relates to the student affairs field, “involves those in the ‘real world’ in determining questions, collecting data, and analyzing the results in order to solve problems and bring about change” (p. 102). Perhaps the most widely accepted definition of AR comes from Herr and Anderson (2005):

[A]ction research is inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them. It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is

deliberately and systematically undertaken and generally requires that some form of evidence be presented to support assertions. (p. 3)

Based on the nature of the phenomenon under study, AR is an apt description of this exploration because the researcher is an insider to the organization that houses the participants, familiar with the phenomenon on an intuitive level through his practitioner status, and believes change is more likely if the research is “done in collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem under investigation” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 3). From the outset of the study, the researcher recognized that he was a stakeholder given his insider status, but he engaged in self-reflective activities, including journaling, coding and memoing, and sharing of data with critical friends (Herr & Anderson, 2005) to control for his bias. Ultimately, the goal of the research was to prompt positive change and improve the community of practice. As an insider, the researcher had a level of credibility with members of his community of practice that an outsider would not, which positioned him to present findings in a more influential and action-oriented fashion.

There is a dilemma of AR, however, which resides in the “rigor” versus “relevant” debate (Schon, 1992, p. 120). This dilemma, “stemming from nineteenth century positivism, according to which instrumental, practical knowledge becomes professional when it is based on the results of scientific research” (Schon, 1992, p. 119), has, over the decades, created a gap “between thought and action, theory and practice, and the academy and the everyday world” (p. 119). This gap breeds practitioner mistrust of the academic researcher to

provide useful knowledge that solves real world problems, increases concerns that academic research may actually make problems worse, and stirs up a sense of alienation and incompetence among practitioners who feel their research has been appropriated and lost to disconnected academicians (Schon, 1992). The discourse regarding the gap of theory and practice is quite similar to the one that exists between academic affairs and student affairs professionals. Therefore, the AR perspective allowed this researcher to explore what Dewey (1938) called an “indeterminate situation” (p. 105), or a situation that is confusing, obscure, or conflicting (Schon, 1992) and, through the act of inquiry, attempted to make the situation determinate by being in it and transacting with it (Schon, 1992). This course of action allowed the researcher to face the dilemma and inherent dualism (rigor versus relevance; theory versus practice) by being situated inside and up close to the problem. Dick (2002) contended that AR is “particularly useful not just for postgraduates or scholars in academic research but also for others who need responsiveness to complex situations—people such as managers or professionals—to address issues in the workplace or other difficult situations” (p. 162). Dick also stated that AR “profits from the use of a cyclical or spiral process in which the researcher alternates action with critical reflection” (p. 159). Based on the nature of this study, including the researcher’s proximity to the phenomenon, reflection was valuable to the process and enhanced the researcher’s skills in studying his own organization and practice.

Research Disposition

The researcher determined that a qualitative approach was best suited to answer the research question and explore the phenomenon of study. Creswell and Miller (1997) explained that a qualitative (or interpretive) approach is appropriate when “the knowledge resides ‘inside’ the individuals as opposed to ‘out there’ beyond the individual” (p. 5). The qualitative approach is particularly useful when seeking to describe the lived experience (Creswell, 1998), explore hard to identify variables that require a deep (as opposed to broad) investigation (Morrow, 2007) or complex factors surrounding a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009), and generate (rather than test) a hypothesis based on a researcher concerns (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). A qualitative approach is also appropriate when attempting to answer *How?* or *What?* questions rather than *Why?* questions (Creswell, 1998). The researcher entered into the study seeking not to explain *why*; for example, why Student Affairs Transplants (SATs) shifted or changed, or why they may or may not be satisfied in their current respective roles and/or work environment. The researcher was, however, interested in exploring *how* SATs adjusted to the transition and *what* they experienced in their respective new roles. Conversely, quantitative hypotheses “are predictions the researcher makes about the expected relationship among variables” (Creswell, 2009, p. 132). This study sought to explore how the transplants were doing on new soil. While the researcher did not make predictions based on relationships between variables, he anticipated that participants would experience a hybrid identity, with one foot in student affairs and one in academic affairs, lean towards the academic unit as their

in group, and associate with professional organizations or networks that are aligned with the academic unit. This did not prove to be the case, which the researcher will discuss further in the next chapter.

The researcher launched this qualitative approach from a paradigmatic base that was interpretivist-constructivist, as he accepted from the outset that there were multiple realities surrounding the phenomenon dependent on participant and researcher subjectivity and worldview, as well as on his openness to varying interpretations (Morrow, 2007). Furthermore, he understood that the meanings that emerged from the study were inherently co-constructed based on the interaction and relationship between participants and the researcher (Haverkamp & Young, 2007), and that each situation was unique and each phenomenon had its own structure and logic (Kvale, 1996). At the basic level, the study was a phenomenological one, as phenomenology “is the study of the lifeworld” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 8) and is a “systematic attempt to uncover and describe structures, the internal meanings of structures, of lived experience” (p. 10). The researcher took a *heuristic* phenomenological approach that allowed him to maintain a close relationship to the phenomenon and interpret the meanings of the lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). The researcher did *not* take a *transcendent* phenomenological approach, which requires the researcher to distance him/herself from the phenomenon so “it is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” and to consider it for “its singularity, in and for itself” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). In summary, the qualitative approach worked well for the study, as the researcher did not have a hypothesis and did not make a prediction. The researcher was on

an exploration where the elements of the phenomenon were revealed throughout the course of the study and, through analysis, meaning was derived.

Research Setting

The setting of the study took place at ASU, a research university with four campus locations across metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona. It was selected because Student Affairs Transplants (SATs) exist at ASU, and the researcher has insider knowledge of the institution, its organizational dynamics and challenges, and the SATs. SATs work in a setting that is undergoing rapid restructuring within the context of the emergence of a new organizational model known as a school-centric or college-centric model. This model has an evolving design that “transcends the campus-based model” (Arizona State University, n.d.c, para. 9) and places recruitment, retention, and student success responsibilities squarely on ASU’s respective colleges and schools. During the course of this study, the researcher made in-person visits to academic units housed in the colleges/schools to gain access to participants working in those settings. The colleges/schools that housed the participants in this study all deliver professional programs, which was purely coincidental.

Action

The researcher conducted the study in two phases. The purpose of Phase One, or the pilot study, was to explore the dynamics of student affairs professionals shifting to the academic unit work environment, assist the researcher in testing appropriateness and relevance of interview questions, improve the researcher’s interviewing skills, and learn more about the

phenomenon in order to improve on the design and protocol for Phase Two of the study.

The researcher sent a brief questionnaire generated in Google Docs (see Appendix B) via email to sixteen potential participants (based on the researcher's institutional knowledge) to generate an interview pool for both phases of the study. The researcher developed the questionnaire in collaboration with his dissertation chair; then, work colleagues at ASU tested it to ensure proper technical functioning and provided feedback on usability. The researcher engaged in a hybrid of convenience sampling and snowball sampling (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), which involved identifying purposeful participants who were accessible (convenient), and then asked those purposeful participants, as well as colleagues, to identify others who met the criteria (snowball). Of the sixteen potential participants, eleven participants completed the questionnaire, and six of those eleven met the established criteria based on the phenomenon under study. From that pool the researcher identified two purposeful pilot study participants who were subsequently sent an Information Letter (see Appendix C) about the study. These pilot study participants were selected in order to achieve a broad range of participants across academic units in the final study.

Before interviewing, the researcher obtained consent from the Phase One participants over the phone, and later in person on audio tape at the outset of the interview. Phase One of the study involved one interview with each participant, with each interview lasting approximately one hour. Interviews conducted in March 2011 took place in each participant's respective offices. Upon the

completion of the interviews, the researcher had the audio recordings transcribed by a professional transcription service with secure and password protected drop box capability. The texts were then uploaded to a data analysis software package called NVivo 9. This proprietary software package, which was purchased by the researcher and stored on his personal computer, was used to sort and organize codes in the form of nodes (more on this process later in this chapter), which allowed the researcher to more easily identify themes and patterns. Based on the experience with the software in the pilot study, it was determined by the researcher that it was a relevant and utilitarian data analysis tool for Phase Two of the study.

The researcher selected the four remaining participants for Phase Two of the study in May and June 2011. The participants came from the same pool of six people who met the established criteria, were purposeful participants, and worked in different academic units to allow for a broad range of academic units in the study. (The researcher provides a further discussion of purposeful participants later in this section.) The researcher spoke to each participant on the phone to discuss the study, confirm criteria, and review the Information Letter sent to them previously. Again, each person consented to participation over the phone and by audio tape at the outset of the first interview. Phase Two first round interviews began in late July 2011 and ran through September 2011. The interviews ranged from approximately one hour to 90 minutes. Follow up interviews took place in December 2011. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour. The

researcher conducted ten total interviews in two phases resulting in nearly 10 hours of audio recording.

Data Collection and Management

The researcher selected interviews as the method of data collection. This form of investigation provided data that described the phenomenon through the first-person accounts of the experiences of the participants (Polkinghorne, 2005). According to Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, and Mattis (2007), the research interview is “one of the most important qualitative data-collection strategies and is a key source of data for biographies, phenomenological studies, grounded-theory studies, ethnographic studies, and case studies” (p. 308). The raw data in this study lived inside the participants and the interviewer/researcher solicited the data by asking questions. The researcher preferred this mode over others primarily for its directness—“[i]f you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?” (Kvale, 2009, p. xvii). Also, there is a “vertical depth” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138) to the human experience, and quantitative methods of gathering data only scratch the surface and are “inadequate to capture the richness and fullness of an experience.... Thus, the data gathered for study of experience need to consist of first-person or self-reports of participants’ own experiences” (p. 138). The researcher recognized the limitations of the interview approach, including the bias that the researcher’s presence had on participant responses, the inherent differences in how participants articulated themselves, the filtered nature of the information through both interviewer and interviewee, and the artificial setting of the sit-down interview

(Creswell, 2009). Despite these limitations, the interview approach in this study facilitated an interaction that resulted in rich data that was highly relevant to understanding the phenomenon.

Participants in the study came from across Arizona State University (ASU), three of the four participants from different colleges/schools, and two from the same college but different divisions. The interviews took place at locations selected by the participant: five of the eight interviews in the respective offices of the participants, one in a conference room in the participant's work area, one in an off-campus coffee shop, and one in an off-campus bookstore. All locations were conducive to audio taping. The researcher adopted a standard practice for the research interviews by conducting interviews in the respective participant's academic unit, or place of work, in order to be "present in the participants' natural worlds and everyday lives and close enough, spatially and psychologically, that participants will reveal the meaning they make of their experiences" (Morrow & Smith, 2000, p. 201).

The intent of the study was to understand a specific type of professional with a set of pre-defined work experiences, so it was important to identify "fertile exemplars of the experience for study" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). This type of selection is known as purposeful selection (Polkinghorne, 2005; Suzuki et al., 2007). For this study, the participant selection criteria were two years of experience in the student affairs field, a master's degree in higher education or college student personnel, one year of full-time experience in student affairs *post-master's* degree, and six months employment in a the same college or school in a

student affairs capacity. The rationale behind interviewing this population was to learn how the new environment influenced the social identity of staff members who previously worked in a student affairs unit. The researcher chose participants employed in academic colleges and schools at ASU because it is his own community of practice and it employs a critical mass of potential participants who are depositories of the data to describe the phenomenon under study. The researcher developed these criteria based on the three classes of variables influencing intergroup differentiation outlined by Tajfel and Turner (1979):

First, individuals must have internalized their group membership as an aspect of their self-concept: they must be subjectively identified with the relevant in-group. Second, the social situations must be such as to allow for inter-group comparisons that enable the selection and evaluation of the relevant relational attributes....Third, in-groups do not compare themselves with every cognitively available out-group: the out-group must be perceived as a relevant comparison group. (p. 41)

The criteria selected interfaced with the three variables in the following ways: the work experience, for internalized group membership and inter-group comparison; the master's degree in higher education for reinforced and internalized group members; and all of the criteria relate to the out-group (student affairs) perceived as a relevant comparison group. This purposeful selection of participants allowed for comparison of participant experiences and resulted in rich data suitable for analysis.

In general, the number of participants in an interview study varies based on the research question, purpose statement, and the nature of the phenomenon. It is common for a qualitative research interviewer to conduct separate two-hour interviews with three to 10 participants until data saturation has been met (Suzuki et al., 2007). In this case, the researcher conducted two interviews with four participants, with the first interview lasting one hour to 90 minutes and the follow up interview lasting 30 minutes to 60 minutes. The number of participants was appropriate for this study, as the “unit of analysis in qualitative research is experience, not individuals or groups” (Polkinghorne, 2005). Four purposeful participants allowed for variety of experience around the phenomenon and gave the researcher room to delve deeper into the experiences. Each interview was audio taped with a digital audio recorder at locations chosen by the participants. The locations were suitable (low or no background noise) for audio recording. The researcher conducted the first round of interviews July through September 2011; follow up interviews took place in December 2011.

The researcher used an interview protocol and semi-structured questions (see Appendix D and Appendix E) to provide the necessary framework (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2009). The researcher utilized an interview format conducive to generating data for grounded theory analysis. The format was divided into three parts: initial open-ended questions, intermediate questions, and ending questions (Charmaz, 2006). Although new to the qualitative research interview, the researcher’s twenty years of practical experience in higher education administration proved useful with regard to probing follow up questions,

interpreting responses, and asking new questions based on previous responses that approached the topic from another vantage point (Suzuki et al., 2007). Plus, he maintained a journal throughout the process (Creswell, 2009). This reflective and iterative activity allowed the researcher to control for bias and consider new avenues of inquiry that led to new insights and discoveries. This journal was more than a reflection chronicling the researcher's thoughts and emotions; it was like a ship's log (Richards, 2005) that provided a detailed account of the journey, including why new directions were taken and why new questions were asked.

Each interview was transcribed to text through a professional transcription service for analysis purposes. The web-based electronic transfer of audio files between the researcher and the transcription service involved password-protected software and an encrypted drop box. The researcher used pseudonyms for each participant in reporting findings and did not identify the academic unit in which the participant works. The researcher kept hard copies of data as well as USB drives in secure locations in his office and home, and an ASU-issued computer that is password protected with university-purchased security mechanisms and software held the data files. The digital files stored on the actual audio recording device were maintained throughout study to allow for researcher review for the purposes of clarity and correctness. Upon completion of the study, the files on the device were deleted, though they remain on the researcher's personal computer. The researcher retrieved data from printed and electronic transcription text, as well as the digital audio files on his computer. When listening to the digital recordings, the researcher used ear buds so others did not overhear the voices of

participants. Data was organized utilizing NVivo 9. Since this study had one researcher and two Phase One interviewees and four Phase Two interviewees, data security, storage, organization, and retrieval were easily managed.

Long-standing concerns from positivist researchers surrounding validity, reliability, and generalizability with qualitative research in general (Guba & Lincoln, 1986) informed the researcher's approach to proper interview protocol, participant selection, and data production and analysis (Polkinghorne, 2005). The researcher addressed reliability, validity, and generalizability through interview "craftsmanship" (Kvale, 2009), and reconceptualized the definitions of these concepts based on relevance to the research interview and everyday situational meanings (Kvale, 2009). With regard to reliability, which "pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings" (Kvale, 2009, p. 245), as well as "whether a finding is reproducible at other times by other researchers" (p. 245), purposeful participants responded to questions specifically designed to solicit data relating to the phenomenon.

In addition, interview protocol and semi-structured questions provided the necessary framework (Creswell, 2009), and the researcher utilized a format conducive to grounded theory analysis divided into three parts: initial open-ended questions, intermediate questions, and ending questions (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher's use of Charmaz's three-part framework allowed him to understand an organizational process, address collective practices of the organization, and then narrow to the individual's role in and views of the collective organization. The researcher's questions reflected "a symbolic interactionist emphasis on learning

about participants' views, experienced events, and actions" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). The questions resonated with participants as well as the researcher, for all had an understanding of common terminology. The researcher posed questions that prompted participants to consider the organization and work, as well as their place in the organization and how they viewed themselves and their behavior in the organization.

The researcher listened to the audio tapes of interviews while also reading the transcripts to check for mistakes, double-checked codes against the data to ensure that the meanings of the codes did not drift, and utilized a software program (NVivo 9) to organize the data and maintain consistency of coding. Validity, according to Creswell (2009), is "based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account" (p. 191), which the researcher achieved by adhering to Creswell's validity strategies. Creswell recommends adopting multiple strategies from eight primary strategies designed to add validity to the study. The researcher implemented the following four strategies based on the breadth, depth, and length of this study:

1. Provide *thick description* of findings in order to give the reader a better sense of the setting and the multiple perspectives on themes;
2. Clarify researcher *bias* through self-reflection and be transparent by sharing how findings are shaped by researcher's background;
3. Present *negative* or *discrepant information* that runs contrary to evidence indicating a dominant theme and subsequent finding; and

4. Spend *prolonged time* with participants in their setting in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. (Creswell, 2009)

Green and Caracelli (1997) describe generalization as a paradox as it relates to qualitative research, since *particularity* rather than *generalizability* is the emphasis with a qualitative approach. This study did not take a methodological positivist approach to the phenomenon in order to “produce laws of human behavior that could be generalized universally” (Kvale, 2009, p. 261). Rather, it relied on a “contrasting humanistic view” (Kvale, 2009, p. 261) that accepted each phenomenon for its unique nature. Therefore, the findings can, theoretically, be generalized through the “study of additional cases and generalizing findings to the new cases. It is the same as *replication logic* used in experimental research” (Creswell, 2009, p. 193). This study did not achieve a scientific level of generalization through an experimental approach. Instead, the researcher took a post-modern view of his approach in which the “quest for universal knowledge, as well as the cult of the individually unique, was replaced by an emphasis on the heterogeneity and contextuality of knowledge, with a shift from generalization to contextualization” (Kvale, 2009, p. 261). The researcher, through sound qualitative procedural steps and strategies, addressed reliability and validity issues, and, as a result, produced a study that adds value to the professional knowledge on the phenomenon.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized grounded theory (GT) as the approach to data analysis. GT originated in 1965 with Glaser and Strauss’s publication, *Awareness*

of Dying, and was reinforced in 1967 by the same authors with the boldly titled text, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Glaser and Strauss (1965) observed medical staff and dying patients in hospitals and “gave their data explicit analytic treatment and produced theoretical analyses of the social organization and the temporal order of dying” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). They then looked more closely at their ideas, constructed their analyses of dying, and “developed systematic methodological strategies that social scientists could adopt for studying many other topics” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). Previous to Glaser and Strauss’s (1965) work, “[a]uthors told their readers little about how to tackle analyzing the piles of collected data. Glaser and Strauss’s written guidelines for conducting qualitative research changed the oral tradition and made analytic guidelines accessible” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 6). GT calls for ongoing coding, categorizing, comparing, and theorizing while collecting and analyzing data (Charmaz, 2006). These approaches allow for flexibility to explore the phenomenon more deeply and “move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the conceptual understandings of the studied phenomenon” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 6). GT was attractive to this researcher because it allowed for the illumination of the raw data, as data collection and analysis were integrated functions and not discrete silos.

The key components to GT are coding and memo-writing. Coding is the “pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Memo-writing

serves as a crucial step because it “prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process...and keeps you involved in the analysis and helps you to increase the level of abstraction of your ideas” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72).

Coding, in brief, means categorizing and sorting data by giving passages short names. This process also begins the sorting and summarizing process of the data, which is necessary before beginning analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz divides coding into two phases, which this researcher applied in this study. The first phase—initial coding—involved naming each word, line or segment of data, followed by focused coding, which required the researcher to look for the most frequent and/or significant initial codes in order to “sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). In the initial phase, the researcher was open to all theories and potentialities; in this focused phase the researcher was looking for “salient categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). In the second phase, theory generation and integration began and continued throughout the study (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher conducted word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-by-incident coding in the initial phase in order to achieve “fit and relevance” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54) of the study. This process also kept the researcher from “imputing [his] own motives, fears, or unresolved personal issues to [his] respondents and to [his] collected data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). Charmaz’s “code for coding” (p. 49) reminded the researcher to remain open, stay close to the data, keep codes simple and precise, preserve actions, compare data with data, and move quickly through the data. By taking this approach, he created codes that fit the data and did not force the data to fit the codes (Charmaz, 2006).

This thorough coding approach guarded against researcher bias and forced him to rely on an analytical eye and not on personal experiences (Charmaz, 2006). The coding process allowed the researcher to understand the phenomenon from multiple perspectives. He was inside the phenomenon based on proximity and past experience, but was forced to view the phenomenon from another or outside perspective through coding and analysis. The data was like an echo; the researcher heard the data first-hand from the participant, but it came back to him from another person/place in another form. Coding allowed the researcher to listen to and analyze the echo more carefully in order to learn more about the overall phenomenon and decipher what it actually meant.

Memo-writing is best described as “conversing with yourself” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). It is a process in which the researcher creates “analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72) and provides a forum for the researcher to flush out meanings through comparisons, discover patterns, and develop and hone theories from the ground up. While no “single mechanical procedure defines a useful memo” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 82), Charmaz gives some helpful procedural parameters for memo-writing, much like her “code for coding” mentioned earlier. She advises the researcher to do any of the following, based on the data:

- Define each code or category by its analytic properties;
- Spell out and detail processes subsumed by the codes or categories;
- Make comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes and codes, codes and categories, categories and categories;

- Bring raw data into the memo;
- Provide sufficient empirical evidence to support your definitions of the category and analytic claims about it;
- Offer conjectures to check in the field settings(s);
- Identify gaps in the analysis; or
- Interrogate a code or category by asking questions of it. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 82)

Based on examples of memos provided by Charmaz (2006), the researcher approached memo-writing as a hybrid of journaling and data analysis. Through memo-writing, he simultaneously wrote insights on paper, foraged for “conceptual connections,” and provided a record of his research and analytic process (Charmaz, 2006, p.76). The researcher maintained a journal that documented his thoughts and emotions throughout the process (Creswell, 2009). This reflective and iterative activity allowed the researcher to control for bias and consider new avenues of inquiry that led to new insights and discoveries. This chronicle, combined with the tools of the software, provided a necessary audit trail that addressed researcher bias, and assisted in the valuable reflective and iterative process. The researcher’s hard copy journal throughout the entire study served as a reflective tool and contained personal and professional insights and questions related to the study. The memos were typed into NVivo (a software package to be discussed later), and which took the form of participant synopses, biographical sketches, and thoughts on connections and disparate findings as the researcher engaged in analysis. Also, the researcher spent time speaking with

colleagues at his own institution and within his immediate division to share preliminary findings and gain valuable perspectives of professionals/stakeholders in the organization.

Due to the volume of data, a respected proprietary software package, NVivo 9, was used to organize and analyze the data. There are some researchers who express concerns about using software for qualitative analysis, such as computers distance researchers from their data, code and retrieval methods dominate and preclude other analytic options, computers make qualitative analysis more quantitative, and computers only support GT approaches or create their own approach to analysis (Bazeley, 2007). However, most researchers now accept software packages as a useful tool that allows the researcher to achieve both closeness and distance in relation to the data (Bazeley, 2007). For this study, software allowed the researcher “closeness for familiarity and appreciation of subtle differences, but distance for abstraction and synthesis—and the ability to switch between the two” (Bazeley, 2007, p. 8). Like any other tool, software was used to make work easier and to produce better results. In this study, the software did not replace the need for researcher engagement with and analysis of the data, but provided new ways to look at what was already there. NVivo 9 held the data in files and the researcher retrieved, edited, and manipulated them based on his original insights. With this software package:

[s]ources [were] neatly filed; cases are identified with demographic and other details; ideas [were] recorded and appropriately linked to their sources; descriptive material and evidence for emerging understanding and

ideas [were] captured in nodes; nodes [were] organized to facilitate querying the data so that research questions might be clarified, developed and answered; and...hunches, case analyses and emerging insights [were] explored in models. (Bazeley, 2007, p. 14)

NVivo 9 is commonly used by academic researchers who take a qualitative approach, especially those who conduct interviews to gather data. It is also very useful for researchers employing a GT approach to data analysis, as the tools of NVivo 9 “support the analyst in making use of multiple strategies concurrently—reading, reflecting, coding, annotating, memoing, discussing, linking, visualizing—with the results of those activities recorded in nodes, memos, journals and models” (Bazeley, 2007, p. 59). This software package was the platform for the researcher’s coding and memoing, as well as a tool for analysis and prompt reflection. It allowed the researcher to make a variety of cross-sectional swaths through the data that helped him develop predominant themes.

Participants

In the interest of maintaining the anonymity of the participants, the researcher chooses to not give a great deal of identifying biographical information on the participants. Here is some basic information on each participant, beyond the established criteria, to provide some helpful context. *Robert* is male and had nearly twenty years of full-time work experience in student affairs at the time of the study. He worked in student housing, student activities, and student union before he moved to an academic unit. *Nicole* is female and had over ten years of full-time work experience in student affairs at the time of the study. She worked

in orientation and admissions before moving to the academic unit. *Laura* is female and had approximately three years of full-time work experience in student affairs at the time of the study. Her experience was in student union, student activities, and orientation prior to her move to an academic unit. *Ian* is male and had nearly seven years of full-time experience in student affairs at the time of the study. Before he moved to the academic unit he worked in student housing.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the social identity of student affairs professionals who have shifted to an academic unit to conduct the same or very similar work. Prior to the collection of data, the researcher, based on a review of the literature and his practitioner knowledge, anticipated that participants would report having a hybrid professional identity, with one foot in student affairs and the other in academic affairs; placing higher value on the academic unit and, subsequently, leaning towards the academic unit as their *in group*; and associating with professional organizations or networks aligned with the academic unit. Two predominant themes emerged from the data that are relevant to understanding the social identity of Student Affairs Transplants (SATs): relationships with students and professional development.

The researcher arrived at the findings with key social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), social categorization theory (Turner et al., 1994), and organizational identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Korte, 2007) concepts in mind. Love and Estanek's (2004) work regarding a new emergent paradigm for student affairs practice resonated with participant statements throughout the study and proved useful in framing and understanding the findings. Participant responses that referenced membership in a group based on beliefs, values, and norms, or affiliation to a group or organization through direct comparisons to other groups or organizations proved useful. Also, participant responses that described preconceptions of the academic unit and whether those preconceptions

were reinforced or contradicted based on actual experiences provided insight into the changing social identity of participants. The overarching organizational context of the institution, including rapid reorganization to achieve efficiency and the college-centric approach, was a factor in how participants responded. In this chapter, findings within the thematic areas of relationships with students and professional development will be identified and discussed singularly and as interrelated and reinforcing groups.

Relationship With Students

The participants' respective relationships with students were connected to academic projects and functions (advising, recruitment, retention, college-centric student activities, programs, and events), and they clearly had the *academic piece* in mind when working with students. The participants reported that their relationships with students are satisfying and rich and, in some ways, stronger and richer than those they had in their previous student affairs roles. Their narratives indicated the relationships took on greater depth because the participants delivered their professional services and expertise within the context of a student's academic affiliation and the core mission of the university. It was clear from the data that participants drew upon past student affairs roles and values to describe their relationships with students, as well as preconceptions of the nature of the relationships that students have with professionals in the academic unit. Participants also reported the reward of seeing students progress academically from first year to graduation, interacting with faculty on academic projects, and working with fewer students and more high achieving students. These reports

contrasted with how they described their relationships with students in student affairs units, which were overall positive but not as glowing or definitively positive as those in the academic unit.

The researcher framed the findings in this thematic area based on the expressed participant values that emerged from the data. The stated values of participants related to relationships with students were getting to know students as individuals, developing the whole student, and supporting student success through out of class involvement. These expressed values align with the statements issued by National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and American College Personnel Association, the standard bearers of the student affairs profession. Similarly, the participants also drew upon their preconceptions of the relationships that staff and faculty in an academic unit had with students. These preconceptions were not having enough personal contact with students and, therefore, not getting to know them as individuals; and not being viewed by students as someone s/he could go to for advocacy and support. These preconceptions, shaped in part by their existing student affairs values, were not reinforced or realized based on the participants' experiences in their respective academic units. What participants found to be true was much different than what they anticipated going into the academic unit. These emergent nuances related to the theme of student relationships were important, as they provided insight into the social identity of SATs. Their preconceptions were challenged and, for the most part, dismissed, resulting in participants looking at their values, practice, and organization in new ways. In order to better understand the relationships SATs

have with students and the influences these relationships have on their social identity, the researcher explored the *quality* and *duration* of student relationships, as well as the *high academic ability* of students with whom participants interacted.

Quality. The participants' interactions with students within the context of their academic unit influenced the participants in a positive way. Before moving to the academic unit, there was a sentiment among participants that working in an academic unit would result in less one-on-one interaction with students and the relationship would be more transactional and service-oriented. This was not the case. What they discovered, as a result of these interactions, is that the academic environment provides rich opportunities to support and develop students in ways they had not fully anticipated.

Robert. In his current position, Robert reported rich relationships with students because of the “value added” piece of the academic environment. He described his work as “interwoven” into the academic mission, and stated that students came to him for critical information key to their academic and career success, and his support helped students based on “the reasons why they are coming [to the university]—for their degree.” Conversely, Robert described his relationships with students prior to transitioning from student affairs to academic affairs as having no real connection to their coursework or their career aspirations. This distinction could have been made as a matter of fact, but he made the statement to show how his current interactions were of more value due to the academic component.

Robert expressed genuine surprise at how often students stopped by his office to take care of academic business, but then stayed longer to talk about personal issues, career plans, and involvement in the college and on campus. He did not expect this kind of interaction going into the position. He stated that he did not get this type of interaction in his previous student affairs roles, as his position was not directly connected to academic success or an academic function. He described his contact with students in his student affairs roles as “being in between classes” with few opportunities to discuss their academics or long-term goals. This was interesting, because his interactions with students in the academic unit were, technically, in between classes, but he seemed to have a new view of them—he saw these interactions as an *extension* of classes. He also described his involvement with connecting students to faculty to work on experiential projects and research, which he especially valued and would miss a great deal if he were to ever leave the academic unit. Finally, Robert stated that he was uniquely positioned to help students at risk of leaving the university, and he intervened many times to advocate for students.

It appeared that Robert developed new concepts related to quality student interaction based on his experiences in the academic unit. He made connections between students and faculty, and his work was integral to the academic success of students. His narrative suggested that he placed a somewhat higher value on his current relationships with students than his previous ones in student affairs units.

Nicole. Nicole got much more one-on-one interaction with students in her academic unit than in her previous student affairs role, which involved speaking to large groups of students at university orientation events. She formed closer relationships and “learn[ed] more about them,” which she found very rewarding professionally. She expressed the reward of helping students improve a cover letter or resume for a job, as well as helping them with academic and career decisions beyond the bachelor’s degree. She spoke often of the importance of supporting, caring for, and developing students within the context of her role in the academic unit. The relationships students forged with faculty also gave her “another perspective to see how students interact[ed] with faculty members and the challenges they face[d] on the academic side.” She saw the value of faculty-student interaction, an indication that she developed a new way of viewing student development and affirmed the importance of it.

Nicole gained new insights on how students related with staff and faculty in her academic unit utilizing familiar student affairs language (caring, supporting, developing) to describe her experiences. Her use of these words indicates that she held on to her student affairs values and utilized them in her support role in the academic unit.

Laura. The well-developed college-centric model in Laura’s division of her college played a significant role in the nature of her relationships with students. She expressed the importance of always having the students’ academics in mind with programming, and clearly articulated her role in creating a student experience that *integrated* the academic curriculum and faculty involvement with

events and activities and vice-versa. Like Robert and Nicole, she had more one-on-one contact with fewer students, both of which she did not expect to have going into the role. She also taught the college's first-year seminar and worked closely with faculty in the delivery of a student leadership program, both of which were platforms for individual interaction with students. Laura explained that she got to know students better and "in a different way" because she talked with them about school and their experiences related to school, such as internships, jobs, studying abroad, and college clubs and activities. She described her office as a "hangout" space for students to study and get advice from her.

Laura clearly connected in a positive way to students and the faculty, and the academic unit was the reinforcing entity for this connection. She described her previous roles as nearly identical to her current one, and that her past experiences in student affairs prepared her for this job. The quality of student relationships appeared to be stronger than those she had in student affairs because of her position in the academic unit and the overlapping and integrated nature of the out-of-class and the college curriculum.

Ian. Ian described the quality of his interactions with students in relation to his past roles that involved student conduct, and that he enjoyed being able to work with students in a way that did not involve discipline. He described the value of faculty interacting with students, and the high quality of student engagement in labs and on high profile research and applied projects. For example, he referenced a university-wide entrepreneurship competition and described how much he enjoyed watching students "way smarter" than him

develop their plan for the competition. He described how he had been at the university for six years but “didn’t really see stuff the students were doing” until he worked in an academic unit. He described this lack of awareness in negative terms, as he knew nothing about the many exciting student projects connected to courses and creative research activities. He was excited to have a role at the university that placed him in an academic college because it was “easier to connect to students” and “more enjoyable” because he did not have work within the context of student housing and the conduct code.

Ian appeared to place a higher value on his role in the college compared to his previous roles in housing based on the nature of his relationships with students. He described his relationships with students and his roles in this particular thematic area in terms of good versus bad, and spoke more to the distinctly different roles, perhaps, than his actual overall view.

Summary of quality interaction. The quality of interactions with students by the participants was defined primarily by their one-on-one contact with students and the academic nature of the interactions, including those they observed students having with faculty and other staff in the college on various research activities and projects. The participants brought their existing values from previous student affairs roles to bear, in an effective way, on their work, which was reinforcement of their identity as student affairs professionals. However, a constant message from all participants was that their relationships with students were of a higher order because of the links to the academic unit and the students’ academic experiences. There was inherent value to their respective

roles due to proximity to the academic unit and the academic nature of the interactions. This value was stronger among participants whose role and work was more integral to curriculum and academic functions.

Duration. Participants described the value of being integral to a student's progress and development over the course of an undergraduate or graduate career. While the length of the relationships to students was directly linked to quality, it was clear from the data that participants connected to the overall academic *cycle* of the university and its students, beginning with recruitment and orientation and ending with graduation and a job offer. Their relationships with students were strong not only because of the quality of the contact, but the sustained nature and context of the contact through their academic careers. The development they witnessed resonated at a deeper level than expected. In previous roles, of course, they were a part of the personal development of students, but outside the context of the academic unit. Being in the academic unit provided a new dimension to their previous concepts of student development, again indicating that the academic element added value and that the participants conceptualized the development of students in a new way.

Robert. Robert described the reward of recruiting students to the graduate program, getting to know them very well, and then being invited to their doctoral dissertation defenses. He spoke of his relationships with students as being "rich" because he was their "go to" person over the course of their academic career for academic issues and concerns, an experience he never had in his student affairs roles. The centrality of his role to the important academic benchmarks of the

student progression—recruitment, welcome, academic advising, industry internship, graduation, and job placement—was powerful. He described the academic progression of the student as “development,” which was a nod to his student affairs background and training and an indicator that he found a new way to apply his student affairs values to his role in the academic unit. He realized the integrated nature of academic coursework and the development of the individual student. This relationship was an indicator that his identity changed and he made connections between his current and previous roles.

Nicole. Nicole described the reward of being part of the academic progression of undergraduate students, beginning with first-year through graduation. She described her role not in terms of being central to student progress, as Robert did, but being a part of students achieving academic success and moving on to a job. She found this exchange particularly rewarding. She stated that she did not experience this kind of reward in her previous student affairs roles and experiences. Throughout her narratives, particularly those related to students, Nicole made frequent (and positive) references of being able to see or experience the “other side,” which was an indication that she made a clear distinction between her student affairs and academic affairs experiences and assigned them value. Her placement of value could have been due to the nature of her previous roles, which was in orientation and admissions. The scope of her relationships with students in student affairs focused on, and rarely spanned beyond, one very important university effort—orientation. So Nicole’s academic unit role presented her with a very new set of professional experiences and,

perhaps, resulted in her drawing starker lines with regard to her roles and professional values. Even with these distinctions present, she saw the value in sustained relationships and placed a high value on the connection between those relationships and culminating student experiences like graduation and job placement.

Laura. Like Robert, Laura referred to the sustained relationships with students over the course of their academic career as an opportunity to help them “develop.” She stated that these relationships reinforced her “core values” as a student affairs professional because she was able to “see them grow from freshmen” and she had the “opportunity to help them grow as people throughout the entire time they are here.” This statement provided insight into her identity, as she was able to take her stated student affairs values and assign them in a new way; specifically, the role in the academic unit allowed her a different perspective on student development that revolved around and connected to the academic cycle. Her ability to overlay her student affairs values in the new environment suggested a changing identity that embraces both student affairs and academic affairs.

Ian. Much like Nicole, Ian’s previous student affairs roles in student housing were very different from his academic unit role. Ian’s academic unit role was very focused on one critically important function of his academic unit and the university—recruitment—whereas his previous roles in housing gave him more opportunities to interface with students outside of class over the course of the undergraduate career. He said he felt “more relaxed” and “more [him]self” when

he engaged with students in his recruitment role compared to his previous student affairs role.

Summary of duration of relationships with students. Participants reported that observing students' academic progression from recruitment to graduation to job placement added value to their role. For Robert and Laura, there was more direct feedback in this particular area, which was due to the positions they held within their respective units that allowed for student interface throughout the academic career. While Ian and Nicole did not reveal as much in this thematic area, the distinctions they described between their current and previous roles were instructive and insightful. They both framed their relationships with students through the lens of their respective roles and positions in the academic cycle and they clearly tapped their student affairs values and skills to interact with students in new capacities. Robert and Laura described their roles as being integral to the success and development of students over the course of the academic cycle, and drew upon their student affairs training and values within the context of their role in the academic unit. Nicole and Ian, in this thematic area, did not express their roles as being integral to student success over an academic cycle, and appeared to draw distinctions between the academic unit role and previous student affairs roles based on interface between the student and the academic cycle.

High academic ability students. Participants described interacting with high academic ability students and that these relationships differed from those they had in their student affairs roles. The nature of the interaction with this

particular type of student was a factor in how they perceived themselves in their respective roles in their academic unit and, subsequently, their changing identity.

Robert. Admission to both the undergraduate and graduate programs in the college where Robert works was competitive, and the students were cognizant of program rankings and very driven to excel in order to compete for the best jobs after graduation. He took pride in the fact that he introduced students to faculty who were seeking excellent students for research projects, and he mentioned a student who had recently appeared on the front page of the university's website for his innovative work with faculty. He also has some graduate student recruitment responsibilities, which he described as being critically important because it brought the "best and the brightest" students to the university from all over the world. He described attending national conferences where he could not "understand one session title," but his role was highly valued by faculty and staff because he was there "selling" the college at the industry and recruitment fair. He had the most positive responses when he shared stories of how graduate students invited him to thesis and dissertation defenses, even though he did not understand much of what they said, and then celebrated with students and their professors afterwards.

Robert's role gave him the opportunity to interact with students who were achieving at a high academic level. Even though he was not a faculty member teaching the students, he felt very much connected to that exchange, and the students and faculty affirmed that relationship. He saw himself as a valued and key member of the college's academic network.

Nicole. Nicole worked mostly with high achieving students and her contact with these students was distinctly different from her admission and orientation experiences in student affairs where she often worked with students who were “not performing.” Previously, she helped students solve problems of a lower order, including being underprepared for university coursework. One comparison from her previous role included student staff members who struggled with job assignments and did not get work done on time. In her academic unit role, students completed assignments early and came back to ask what else they could do. Nicole took the same “care” and “support” approach with both types of students, but in describing her relationships she seemed to prefer the work with students in the academic unit. In her academic unit role she spent a great deal of time working with students in a scholars program, as well as students seeking admissions to graduate schools. She stated that working with these high achieving students was “nice and refreshing,” and appreciated seeing students who were on the “opposite spectrum” from her experiences in student affairs. Her description of the differences in the students were inherently value laden, and she associated her role in the academic unit with higher ability students seeking admission to graduate programs and having enviable choices, such as weighing options on multiple job offers.

Laura. Laura described students in her college as “high caliber,” “competitive,” and “some of the brightest students at the university.” She also made frequent reference to “our students” when making comparisons to other students at the university. She also shared that students in her college pay a

substantial fee that covers her salary and the specialized programs for students in the college, and she feels a strong sense of responsibility to provide services and experiences that a “typical” ASU student would not have. It is relevant to note this dynamic since the fee students pay appears to have some influence on how some Student Affairs Transplants (SATs) frame their relationships with students. The overall market value of this college’s program is very high, and the students it attracts are high achieving and willing to pay a premium for the experience. Laura was very compelled to deliver a high quality product based on the higher price. While it did not appear that Laura’s relationships with students were *directly* driven by the presence of a fee, she placed a very high value on the college brand and its services due, in large part, to the fee. This organizational dynamic, no doubt, breeds positive affiliation, group identity, and high expectations of all of its members, which plays into all relationships in the college.

Ian. Ian’s reference to high ability or high caliber students was in relation to an aspect of his role in recruitment—admitting honors students. He stated that honors students are one group of students who get special attention and treatment from staff and faculty. Obviously, in his recruitment role, students with high academic ability are going to garner some extra attention. Like Robert, Ian spoke of the quality of the student relationships in more detail, but his comment about his conduct role in student affairs compared to his current role addressed the finding of high academic ability students. He portrayed his conduct role in student affairs in a negative way and his current role in recruitment in a positive

way. He stated that his current role was more “enjoyable” because he did not have to confront students for violating the code of conduct and he was able to interface with students in other more positive capacities. Examples of these interactions were hiring and training students to be ambassadors for the college, coordinating events where students showcased their innovations for industry and prospective students, and arranging student panels for campus visitors. In student housing, where he was also a “live-in” staff (meaning he physically lived in the hall where he had oversight responsibility), his experiences included relating to students based on their bad behavior. He also expressed the stress and pressure of responding to student crises. In these comparisons, he seemed to be assigning his student affairs roles in a negative light and his academic unit role in a positive light.

Summary of relationships with high ability students. High academic ability students appeared to generate a strong affiliation with the academic unit and provide an overall positive experience for the participants in their respective roles. This relationship, combined with the high expectations and standards in the respective colleges, generates identity with the academic unit group.

Summary of relationships with students. The participants gained new perspectives and, consequently, strong and positive affiliations to the academic unit and the college through their relationships with students. The quality and duration of the relationships, as well as the high academic ability of students with whom participants interacted, emerged as factors in how participants perceived themselves in their respective units and, subsequently, how they identified

themselves within that unit. Participants described strong and rich relationships with students because of the links to the academic unit and the students' academic experiences. There appeared to be an inherent value to the role participants had simply by the fact that they are housed in the academic unit and connected nature to the curriculum and key academic functions.

Participants also drew upon their student affairs training and values, and some participants saw distinct connections between academic progression and students developing as whole persons, which was an additional dimension based on stated preconceptions. It appeared that the preconceptions participants had with regard to relationships that staff and faculty have with students were, to a great extent, dismissed. The participants saw that the relationships with students on the "academic side" were not simply transactional. The interactions had depth, and there was ample opportunity to engage with students on an individual level. Two of the participants, Robert and Laura, were able to view out of class involvement as not a discrete activity separate from the academic life of a student, but as an experience integrated with the curriculum.

Professional Development

The theme of professional development was predominant throughout the study. Participants discussed a full range of professional development issues, but there were specific areas within professional development that resonated with social identity theory: the market value of the academic experience and its influence on professional advancement, and the college-centric approach. These

sub-topics of professional development are discussed sequentially, with attention given to each participant.

Professional advancement and the market value of the academic experience. Participants expressed that career advancement, specifically the next step up, in the academic unit was ambiguous and/or undesirable, and some of the participants stated that they needed to return to student affairs to achieve their respective long-term career goals. This finding was relevant because the ability to move up and be challenged in an organization is valuable to a professional, and the ability to see a future in an organization fosters membership and affiliation in an organization. Ashforth and Mael (1989) cite that loyalty and commitment are critical factors in group and sub-group identity. Hence, if members cannot see themselves long-term in the organization and/or perceive that there is no commitment from the organization to their ongoing professional development, they may be confounded in their identification within the organization. Another relevant finding, which presented an interesting juxtaposition, was that participants strongly believed their experiences in an academic unit had high value in the market place that would help them professionally if they returned to student affairs. So, the participants saw real and perceived value of holding a position in the academic unit, but did not, in some cases, see a long-term career path in the academic unit. Again, the inability to see themselves in the organization long-term contributed to commitment and loyalty implications, which is integral to social identity.

Robert. Robert worked in a graduate program as an academic advisor, which included planning events and activities for students in the college, as well as recruitment efforts. He worked in a similar capacity with undergraduates in the same college before making the lateral move to the graduate division, which was the position he held concurrent to this study. He stated there was a limit to how high he can progress professionally in his organization because there are simply not enough positions beyond the entry and mid-level. He was very happy in his work environment and got support from his supervisor, but he exhibited clear frustration when he spoke about moving up professionally. He stated that there are limited assistant dean and associate dean positions in the organizations, and even if he secured one of those roles, he would have limited student contact, which is undesirable to him. He saw himself returning to student affairs to advance professionally, even though he would miss the work environment of the academic unit. He believed his role working on the “academic side” gave him a different perspective on working with faculty, which will be valuable when he returns to student affairs. The findings in this thematic area for Robert are intriguing, as he seemed to believe professional advancement in student affairs will not result in less contact with students, which is the prevailing reality based on the researcher’s practitioner knowledge. It is unclear to the researcher why Robert is making this assumption, so he will return to this in chapter five.

Robert was often emotive in his responses, and became nostalgic when referencing his previous student affairs roles. It became clear that answering the interview questions prompted him to reflect, perhaps for the first time, on his

previous role within the context of his academic unit position. He stated that he left his student affairs role for his current position because he was “burned out” and had achieved all he could in his student affairs unit. After he conducted informational interviews and talked with colleagues who had already moved to an academic unit and had positive reports of their experiences, he sought out a position in the academic unit. The position in the academic unit he ultimately accepted paid the same and had a similar title, but he was ready to make a change so he made the lateral move. The fact that he saw the value in the position after an exploratory period, as well as gaining first-hand knowledge from trusted colleagues who had successfully transitioned to an academic unit, made the decision to move easy.

Robert’s statements in this particular area indicated that, in general, he placed a high value on the academic unit, but his professional affiliation was not particularly strong due to the lack of professional upward mobility. And even though he stated that he had achieved all he could in his previous student affairs role, he saw pathways for advancement in student affairs. His seemingly confounding statements in this thematic area were due to his frustration of not seeing next steps in his own organization, which created loyalty and commitment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) issues. As a result, he turned to his professional *home* (which is student affairs) to satisfy his need to affiliate long-term with an organization. In terms of professional advancement, Robert is struggling with his identity due to these loyalty and commitment issues where both organizations are leaving him unrealized professionally. He also reported that he is struggling to

find a mentor (the term he uses is “mentor-less”) and the student affairs professional associations are no longer useful to him. Again, his statements reaffirmed that he does not see clear connections for professional development and is frustrated in this regard.

Nicole. Nicole worked in a graduate program (in another college) as an academic advisor, a support person for students seeking admission into post-graduate programs, and administrator of a student scholars program. She left her student affairs position during a time of significant restructuring in her unit that involved new leadership taking the organization in a different direction with a different approach. She was uncomfortable with that direction and approach, and also felt less involved in setting the mission and goals of the unit. As a result, she became unhappy in her role and began a job search that involved her looking at positions in student affairs and academic affairs. After a few months of searching, she secured a job in an academic unit. Like Robert, she consulted with friends and colleagues who had moved from student affairs to an academic unit, which made the move easy. She said that colleagues reported being satisfied in their respective roles, which gave her some additional incentive to move.

Nicole was very happy in her academic unit position, and reported that she has supportive peers and a good supervisor. In the first interview, she stated that she did not see the next step up in her organization as appealing because it involved very little interaction with students and colleagues, and involved tasks and responsibilities, such as data management and generating reports, which were not appealing to her. She made it clear that she would have to return to student

affairs to advance professionally, and that she wanted to be a part of “that world” as that is where her “true interests” lie. But she also felt that her experience in the academic unit gave her a new perspective and would be very valuable when she returned to student affairs. Like Robert, her statements presented a paradox, as she placed high value on the professional experience in the academic unit but did not see a long-term professional future in the academic unit. Also, similar to Robert, she had an unrealistic view of the amount of student contact in positions higher up in the organization. Loyalty and commitment issues were, again, a factor in changing her focus to student affairs.

In the second interview, however, Nicole’s outlook on professional advancement in an academic unit changed somewhat because she learned of several new student affairs positions posted in academic units. She stated that if the “university continues to move in that direction” (student affairs within the college), then she “would definitely say that [her] career aspirations could be reached in the academic unit.” She also placed more value on her role in the academic unit in the second interview, a clear indication that her views and, perhaps, her identity changed somewhat since the first interview. Nicole also reported some sub-group differentiation. She stated that some faculty hold an old view of her role that is not professional, a view reinforced by some long-time staff who still operate in an “administrative assistant” capacity. She stated that the student affairs professionals in the academic unit make the environment more professional and that faculty members respect them more because of their training

and expertise. This distinction indicated a changing social identity *within* the academic unit.

As the university and her college evolved, so did Nicole. Initially, she clearly identified as a student affairs professional working in an academic unit, but that identity was re-evaluated as her academic unit generated new professional opportunities. She also shared that her mentor, a colleague and supervisor from a previous student affairs role, was a valuable source of support and advice for her and she did not see anyone in her current organization who could serve in this capacity. She also maintained her professional association membership from student affairs and said that it continued to help her in her position in the college. Ultimately, she still deferred to student affairs in this thematic area, stating that her “true interest” and “heart” was “still” in student affairs. This statement was a clear expression that Nicole identified more with student affairs than academic affairs, and that she held these respective units in different, and sometimes opposite, spheres in her mind.

Laura. Laura was a student engagement coordinator in the undergraduate division of a college. She planned major events and activities for students, worked as an administrator for student leadership programs, and taught the first-year course. Laura left her student affairs position primarily due to significant differences in leadership styles between herself and her supervisor. She was very unhappy in her position, so she began looking for positions in student affairs and academic affairs that would allow her to leave her job. Similar to other

participants, she knew friends and colleagues who moved to an academic unit, and had been exploring opportunities in academic units, as well.

Laura's college, particularly its undergraduate division, has a very well-developed college-centric model and many more positions and opportunities for advancement than the colleges that employ the other participants in this study. Consequently, Laura's description of her professional path within her academic unit was quite different than the other participants. She saw a clear path for advancement, as there were existing positions at the next level occupied by professionals who advanced internally through the college, similar to how "someone in student affairs may have progressed." She articulated having multiple options for professional advancement, which included a return to student affairs, remaining in her college in a new role, or moving to another academic unit. She also offered that the "position she may want long-term probably doesn't even exist right now." This statement indicated that she, like Nicole, adjusted to the changing nature of the college and the university and her identity changed with it. Laura was different than other participants, however, as she saw herself as a student affairs professional who can operate across boundaries in the same capacity. She moved beyond the dualistic relationship between student affairs and academic affairs, and saw student affairs work happening across all areas of the university. Laura has also maintained her student affairs professional association affiliation, as it directly related to her job, especially in her work with first-year students. This was another indication of the developed college-centric model with a strong student affairs presence, as she saw the ubiquity of student

affairs work at the institution and, therefore, professional possibilities that other professionals did not.

Laura placed a very high value on her academic professional experience in the market place, and stated that this professional experience will serve her well if she returned to student affairs. She appeared to have a stronger affiliation to academic affairs, as evidenced by statements that academic affairs “is the whole point of the university” and “you’re never going to get rid of an academic unit,” but you can eliminate a student affairs unit. She identified strongly with her academic unit and exhibited more professional satisfaction than others in the study, which was driven by the well-developed college-centric model of her college with room for professional growth. She made multiple references to her student affairs or student engagement “team” in relation to other groups in the same college who provided support services. This reference was a form of sub-group categorization within the larger group (college), an indication of the college’s advanced evolution in the student affairs area, as well as evidence of her identity formation in relation to other work groups in her academic unit, as well as the university. For example, she referred to the academic advisors in her organization, but made it clear that these professionals were not members of the “student engagement team.” She also stated that more student engagement staff exists in her academic unit than at entire campuses within the same university, demonstrating that she is taking a larger view of her role and how she and her group are positioned at the university.

Ian. Ian moved to the academic unit based on his work with academic partners in his student affairs role so he could gain valuable experience and a new perspective on what he called the “academic side.” He explored options and conducted informational interviews before he moved. He initially had a management role in undergraduate recruitment *and* retention, but during the course of the study his job changed significantly, with the focus of his job being recruitment. During the first round of interviews he oversaw the first-year seminar and the residential college experience. By the second interview his role was still managerial in nature, but with a focus on recruitment of students. Additionally, several new professional staff members reported to him.

Ian was ambivalent and unclear regarding advancement professionally. There were not as many levels for advancement in his organization compared to his previous student affairs unit, and he was frustrated by that. However, he saw his professional career tracking in the recruitment and/or admissions area, and stated that his experience in the academic unit will serve him well in the future even though he did not have a specific career aspiration. He stated that there was an unclear professional path in his academic unit. Like Robert, he did not have a mentor to give him professional advice, which he attributed to his supervisor’s lack of student affairs experience and understanding him professionally. He sought out professional development from recruitment and admissions organizations, and he rarely tapped his previous professional organizations because they did not help him in his role. He said that the next few years may present advancement opportunities as his college evolves and grows. His college,

in its most recent organizational iteration, was fairly new and the college-centric approach is not well-developed, which contributed to the lack of professional advancement levels within his unit. Ian described his professional advancement with conflicting narratives. He expressed needing the support of a “student affairs” mentor who understood the “academic side,” or someone from the academic unit who could relate to him as student affairs professional. This description represented a Catch-22 and suggested that Ian views student affairs and academic affairs as distinct entities that are not connected or overlapping. The fact that he sees this distinction, however, indicates a recognition of what he needs as a professional which he is currently not able to get in his current role in his college.

College-centric approach. The four participants each worked in a distinct academic unit, with two participants housed in different divisions (undergraduate and graduate) of the same college. The findings in this thematic area indicated that participants adapted to the new organizational model and recognized the value of its approach as it related to student success. They were also very cognizant of the institutional, financial, and professional implications of operating in a college-centric model, and cited competition among colleges and identification with the larger university community as challenging issues in their respective units.

Robert. Robert gave pros and cons (mostly pros) of the college-centric approach, and disclosed that his opinion on how to deliver programs and services changed due to his experience in the academic unit. He gave an example using a

long-standing student affairs truism—getting students involved outside of academics. He shared that he was rethinking this and other student affairs approaches based on the “really strong, quality” interaction between faculty, professional staff, and students in the academic unit. He stated that if he were to return to his previous student affairs unit he would advocate for major changes, including eliminating positions and departments, and that he would “blow some of it up.” This statement suggests that Robert saw value in the college-centric approach and, in some cases, preferred it over the approach he took in his student affairs units. Robert was attuned to the organizational and financial realities surrounding the college-centric model, and made reference to the duplication of effort and decentralization inherent in delivering like services on multiple platforms. He made this observation within the context of describing the benefits of the college-centric approach, indicating that he valued his college’s approach over other university-wide student affairs approaches.

Nicole. Nicole’s comments related to the college-centric approach that stemmed primarily from her previous role in orientation and admissions. In that role, she created a program and experience designed to affiliate students to the overall university, and the college-centric approach contradicted her previous practice. She expressed concern that if students and staff at the university identified more with the academic unit than the university, then they would miss out on opportunities to be part of the larger community. This comment was particularly interesting, as she drew distinctions between the academic unit and the university based on identification with those groups. Nicole also expressed

concern over resource distribution in the college-centric model, as some colleges have more resources than others, which allows some colleges to provide “student affairs and student development” while others cannot. She was thankful to be in a college with plenty of resources, even though the inequity concerned her.

Nicole’s comments on this topic suggest that she held on to her belief that students and staff should first affiliate with the institution and then the college.

The comments suggest that she maintained her focus on the individual student, a value she associates with student affairs, as well as the powerful message from her previous role in orientation and admissions.

Laura. Laura believes the college-centric approach is complementary to the overall university experience. When students “break out” from the larger university programs and activities, they have college-specific opportunities that add value to their experience. She was aware of the duplication, but believes that the programs and services in the college are tailored to the needs and interests of students in the college and add value for the student. She particularly saw the value of integrating activities and events with the curriculum, which gave her and faculty the opportunity to coordinate out of class engagement that was directly connected to course learning outcomes. Laura spoke specifically about the broader organizational implications of the college-centric approach, and stated that student affairs units could easily be placed inside the college, but academic colleges are central to the mission and were not going away. This comment suggests that she placed a higher value on the academic unit over her previous student affairs unit. She could see student affairs being subsumed by her

academic unit, but not vice-versa, demonstrating her affiliation with her academic unit. She maintained, however, that the work she does in her unit is student affairs work.

Ian. Ian's recruitment role provided him a perspective that is similar to Nicole's, as his focus is on admitting new students to his college, a role Nicole had in her previous student affairs unit. He struggled with the relationships he has with recruiters in other colleges, as there was apparent competition among colleges for students (many of whom were honors students), and he described recruitment practices that did not mesh with his overarching value of finding the right "fit" for students. For example, he stated that he often referred students to another college with similar programs because that program was better-suited for the student; however, that professional courtesy was never reciprocated. He thought if students were in the best program for them then they were more likely to stay at the university. Ian's description of this strain between the college and the university over recruitment was similar to Nicole's description of identifying with the college over the university. Ian held on to his belief in seeing the student as an individual, which, at times, conflicted with his job of increasing enrollment numbers in his college. He also mentioned experiencing a sense of isolation in his unit and did not have much opportunity (or encouragement) to branch out from his college to connect and work collaboratively. This state of conflict made it difficult for Ian to reconcile his values and self-concept with his academic unit, therefore making identity formation with his academic unit complicated and confounding.

Summary of professional development. Participants presented a collective narrative that was contradictory and paradoxical. They expressed the positive influence of the college-centric approach and the market value of their academic unit work experience. Yet, they struggled to see themselves advance professionally in the academic unit. The participants believed that their experience in the academic unit will help them find a job in student affairs because it gave them a new and respected perspective on the university and higher education. The participant from the college with the most developed college-centric approach saw her professional path in the college much better than the others, and she also had a stronger affiliation to the college. This indicated that colleges with an established student affairs program within the college foster an environment conducive to professional growth and development of their student affairs staff.

Another seeming contradiction was participant tension regarding their identity with the college over the university. Despite valuing the college-centric approach, some participants were keen to competition among and inequity between colleges and schools, which presented a conflict of priority and, for one, a feeling of isolation. Their previous roles in student affairs did not pose the same dilemma. The participant in the college with the most developed college-centric approach did not share this concern, and saw the college-centric approach as a complement to the broader university experience. There was concern among some participants that identification with the college took priority over identifying with the university, resulting in students and staff isolation in the college and not

affiliating strongly with the larger university. For one participant, the strong college focus resulted in competition for students, which he felt was not in the best interest of students. Ultimately, the participants found their way professionally in their respective academic units. They appeared to inhabit one “world,” but brought their student affairs-ness with them. They all described themselves as student affairs professionals working in an academic unit, an indication that they held on to their student affairs identity and evolved in the new environment that presented new ideas and approaches.

Summary of Findings

Despite working in an academic unit and placing a high value on the college-centric approach to student affairs functions, the participants still identified as student affairs professionals. There was frequent reference to operating in a “different world” or working on the “academic side,” which indicated a broader awareness of the long-standing distinction that pervades the student affairs discourse regarding student affairs and academic affairs collaborations. However, the existence of this dichotomy did not prevent the participants from identifying as student affairs professionals working *inside* the academic unit. The participants gave descriptions that indicated they viewed themselves as student affairs staff embedded in the academic unit, or an academic support person with a distinctly student affairs point of view. The participants also shared that they drew upon the core values they developed as student affairs professionals and that their skills were very transferrable and valuable in their respective roles in the academic unit. The researcher’s assertions entering the

study were that SATs would develop a hybrid identity that was *more* affiliated with the group that had more real and perceived value, or the academic unit. This description implied that SATs would be straddling a gap between two entities and moving towards identifying more with in-group (academic unit). A better description is that the participants, while struggling with some identity issues, discovered that there was no wide gap to bridge. Instead, they continued to embody their student affairs identity, but in a platform with new dimensions and opportunities.

In chapter five the researcher will discuss the findings in greater detail, provide insights on implications for practice, and make recommendations for future study. In addition to social identity theorists who provided the theoretical framework for the study, Love and Estanek's (2004) research on re-thinking student affairs practice proved to be a useful conceptual framework to discuss the findings in this study. Therefore, the researcher will utilize this framework for explanatory purposes throughout the chapter.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Social Identity and Student Affairs Transplants

The researcher anticipated from the outset of the study that the Student Affairs Transplants (SATs) would operate in a hybrid professional identity, with one foot in student affairs and the other in academic affairs; place higher value on the academic unit and, subsequently, lean towards the academic unit as their *in group*; and associate with professional organizations or networks that align with the academic unit. What appeared to be the case is that participants moved to the academic unit and held on to their student affairs values and identity. The researcher's professional bias was a source of these anticipatory thoughts from the outset, which created a forced choice/dualistic environment. The grounded theory approach to data analysis, combined with further review of the literature, led the researcher to a conceptual framework more suitable to frame the findings for his community of practice.

The participants saw the value of the academic unit and reported a strong affiliation to that unit in some thematic areas, but also reported the need to rethink some common student affairs practices/approaches based on their new perspectives. It was the researcher's belief from the outset of this study that the social context (Tajfel & Turner, 1974) surrounding the phenomenon—rapid reorganization at the institution and the long-standing real and perceived divide between student affairs and academic affairs—would create a competitive

environment conducive to participants identifying with one group (the academic unit) over the other (student affairs unit). However, their respective narratives indicated that they did not adopt an academic affairs or academic unit social identity. Instead, the participants demonstrated membership in *both* groups—they stated that they held on to their student affairs core values, but also affiliated with their academic unit and placed high value on the college-centric approach.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) point out that social identification is not an “all-or-none phenomenon” (p. 21) and can exist in matters of degree. This position is reaffirmed in this study. Although there were statements indicating intergroup competition and some conflict, the participants did not make statements that indicated significant conflict, differentiation, or discrimination. In an environment where budget cuts and reductions in the work force exist, the researcher anticipated a more differentiated identity that favored the group with more resources and status in the larger organization—in this case the academic unit.

There are several possible explanations for the absence of definitive differentiation between groups. Tajfel and Turner (1974) describe “three variables that should influence intergroup differentiation in concrete social situations” (p. 41). The variables are “individuals must have internalized their group membership as an aspect of their self-concept;” “the social situations must be such as to allow for intergroup comparisons that enable the selection and evaluation of the relevant relational attributes;”...and, “the out-group must be perceived as a relevant comparison group” (Tajfel & Turner, 1974, p. 41). First,

with regard to internalized membership and self-concept, the participants placed a high value on the academic unit and relationships they had with students in that environment, but they never internalized their membership with that group as an aspect of their self-concept. They still saw themselves as student affairs professionals *inside* the academic unit. Also, the fact that all of the participants easily envisioned themselves returning to a student affairs unit was testimony to their dual membership. Secondly, the social situations in this study, defined broadly as the university, but also as work units, professional organizations, and other sub-groups within the university, did not provide enough differentiation in terms of overarching values, goals, and beliefs. Perhaps the broadly-accepted college-centric model, and/or the presence of other student affairs professionals in the academic unit, reinforced existing student affairs identity. And, thirdly, it seemed that participants saw themselves as too similar to the comparison group, or the academic unit staff. As their work was, for the most part, quite similar to their student affairs work, it is possible that there was not enough difference in the relevant relational attributes (Tajfel & Turner, 1974) to prompt in-group identity formation. Ashforth and Mael (1989) provide a simple explanation for the absence of inter-group differentiation in this study: “although identification is defined as organization-specific, internalization and commitment may not be. An organization’s goals and values may be shared by other organizations” (p. 23). Overall, the participants did not view one organization/group as substantially better or worse because of overarching goals and values. The academic unit was just another platform to serve in a similar role and deliver similar services. A

very interesting and notable finding of this study, however, was that the more developed the college-centric model the stronger the positive affiliation with the college and, consequently, individual identity with the group. Laura, the participant in an academic unit with the most developed (and longest standing) college-centric approach, had the strongest in-group affiliation to the academic unit. This was due, in large part, to the distinct professional path she saw in her college for student affairs professionals, as well as the high market value her college has at the institution and beyond. Hence, as the college-centric model evolves and, possibly, expands to include more student affairs functions/positions, the identity individuals have with the group may grow stronger.

Love and Estanek's Conceptual Framework

Student affairs transplants. The findings in the study were conducive to the development of a basic model of social identity for SATs, which allowed for better understanding of the phenomenon. The model borrows from Love and Estanek's (2004) concepts designed to "provide insights to help student affairs professionals think about their work in new ways" (p. 1). The grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) to the study created an analytical environment conducive to seeing connections to other frameworks to describe the phenomenon. As the researcher developed themes from emergent patterns and began to synthesize and share findings, he realized that the social identity of SATs mirrored Love and Estanek's (2004) framework. As stated earlier in the literature review, the four concepts developed by Love and Estanek are valuing dualism, paradigm transcendence, recognizing connectedness, and embracing paradox.

Love and Estanek built on Wheatley's (1999) work that asserts organizations tend to operate based on the science of Newton, or *old science*:

we manage by separating things into parts, we believe that influence occurs as a direct result of force exerted from one person to another, we engage in complex planning for a world we keep expecting to be predictable, and we search continuously for better methods of objectively measuring and perceiving the world. (as quoted in Love & Estanek, 2004, p. 7)

Love and Estanek believe a reliance on the *old science/paradigm* of Newton is not sufficient to understand all phenomena, so they proposed a *new science/paradigm* to encourage student affairs professionals to “think in new and complex ways” (p. 10) to improve organizations and practice. The new science and the emergent paradigm were associated with Einstein and other scientists and theorists who introduced concepts like quantum physics that altered our view of time and space. They did not view the world as predictable and mechanical, but chaotic, unstable, and constantly self-organizing in response to complex conditions and feedback (Love & Estanek, 2004). Love and Estanek believe the new paradigm (*which will not replace the old Newtonian paradigm*), is necessary as institutions become more complex and less predictable. They claim there is a need to rely on both the old and the new (both/and approach) and not one or the other (either/or approach).

In the new social identity model for SATs, the concepts put forth by Love and Estanek (2004) each represent a social identity phase. Before discussing the findings within the context of these concepts and the new model, an explanation

of the concepts will be provided. The four concepts are related and overlap, but can also be viewed as a progression. In the spirit of the conceptual framework, the researcher encourages the reader to see *both* the relational *and* progressive nature of the concepts/phases.

Valuing dualism. Valuing dualism rests on the simple premise that individuals prefer one system or organization over the other. There is an either/or approach with one being better and more valuable than the other. There are two oppositional poles, and the differences between these poles are accentuated. An example of *dualism* from this study surfaced when participants described academic affairs and student affairs using terms like *different worlds* or being on one *side of the house* looking over at the other. Love and Estanek (2004) stated that the first step to emerging from dualism (or the old Newtonian science), which leads to valuing dualism (or the new emergent paradigm), is recognizing that what is opposite can be good and the space in between represents connection and not simply empty space or a divide to be bridged. Rather than seeing others in an organization as adversaries to manage, one must “recognize the connections among people and between people and the natural forces of the planet” (Love & Estanek, 2004, p. 19). In order to move from dualism to valuing dualism, one must *not* think of oneself or an organization in terms of limitation, hierarchy, or predictability. Instead, one must consider new possibilities, networks, and patterns. Dualism creates a divide that emphasizes the empty space in the middle. Valuing dualism recognizes the boundary and the divide, but accepts that what is

on the other side is viable and worthy and sees the potential for collaborations that can lead to a new structure.

Transcending paradigms. The next concept in the framework, *transcending paradigms*, involves not a shift (as this would simply reinforce dualistic thinking by moving from one side to the other), but an incorporation of both sides, or old *and* new. If there is only a shift in paradigm, then “[t]here is change from the old to the new, with the old being discredited and discarded” (Love & Estanek, 2004, p. 15). This dynamic breeds more dualism—one *over* the other or good *versus* bad. Love and Estanek presented this concept as a relationship that is “neither attraction nor repulsion, but one of dance” (p. 17). Love and Estanek used various definitions of transcendence to clarify the concept, including the ability to “rise above,” “go beyond,” and “be greater than” (p. 16). When one transcends paradigms, “dualisms cannot exist without the other....elements of each exist in the other....one cannot understand one without the other” (p. 17). There was evidence that two participants in this study transcended paradigms in certain thematic areas; however, the structure of the institution, despite radical organizational changes, still reinforced bifurcation. Participants *saw* the connections and networks leading to transcending paradigms, but they “organized their work in such a way that these natural connections [were] broken” (Love & Estanek, 2004, p. 19).

Recognizing Connectedness. Recognizing connectedness flows from paradigm transcendence and relies on interdependence, cooperation, interaction, and a web of networks. *Recognizing connectedness* rests on the belief that

organizations have natural connections but people have structured themselves in a way that makes connecting difficult. Love and Estanek (2004) asserted that natural connections are “seen in such concepts as cooperation, relationships, interdependence, network, web, heterarchy, interaction, multifunctionality, holism, critical connections, and organization as organism” (p. 19). They believe that socially constructed organizations prevent natural connections, but organizations can be changed to allow for connections to happen, feedback to occur, and, subsequently, ongoing maintenance and improvement of organizations and relationships. Being in an organization that recognizes connectedness means it is open with information and feedback, which then becomes a “self-renewing resource” (p. 21) that is always present and not something to be periodically and/or strategically shared. This concept emerged when participants shared how their core values in student affairs, as well as certain skills, were transferrable and valuable in the academic environment.

Embracing Paradox. Love and Estanek’s (2004) final concept of the framework “informed by the new science” (p. 21) is *embracing paradox*. Similar to recognizing connectedness, embracing paradox stems from, and is a form of, dualism that *allows for the application* of paradigm transcendence. In other words, “paradoxes and dualisms encourage individuals to hold contradictory or apparently contradictory assertions or beliefs in their minds” at the same time (Love & Estanek, 2004, p. 23). Love and Estanek provide a helpful example by comparing how the old and new science paradigms would approach a conflict in an organization or system. Following the old/Newtonian science paradigm,

conflict equals disorder which would prompt the quick removal or mediation of the conflict to re-establish order. The new science approach/paradigm sees conflict as an opportunity for growth or evidence of creativity. Both paradigms are needed to understand and address the conflict. The organization cannot constantly be in conflict or chaos, but conflict is also a sign of reorganization and reinvigoration in response to environmental factors (Love & Estanek, 2004).

Love and Estanek's Conceptual Framework in Understanding Student Affairs Transplants

Now that the fundamental concepts of Love and Estanek's (2004) framework for a new paradigm for student affairs practice have been summarized, a discussion of the findings within this framework will follow. The discussion is organized according to the thematic areas outlined in chapter four: relationships with students and professional development. The conceptual framework is overlapping and evolutionary in this order of progression: dualism, valuing dualism, recognizing connectedness, embracing paradox, and paradigm transcendence. The researcher considers recognizing connectedness and embracing paradox *as conditions that must exist* for one to move from one phase to another. Recognizing connectedness is a condition for one to value dualism, and embracing paradox is a condition for one to transcend paradigms. The participants in this study were mostly in the valuing dualism phase, and two participants indicated that they could transcend paradigms.

Relationships with students. The responses from the participants displayed a range of responses within Love and Estanek's conceptual framework.

Robert and Laura were most consistently in the valuing dualisms phase, as their firm understanding of the strong connections their roles have throughout their respective organizations was evident. Their descriptions of how their work was “interwoven” and “integrated” with academic courses and functions demonstrated that they not only *recognized and valued* the connections, but they performed the actual work that facilitated the connections. They both described working closely with faculty to foster connections and merge the in-class with the out-of-class, and also described their relationships with students in ways that indicated they had dismissed many preconceptions. For example, they leveraged their one-on-one meetings with students to help students in academic and personal matters beyond the intended scope of the meeting. The dynamic nature of this interaction placed them in an advocacy and support role (similar to their student affairs role) in addition to their academic role, which the participants did not anticipate prior to moving to the academic unit.

At times, Robert and Laura provided insight that *embraced paradox* and, as a consequence, indicated *paradigm transcendence*. Robert, for example, shared that if he returned to student affairs he would advocate for major changes in approach and philosophy based on his academic unit experience: “I would almost want to blow some of it up.” This statement was confirmation that Robert imagined a new model, with some old parts needing to be eliminated in order to create something new. He chose a phrase (“blow some of it up”) that strongly suggested conflict. If he were operating in a traditional, or old, model, he would “be moved to mute or mediate the conflict as quickly as possible in order to

preserve the system or organization” (Love & Estanek, pp. 21-22). Instead, he took a new science approach, and “[saw] the conflict as a source of creativity or new growth” (p. 22). Similarly, Laura embraced a new transcendent model when she shared that student affairs can exist *everywhere* at the university and it does not need to be its own organization or separate structure. This bold statement showed that she conceptualizes and defines her work *beyond* her profession and its hierarchical limits, and sees that it can transcend traditional (old) boundaries by being in *both* student affairs *and* academic affairs across the same university.

Nicole’s and Ian’s respective narratives were aligned with the valuing dualism phase as well, but were not quite as developed as Robert and Laura. Overall, they placed more emphasis on the differences between the academic side and student affairs side, and viewed functions and activities as discrete but not integrated. They spoke often of *seeing* the connections, but did not explain how they actually worked at making or facilitating real connections. Ian, for example, described academic advising meetings as “more rigid” and just “focused on the academics,” which was an indication that he saw this interface as one dimensional. Nicole was not quite so dualistic in her interactions with students. She brought her student affairs perspective to her individual meetings with students and peers, but it seemed to predominate. For example, she stated that students attend college so they can get a degree, but they persist and are ready to lead because of the services and programs offered by student affairs. She was still making this long-standing distinction between student affairs and academic affairs, which resonated with an old model and not a new or emerging one.

Nicole and Ian exhibited that they gained a new perspective, but did not demonstrate, at least at the same level as Robert and Laura, that they embraced new ideas and put them into practice. Nicole and Ian affirmed the value of both, but did not take full steps to blend or connect them.

Professional development. Robert, Nicole, and Ian were less advanced in this thematic area in comparison to their relationships with students. There was much more frustration among them regarding the lack of a clear professional path within their academic unit, which created some ambivalence and unease. They reported being generally happy and supported in their respective roles and work environments, and they all thought their academic experience had high market value. However, they expressed that a “return” to student affairs was, most likely, necessary to achieve long-term career goals. The finding suggested that these participants were mostly in the valuing dualism phase and at times definitively dualistic. They envisioned professional advancement on both sides, but they did not move beyond the existing organizational structures to bridge the gap to make connections. Robert, for example, used terms like “limit” and “ceiling” with regard to moving up in his organization, and both Nicole and Robert saw the next steps up in their respective organizations as administrative with little to no contact with students. It is the researcher’s experience that limited contact with students occurs as one moves up in any higher education organization, yet their comments indicated that they felt restricted in their organization and were looking outward for professional advancement. The researcher was intrigued by this finding, as it indicated a general lack of awareness or naiveté regarding positions at the next

level in both the academic unit and student affairs unit. Or, perhaps, it was a response given to explain one's inability to move upward in the organization. Nonetheless, on the face, this was a dualistic outlook that may or may not have been reinforced by the structure of their respective organizations. Ian also felt limited in this organization because he did not have a doctorate degree. He stated that he is more "capped out" in his current organization than in student affairs, and he is not sure if a doctorate in higher education or another master's degree in a discipline offered by his current college would be more professionally beneficial. His narrative in this area indicated that he still placed student affairs and academic affairs in different spheres and struggled with determining the best route forward in his field.

Laura was in a different evolutionary phase than other participants in this thematic area. She was the only one to see viable professional advancement in her organization in the near term. She was able to see her next professional step up in her current college, in another college, or in a student affairs unit. Her outlook on her professional future was not defined by either student affairs or academic affairs, but by both. What some other participants saw as non-intersecting parallel paths, she saw as one path that contained various options. For example, when discussing her career trajectory, she stated that the job she will have in the future "probably does not exist right now" and she can advance in her academic unit "similar to how someone in student affairs" can. This description of her options suggested that she embraced a full range of professional possibilities. Again, this might be explained by her college's strong college-centric model, as

its various types and levels of student affairs professionals creates an organizational environment conducive to observing new models and creative approaches.

Laura also stated that she has great relationships with “student affairs partners” outside of the college, and that student affairs and engagement staff in her unit (e.g., study abroad) partner with other student affairs units to deliver services. This is interesting because she views herself as a student affairs professional (inside the academic unit), but sees other student affairs professionals outside of her unit as “partners.” Her observations draw attention to the fact that she saw the differences and valued them (via recognition of networks and then actual partnering), yet considered everyone a student affairs professional. The student affairs positions were the same, but different, which presents a paradox. Finally, she recognized that the college-centric services can be, at times, duplicative, and that university-wide services are important; yet, she maintained her that “tailoring” services to the needs of students in her college is very important and valuable. Love and Estanek (2004) explained how paradox is a form of dualism that “is the acceptance that two items on one level are contradictory but on another level exist together in a relationship” (p. 23). In this thematic area, Laura lands in the valuing dualism phase most of the time, but in some areas she transcends paradigms because she is able to achieve a level of acceptance that embraces paradox. She was able to value *both* the college-centric approach *and* the broader university/central approach.

Despite some of the borderline dualistic outlooks of three of the four participants with regard to professional development, they all desired professional advancement in their academic unit and could conceptualize what that advanced role would look like. They saw the possibilities within the “other side” (in this case, the academic side), as well as the potential connections in between, but they did not quite realize the connections. Their ability to observe the potentialities indicated value dualism. Laura was the most advanced in Love and Estanek’s conceptual framework and was secure in the valuing dualism phase, and at times moved into paradigm transcendence.

Personal and Professional Implications

As the researcher engaged with the data, he became increasingly aware that the paradigmatic concepts of Love and Estanek (2004) were suitable for explaining the phenomenon under study for his community of practice. Rather than abandoning social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as a theoretical framework, the researcher chose to leverage Love and Estanek (2004) to better explain and understand the findings within the context of social identity theory. It was a valuable lesson for the researcher to trust the grounded theory process and be open to new concepts. By adding the lens of Love and Estanek’s conceptual framework, the researcher saw an organizing principle that dovetailed more logically with university structure. More on this topic will be discussed later in this chapter.

The bias of the researcher was, of course, a factor in the study. Through frequent conversations with colleagues, note-taking, and memoing, the researcher

took significant steps to account for his bias and engage in a genuine and ethical analysis of the data and presentation of findings. The researcher expected to find participants identifying as a member of an in-group (academic unit), but this was not the case. Participants were welcomed into the new academic unit environment and felt comfortable very quickly after arriving there. The researcher's initial misreading in this area revealed an early bias. The researcher's own professional experiences, combined with the dearth of literature describing the wide gap between student affairs and academic affairs practice, were sources for this assertion. He thought that the differences between groups would be so distinct that Student Affairs Transplants (SATs) would choose one over the other. This unexpected realization helped the researcher in his own personal and professional growth.

The rapid and transformational change at Arizona State University was constant and did not subside during the course of this study. There was tension and uncertainty in many areas due to fiscal concerns and reorganizations, and the participants were not immune to personal stress and anxiety as a result. The researcher was sensitive to this reality and was vigilant in the maintenance of participant anonymity so there was no added pressure on participants. The researcher learned that studying one's own organization during difficult financial times (that included significant reductions in force) required a great deal of trust from participants. It was the perception of the researcher that the participants were very forthcoming and honest with responses. They were also very generous with their time. The positive relationship between each participant and the

researcher was critical in studying the phenomenon, and it is noteworthy and commendable that the participants engaged in the study in such an open and honest way. The trust was reciprocal, which allowed the researcher to explore areas not otherwise open to inquiry. Another challenge to the study was the strong perception that student affairs was being “swallowed up” (a term used by several work colleagues who were not participants in the study) by academic affairs. It was not lost on the researcher that some of the university’s movement to the college-centric approach was due, in part, to budgetary factors and not purely philosophical ones. The researcher was also aware that the decision to reduce staff in some student affairs units and move them to an academic unit was a value statement by the university. This was a complex issue, as there were many academic units being reorganized, eliminated, or disestablished and reestablished with relatively swift administrative actions. Entire academic disciplines were eliminated and merged into new transdisciplinary units. The researcher remained cognizant of the fluid and political nature of his institution and its sub-units, and took the steps he deemed appropriate to protect participants from real and perceived ramifications while maintaining forward momentum with the study.

Participants and the researcher evolved along with the institution, which could have contributed to confounding, conflicting, or confusing descriptions and interpretations. The researcher attempted to address these inevitabilities throughout, but vagaries such as these are often elusive and challenging to corral. The researcher experienced role changes in the organization over the course of the

study, which included assuming leadership of key university initiatives that crossed the paths of the participants. Again, trust played a role in maintaining healthy working relationships and the integrity of the study. The researcher also brought insights and new knowledge from the study into his practice in real time through staff meetings, training sessions, strategic planning meetings, and consulting work for other universities. Examples include the development (and construction) of new residential colleges and recreation centers, training of student government leaders, creating a social entrepreneurship-leadership course, and developing staffing and budget models based on the new paradigms. The researcher engaged with staff and faculty across both student affairs and academic units, and the knowledge gained from this study provided new and emergent ideas and frameworks to direct his work and re-envision his institution and his role within it.

Professionally, the researcher rethought his practice, his professional organizations, and his future leadership roles. As a result of this study, he engaged in conversations with professional peers, as well as past and present supervisors, to consider next steps based on the direction of higher education and his career aspirations. He saw new opportunities. Upon reflection at the conclusion of the study, he saw no boundaries or limits to his next professional move. He has moved beyond valuing dualism and was ready to embrace a transcendent paradigm. He worked with others across his work unit to advance this way of thinking to prompt positive change in his unit and facilitate connections that leverage the strengths of the university.

During the course of the study, participants reacted positively to the topic and seemed to genuinely learn more about themselves throughout the study. One participant stated that he found the interviews to be “therapeutic” and prompted him to do a great deal of reflection on his professional life and consider how he could improve his practice. All of the participants shared that they were eager to learn about the findings, compare their experiences to others in the study, as well as meet the other participants to learn from each other and support each other in their respective roles. The researcher was pleased by this development, as it affirmed the action research approach taken in this study, which was an inquiry *by* and *with* participants and not *to* or *on* them (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Based on feedback from the participants, the researcher gained their individual permission to coordinate a voluntary post-study gathering designed to share findings and engage participants in an open dialogue on the topic. This forum, which had not taken place at the publishing of the study, will be a catalyst for future interactions among participants, with the potential to lead to more action and research and prompt positive change for the institution.

Organizational Implications

At the time of the study, Arizona State University, under the leadership of its current president, Michael Crow, was far along in its evolution into becoming a *New American University* (Crow, 2010). This new higher education design emphasized broad access for qualified students, academic excellence, and societal impact (Crow, 2010). This transformation was in response to public divestment in the university, competition from for-profit and international universities, and

the inability of the university to evolve quickly to meet local and global challenges (Crow, 2010). A key design principle from the outset was to create an institutional profile at ASU that leveraged its strengths through a “federation of unique colleges, schools, inter-disciplinary research centers, and departments—with a deliberate and complementary clustering of programs on each of the four campuses” (Crow, 2010, p. 5). This design principle generated a new approach that Crow (2010) calls “school-centrism” (p. 5), which, in part, led to the significant reduction of colleges and schools, and prompted academic units to combine resources and organize around new transdisciplinary structures. This approach was also a catalyst for academic leaders in colleges and schools to hire student affairs professionals to assist in advancing its mission in the new college-centric model.

The New American University design model was conceptualized in 2002 and, after a decade of implementation, led to “institutional innovation” and “institutional evolution” (Crow, 2010, p. 5). This study was designed to explore the social identity of Student Affairs Transplants (SATs), which, by default, provided insights into one dimension of the innovative organizational changes at ASU under the New American University design. These insights inform practice and assist leaders in higher education considering similar restructuring. As universities and colleges across the country develop strategies to reorganize and achieve efficiencies in the wake of increased accountability and reduced funding, innovative models and new approaches are imperative. Much like the participants in this study, decision-makers need to move past dualistic (old) thinking and

adopt new paradigms that allow for quick responses to emerging challenges. It is the hope of this researcher that findings from this study will inspire anyone engaged in delivering programs and services for students to consider new ways to work across units and campuses in the fundamental delivery of those services and programs, as well as the foundational structures that support those efforts. Similarly, professional associations that serve both student affairs and academic affairs can benefit from re-thinking their roles, missions, and goals.

Recommendations for Further Study

The focus of this study was on Student Affairs Transplants (SATs), which was chosen based on the researcher's organization proximity to participants and his professional inclinations. It would be valuable to conduct a similar study, but through the narratives of the supervisors of the SATs. This study showed how the academic unit changed SATs, but not how SATs changed their academic unit. A study such as this would provide a perspective on how SATs perceive student affairs professionals in the academic unit and their influence on the organization. This study may provide insight into the supervisors' respective social identities and how they may be rethinking their work and organization.

There are many other areas of inquiry that would provide meaningful follow up to this study. Exploring SATs who returned to student affairs after working in an academic unit would provide insight into in-group and out-group affiliations based on the return, and would also address questions surrounding the real and perceived ability to advance professionally, which was clearly an issue of concern for three of the four participants. Further inquiry to determine if the

amount of time spent as a SAT is a factor in social identity formation would prove valuable. This topic may answer questions regarding loyalty and commitment, and if time in an academic unit resulted in stronger in-group identity. An investigation of SATs at other institutions and institutional types, including community colleges, would provide valuable comparison on a range of variables, including size, mission,, and structure of institutions. It appeared in this study that a well-developed college-centric model generated stronger social identity with the academic unit; hence, a study focused on this organizational factor would shed more light on that variable. An exploration of the social identity of SATs applying Love and Estanek's (2004) conceptual framework throughout the entire study would, perhaps, allow for more discussion of institutional models, organizational change, and professional development. Finally, a quantitative approach may allow for a study with more participants and multiple institutions, which would provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

Summary and Conclusion

The narratives from the participants indicated that they identified with both student affairs and academic affairs and had dual membership. They saw value in the college-centric model and working in their academic unit, but were still student affairs professionals. In short, they identified as student affairs professionals working in an academic unit. There was not enough differentiation in the values or goals to facilitate a strong in-group affiliation with the academic unit, so their social identity never shifted significantly. It changed, but it did not move from one group to another.

The conceptual framework of Love and Estanek (2004) provided a better framework for the researcher to understand the findings and was more suitable for his community of practice. The grounded theory approach to the study allowed the researcher to see this connection. The framework consists of four concepts—valuing dualism, recognizing connectedness, embracing paradox, and transcending paradigms—and they are overlapping and progressive in nature. The participants were predominantly in the valuing dualism phase, as they recognized connections between student affairs and academic affairs and saw the value of both sides. However, for the most part, they were unable to achieve paradigm transcendence as they could not move beyond *seeing* the connections to *making* the connections. There were instances of paradigm transcendence, most notably in Laura’s narrative. She was able to look past traditional boundaries and organizational structures with regard to her professional growth, as well as her relationships with faculty and students.

The phenomenon in this study existed in a complex and rapidly changing environment, which influenced the participants and the researcher. The researcher took insights from the study and applied them in real time to his practice which generated a mutually reinforcing dynamic congruent with action research. The participants demonstrated great interest in the study and took action to improve themselves as professionals and their respective organizations based on the study and its findings. The researcher and the participants engaged after the study to share thoughts on actions to improve practice and their university. Areas for further study include exploring SATs who returned to student affairs

after working in an academic unit, determining if the amount of time spent as a SAT is a factor in social identity formation, investigating SATs at other institutions, looking into the influence of well-developed college-centric model on social identity, exploring social identity of SATs applying Love and Estanek's (2004) conceptual framework throughout entire study, and finally, taking a quantitative approach to the phenomenon with more participants and multiple institutions. Studies such as these would add new dimensions to the broader phenomenon of social identity and student affairs staff.

The topic of social identity and student affairs is of interest to a variety of academic leaders and entities. Student affairs leaders with an interest in the professional development trends, organizational change, and the personal well-being of staff will find the research useful in understanding how staff members view themselves in their respective organizations, as well as the overall profession. Leaders in both academic and student affairs units who are hiring, orienting, training, and attempting to retain professional staff within the context of restructuring will find value in how individuals operate in organizations. Faculty and program administrators of master's and doctoral degree programs in higher education, college student personnel, or other degrees will discover information that improves curriculum and assists in program design and student preparation for practice. Finally, working professionals will learn more about trends in the delivery of student affairs programs and services, as well as themselves, as they operate within their respective organizations.

As universities and colleges continue to reorganize and achieve efficiencies in the current economic environment, more student affairs units across the country may be faced with tough decisions due to cuts in budget and, subsequently, the movement of student affairs staff within the institution to an academic unit or, in some cases, the elimination of staff lines. As the academic mission is the imperative of any institution of higher education, there will be continued scrutiny of the role of student affairs, and organizational models will change in ways to maintain the centrality of the academic mission (manifested through the academic colleges and schools) but also to provide the necessary student support services and programs traditionally offered in student affairs units. The researcher contends that the trend of academic units hiring student affairs professionals will continue and, therefore, the issue of social identity and student affairs professionals in the academic unit will continue. The researcher believes that, based on findings in this study, as well as his practitioner knowledge, student affairs professionals are highly-adaptive and well-suited for organizational change, and their skills and expertise are valued by the academic units who are hiring them. The fact that academic units seek student affairs professionals to deliver programs and services that increase retention is an affirmation of student affairs professionals and the work they perform.

The methodological approach employed in this qualitative interview took an interpretivist-constructivist approach because the phenomenon existed inside the participants (Creswell & Miller, 1997), a deep (not broad) investigation was needed to solicit the data (Morrow, 2007), hypotheses were generated and not

tested (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), and *How?* and *What?* rather than *Why?* questions were asked (Creswell, 1998). This approach allowed the researcher unique access and a valuable perspective. Furthermore, the overarching action research approach helped the researcher understand his own organization and improve practice (Herr & Anderson, 2005), and the application of grounded theory to analyze the data (Charmaz, 2006) provided the necessary framework to see patterns and themes that assisted in interpreting the data and led to valuable findings.

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APPENDIX A
DEFINITIONS

There are several terms that require definition beyond common knowledge standards that will assist the reader.

Organizational Identity: A specific form of social identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Profession: The name of the career that one is entering or has entered (Bledstein, 1984).

Professional: A person who works in a specific field, career, or profession (Bledstein, 1984).

Identity: A concept where a person has a “consistent self-image that is experienced personally, validated interpersonally, and formed in the context of cultural norms” (Young, 1985, p. 50).

Professional Identity: Professional identity is being able to connect and identify with a profession (Sugrue, 1997). Having a professional identity means knowing where one has been, envisioning where one is going, and being aware of where one is not going (Ivey & Van Hesteren, 1990).

Social Identity: “aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories in which he perceives himself as belonging” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40).

Social Categorization: “cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social action” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). More simply, the way individuals place themselves in groups and subgroups in their social worlds.

Student Affairs: The division in higher education that often includes the following offices: residential life, admissions, orientation, leadership, student activities, student union, student government, multicultural student affairs, Greek life, student conduct, student health, counseling services, and career services.

Student Affairs Transplants (SATs): Student affairs professionals who shifted to an academic unit to perform very similar, if not the same, work.

The researcher also used the term socialization, a process which is best defined as “not only a transmission of values, attitudes, and norms of a group, but as also encompassing the acquisition of a specialized body of knowledge necessary for the person to assume the role of a professional. Successful socialization into a profession ultimately leads to a sense of professional identity” (Bragg, 1976). Another term used is “college-centric” or “school-centric.” For the purposes of this study, college or school meant an academic unit housed in

academic affairs, and has academic majors and disciplines that are administered within the academic unit. College-centric or school-centric indicates that the university's organizational structure places increased responsibility on colleges and schools to be autonomous financially and to deliver the necessary programs/services that will increase student success.

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello,

My name is Mike Mader, and I'm an Assistant Dean in Educational Outreach and Student Support at Arizona State University. I am also a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. I am currently engaged in research, under the supervision of Dr. Lisa McIntyre, which explores the dynamics of student affairs professionals who have shifted to the academic unit work environment. In order to advance my research project, I am seeking out participants who meet defined criteria. Based on my institutional knowledge, you may meet the participant criteria I have established. Below is link to a very brief questionnaire to determine if you meet the criteria for participating in this study. The questionnaire will take only a few minutes to complete. If you meet the participant criteria, you may be invited to be a participant in the study. In this case, you will be given detailed information on the study. The study will be completed this semester and will involve 1-2 interviews, with each interview lasting sixty to ninety minutes. NOTE: all correspondence connected to the study, including this one, will be kept confidential.

Thank you,

--Mike Mader

*** Required**

What is your highest level of education? (e.g., bachelor's, master's) *

What degree did you earn? (e.g., higher education, counseling) *

What year did you earn this degree? *

If you have a master's degree or higher, do you have at least two years of experience working full-time in a student affairs unit (e.g., residence life, student activities, greek life)? Write "n/a" if not applicable. *

If you answered yes to the previous question, please list the student affairs units you worked in and the dates you worked there. Write "n/a" if not applicable. *

Where are you currently working and how long have you been working there? *

Send me a copy of my responses.

APPENDIX C
INFORMATION LETTER—FULL STUDY INTERVIEWS

Title of Study: "Social Identity and Student Affairs Professionals in the Academic Unit"

Date: July 25, 2011

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Lisa McIntyre in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University (ASU). I am conducting a research study to explore the social identity of student affairs professionals who have shifted to an academic unit at ASU.

I am inviting your participation which will involve one ninety-minute to two-hour interview and one thirty-minute follow up interview. The interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed later into text, and I will also be making notations with pen and paper. The interview will occur at a mutually agreed upon location at ASU in a private setting. The interviews will take place in the months of July and August 2011 at a time convenient to you. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. If you participate in the pilot study, you will *not* be eligible to participate in Phase Two of the study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation. Potential benefits to participation include learning more about yourself, your profession, and yourself in that profession.

Your responses will be kept confidential, and the audio tapes and transcriptions of the recordings will be destroyed one year after the conclusion of the study. While the study is being conducted, hard data will be held in a secure university office in locked file cabinet. Electronic data will be kept on a university computer that is password protected. All raw data will be destroyed (shredded or permanently deleted computer or audio tape files) one year after the conclusion of the study. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications; however, your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: 480-727-1215 (Mike Mader, Co-Investigator) or 480-965-6738 (Dr. Lisa McIntyre (Principal Investigator)). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

Thank you.

Mike Mader, Co-Investigator

APPENDIX D
PILOT STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Format borrowed from Charmaz' (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (p. 29-32). Instruct interviewees to not name others directly when answering any question, but to use generic terms such as "colleague" or "co-worker."

Initial open-ended questions

1. How would you describe your current job responsibilities?
2. What factors and/or events led up to you assuming your current position?
3. What was it like transitioning to your current position?

Intermediate questions

4. What is it like working in the *college/school of* _____?
5. What is a typical work day for you?
6. How would you describe your working relationship with your professional peers? How would you describe your working relationship with your supervisor? What are the professional development opportunities through your work?
7. How does your current position fit into your longer-term career plans?
8. Are you pursuing, or considering pursuing, another advanced degree? If so, in what field, and why are you pursuing it?
9. How would you describe your previous position in student affairs? Use department name if known. Overall, was taking this current position a good choice?
10. Do you miss your "old job?" If so, in what ways?

Ending questions

11. In what ways have your views changed regarding your work with students since taking this position?
12. In what ways have you changed professionally or personally since taking this position?
13. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give someone who moves from a student affairs unit to an academic unit?
14. Is there anything else you want to add? Is there anything you want to ask me?

APPENDIX E
PHASE TWO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Format borrowed from Charmaz' *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (2010, p. 29-32). Instruct interviewees to not name others directly when answering any question, but to use generic terms such as "colleague" or "co-worker."

Initial open-ended questions

1. How would you describe your current job responsibilities?
2. What factors and/or events led up to you assuming your current position?
3. What was it like transitioning to your current position?

Intermediate questions

4. What is it like working in the *college/school of* _____?
5. What is a typical work day for you?
6. How would you describe your working relationship with your professional peers? How would you describe your working relationship with your supervisor? What are the professional development opportunities through your work?
7. How does your current position fit into your longer-term career plans?
8. Are you pursuing, or considering pursuing, another advanced degree? If so, in what field, and why are you pursuing it?
9. How would you describe your previous position in student affairs? (use department name if known) Overall, was taking this current position a good choice?
10. Do you miss your "old job?" If so, in what ways?

Ending questions

11. In what ways have your views changed regarding your work with students since taking this position?
12. In what ways have you changed professionally or personally since taking this position?
13. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give someone who moves from a student affairs unit to an academic unit?
14. Is there anything else you want to add? Is there anything you want to ask me?

Second Round Follow Up Interview Questions

1. What led you to pursue a career in student affairs?
2. What do you consider your core values and how do you draw upon those values in your current job role?
3. How do your colleagues and/or supervisor support you professionally as a student affairs professional in the short-term and long-term?
4. Describe your work relationship with students in your current role, and how does the relationship compare to your previous role in student affairs?
5. How does your work with students reinforce your core values as a professional?
6. Have reorganizations influenced your career decisions or decisions you make at work?
7. What factors played a role in your move to this new role?
8. How are other student affairs professionals regarded by others in your work unit?
9. Explain your working relationship with faculty and to what extent do you work with faculty?
10. Are there any skills/abilities that you brought with you that are not valued or supported in your current work unit?

APPENDIX F
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Lisa McIntyre

From: Mark Roosa, Chair (Y)
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 02/08/2011

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 02/08/2011

IRB Protocol #: 1102005998

Study Title: Social Identity and Student Affairs Professionals in the Academic Unit

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.